

**Conceptions of teaching and learning held by teachers of  
Mandarin and Cantonese in Chinese complementary schools  
in Scotland**

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Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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October 2015

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## **Declaration**

I declare that I have composed this thesis myself which embodies the results of my own research, and that all other sources have been specifically and properly acknowledged, as and when they occur in the body of my text.

Wai Wan Cheung

## **Acknowledgments**

Thanks are due to far more people than I can mention here. First, the completion of this thesis owes a special debt to Professor Emeritus Richard Johnstone, my supervisor, who has been very supportive throughout my course of study. His ideas and insights have been always stimulating and helpful, making this academic journey an enjoyable experience. They enriched my thinking and broadened my horizon in examining educational issues in the Scottish context. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Dr Richard Dockrell, who has been extremely supportive and helpful throughout. Thanks also go to my two former second supervisors Joanna McPake and Professor Julie Allan. They were very encouraging and generous in offering advice and support to my research. Their kind help and inspiration at various stages of the project made my research fruitful.

My deep appreciation and gratitude certainly goes to the headteachers, teachers and pupils of the several Chinese schools participating in this research, without whose trust to share with me their thoughts and experiences this study would never have been possible. Sincere thanks also go to Dr Amy Chak, an academic in Hong Kong, for acting as the co-judge in coding random samples of interview protocols for inter-judge reliability, and to the many friends who gave their encouragement in one way or another.

Last but not least, my heartfelt thanks to my son for his patience and to my husband for his unfailing support, financially, spiritually and academically, which enabled me to progress in the study in good spirits.

## **Abstract**

The thesis explores Chinese teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning Chinese at Chinese complementary schools in Scotland. The teachers taught either Cantonese or Mandarin, the two main Chinese languages spoken by Scotland's Chinese communities; teaching took place on a voluntary basis at weekends; the teachers were drawn from a variety of occupations; most of the pupils were of Chinese ethnicity, with in addition some non-Chinese children.

The research mainly draws on phenomenography, a research approach that investigates variation in conceptions of different phenomena as these appear to particular groups of people – in this case, teachers of Chinese in Scottish complementary schools. The variation refers to the different conceptions of teaching and learning that were identified in the group of teachers as a whole. Semi-structured interviews with each individual teacher were devised, conducted and analysed according to phenomenographic procedures. From the group as a whole six key conceptions of teaching were identified, and likewise six key conceptions of learning.

In addition, the research focused on a smaller number of teachers in order to identify individual profiles in greater depth. The teacher interviews also elicited the metaphors that the teachers considered represented good teaching and learning. The interviews also served to identify the factors that the teachers considered had most influenced their conceptions, and they were complemented by qualitative classroom observations designed to identify factors that would allow the researcher to better understand the context in which the teachers had formed their conceptions.

The findings showed that Mandarin and Cantonese teachers had much in common, but that also there were clear differences in particular areas that seemed to be explained both by differences in culture between Mandarin-speaking Mainland China and Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong, and also by emerging differences in power and status, with Mandarin assuming a dominant role and Cantonese showing some decline in numbers and in optimism, with some parents switching their children over from Cantonese to Mandarin. More generally, the findings suggested that the teachers were dedicated, adaptable, and different from the stereotypical perception of Chinese teachers of the sort that emphasises examinations, rote-learning and authoritarian teaching style. The teachers in the present study generally understood their pupils had

multiple identities and they sought to teach in a child-centred way, and to help their pupils preserve moral values and a Chinese component of their identity through learning Chinese language and experiencing Chinese culture.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This research is a phenomenographic study exploring the conceptions of teaching and learning among a group of Chinese native-speaker teachers who teach Cantonese and Mandarin as a community language to Scottish-Chinese and/or as a foreign language to non-Chinese children in complementary schools in Scotland. It inquires into how they conceptualise Chinese teaching and their pupils' learning in the specific educational, linguistic and social contexts they are in, amid their own inherited Chinese culture of learning usually perceived to be different from Western countries.

This thesis sets itself against the background of a multilingual Scotland, which recently calls for pupils to learn their mother tongue plus two additional languages (Scottish Government, 2012). As stated in this 1+2 Approach, these languages could include foreign languages such as French, German and Spanish, heritage languages like Scottish Gaelic or community/international languages such as Chinese. It also recommends local authorities to engage “appropriately skilled native speakers” of these languages to support teachers in schools (p.33). Tinsley and Board (2014:6) point out that the 1+2 Approach allows “the systems to develop its capacity in Chinese”. However, regarding the foreign language capabilities of Scottish primary teachers, Medwell, Richardson and Li (2012:39-40) point out “there is reason to suspect that few of them are likely to have the knowledge of Chinese desirable to support a 1+2 curriculum”.

Until recently Chinese language teaching was “predominantly confined to community schools for Chinese children at weekends” (Zhang & Li, 2010:87). In the 1970s Chinese communities in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dunfermline and Glenrothes set up classes for Scottish-Chinese children to learn Chinese language and culture (Barr, 1983). In the 1980s, apart from ethnic Chinese, some “Scottish children attend[ed] these classes purely out of interest” (p.7). In this regard, Chinese complementary schools, or Chinese schools for short, have been conducting the native/additional language teaching in Scotland for four decades.

The beliefs or conceptions teachers hold have an impact on their teaching practices (Fang, 1996; Levitt, 2001; Olafson & Schraw, 2006). Their conceptions of teaching and learning can affect how they manage teaching and anticipate pupils' learning (Trigwell & Prosser, 1996). Early studies in teacher education suggest their

classroom practices are influenced by a belief-driven theoretical framework (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Richardson, 1996). It represents teacher thinking under labels such as implicit theories, images, conceptions, and metaphors (Calderhead, 1996; Fox, 1983; Munby, 1986; Richardson, 1996).

The present study draws together literature and research from complementary Chinese education in the UK, Chinese culture of learning, and international research on conceptions of teaching and learning. It aims to understand Chinese teachers' teaching and learning conceptions and factors they perceive that might have shaped their thoughts. It is hoped that findings will inform the complementary Chinese education sector, Chinese learning in mainstream schools and the respective research communities.

In this chapter, Section 1.1 identifies the socio-linguistic and educational background of this study. Section 1.2 puts forward the problem statement. The researcher's personal statement and reflexivity are in Sections 1.3 and 1.4, followed by three research questions in Section 1.5. The structure of the thesis is outlined in Section 1.6.

## **1.1 Background to the study**

### **1.1.1 Globalisation, multilingualism and community languages in the UK**

Rizvi (2007, 2008) points out that globalisation has given rise to social, economical, technological, cultural and educational changes that shape the world. At the centre is global interconnectivity and migration. According to Blommaert (2010), migration involves people emigrating and immigrating which lead to changes and organisation of people's lives. People leave their country of origin and settle in a new place. He points out that up to the 1990s, western host societies accommodated "relatively isolated, stable and residential immigrant groups," but since then, "these globalized neighbourhoods appear chaotic, and common assumptions about the national, regional, ethnic, cultural or linguistic status of the inhabitants often prove to be useless ... The linguistic diversity in such neighbourhoods generates complex multilingual repertoires in which often several (fragments of) 'migrant' languages and lingua francas are combined" (pp.6-7). Given that most Chinese complementary schools

are in or near big cities, the societal context for them has changed considerably since their inception.

Hancock (2012) states that children at school in Scotland had 137 different first languages. Though Scotland is a multilingual society with more than 300 languages spoken by its people, foreign languages are not popular school subjects and community languages are not promoted by the government. McPake et al. (2008) consider that the lack of availability of community languages in higher education is a problem, while Dearing and King (2007:41) point out community languages can become part of a whole UK school experience.

Chinese is a foreign language of major global potential for business in the UK (CBI, 2011). However, policy-makers often fail to see that community languages like Chinese and Arabic are important international languages. Attitudes held by many in mainstream education towards community languages can be described as ignorant or hostile (Powney & McPake, 2001). A former UK Home Secretary once said UK Asians should speak English at home because it “helps overcome the schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationships” (Blunkett, 2002:10).

### **1.1.2 Chinese teachers and the teaching and learning of Chinese in the UK**

At present the two main providers of Chinese language education are complementary Chinese schools which run weekend Cantonese and Mandarin classes and some mainstream schools which offer Mandarin in their curriculum. Shortage of teachers is a problem for both. The small demand for Chinese language in the past resulted in only a few universities offering recognised teacher training programmes. Teacher shortage has become the main obstacle to the development of Chinese learning in UK mainstream schools (Tinsley & Board, 2014; Wang & Higgins, 2008; Zhang & Li, 2010).

Zhang and Li (2010) point out less than one-tenth of UK mainstream Chinese teachers have qualified teacher status, and less than half have any formal teacher or linguistic training. Tinsley and Board (2014:123) said “the expertise of volunteers who teach the thousands of children of Chinese heritage in ... weekend schools throughout

the UK has until now been an under-used resource in the development of Chinese teaching to a broader clientele”.

The linguistic makeup of Scotland has been characterised by settled communities of citizens originally from commonwealth countries such as Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong<sup>1</sup> (Hancock, 2012). Cantonese is a major Chinese language spoken by Scotland’s Chinese community (Johnstone, 2008; Seawright, 2009). Johnstone (2008) points out the unresolved issue of how Scottish-born children speaking important community languages like Cantonese can be supported in their bilingualism through school education. In actual practice, their Cantonese is supported by their Chinese school teachers.

An internet search in June 2015 listed 14 Chinese schools in Scotland. The largest one has over 900 pupils. Among them, two are in Glasgow, three in Aberdeen and five in Edinburgh. In the 1990s Mandarin schools were established by Mainlanders from China. Many Cantonese schools also set up Mandarin classes in the 2000s. Now well-organised Chinese schools have an executive committee, a school constitution, and a parent committee to oversee the school’s development.

CILT (2007) points out that there is room for complementary and mainstream cooperation. But “there appears to be little attempt to harness the skills of those who know Chinese through their home background to support the wider teaching of Mandarin as a foreign language, although this could prove productive and enriching for both sets of pupils” (p.12).

To seek a closer connection with China, the Scottish government made Mandarin one of the modern languages in the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Scottish Executive, 2006). Confucius Institutes were established to promote Mandarin learning (Hancock, 2014). Mandarin is taught as a foreign language in a small but increasing number of secondary schools (Hancock, 2011b; Johnstone, 2008). In 2015, 14 Confucius Classrooms were created across 18 Scottish local authorities. Teacher education in Chinese is now available at a number of universities in Scotland.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2011 census records 34,000 Chinese (Chinese, Chinese Scottish and Chinese British) living in Scotland, which make up 0.6% of its population. Chinese is the sixth most widely used language at home.

Currently 29 GTCS (General Teaching Council for Scotland) qualified Mandarin teachers are working in Scotland (Tinsley & Board, 2014). There is plan to set up Confucius Classrooms to teach Mandarin in primary schools. However, there are concerns that the Confucius Institutes may leave Scottish pupils vulnerable to Chinese political propaganda (Alexander, 2015), compete with or marginalise the teaching of French, Spanish and German (Leask, 2015; Tinsley & Board, 2014) and impede Cantonese Chinese.

In a recent report on the teaching of Chinese in the UK, Tinsley and Board (2014:123) point out that “a tailored programme of support targeted at Chinese teachers in supplementary schools would enable this group of professionals to contribute to teacher supply in mainstream schools”.

### **1.1.3 Chinese and Western culture of learning**

Whitehead and Taylor (2000) argue that there is a fundamental difference in emphasis in different education systems due to “their diverse evolution” (p.377). Teaching can be regarded as a cultural activity. Jin and Cortazzi (1998a) have defined a culture of learning as “socially transmitted expectations, beliefs, and values about what good learning is”, being “at the interface between cultures, socialisation, and education which is influenced by tradition but can change in response to situations” (p.749). They claim that within a culture of learning, there are often taken-for-granted cultural ideas about appropriate teaching and learning styles, materials and methods, roles and teacher-learner relations.

Though teaching is universal, teacher practices differ considerably across countries and cultures (Chik & Marton, 2010; He, 2006). It is recognised that while Western countries emphasise a more questioning and exploratory approach which expects students to evaluate others’ beliefs and to express their own ideas, Asian educational systems appear to stress a more reproduced view and pragmatic acquisition of knowledge (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Tweed & Lehman, 2002). In Chinese culture, teachers are often characterised by moral and authoritative inclinations (He, 2006), and expected to be role models, relating students’ intellectual development to their personal moral growth (Gao & Watkins, 2001).

Chinese teachers are not alone in being influenced by their unique culture of learning. Whitehead and Taylor (2000:375) point out native speakers from France and German trained in England to become foreign language teachers or foreign language assistants (FLAs) have their own perceptions of teaching and learning rooted in their culture of learning. They highlight the different perspectives on teaching and learning across Europe. While England has a more pragmatic tradition and concern about teachers' social role, France and Germany stress more on transmission of knowledge, subject didactics and pedagogy. They argue that native speakers as foreign language teachers face a range of linguistic, pedagogical and cultural challenges which may make it difficult for them to teach languages successfully in UK schools.

Although there is validity in the view of Whitehead and Taylor, in the past two decades the European Commission and the Council of Europe have initiated trans-European projects designed to create a European community of languages for teachers to interact with each other, engage in joint language projects and exchange ideas. Examples include the Scottish 1+2 Plan, which is a reflection of the EC (2006) Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity, and the Council of Europe's (2002) Framework of Reference for Language Learning. Thus, native speakers of French, German and Spanish who teach these languages in UK are increasingly able to find common ground in their UK schools with teachers of these same languages who are native speakers of English.

However, the same does not apply to native speakers of Chinese who teach Chinese in Scottish complementary schools. First, when the European Commission and the Council of Europe discuss heritage minority languages, they usually refer to languages from within Europe such as Gaelic in Scotland, Welsh in Wales or Breton in France. Their priority is to maintain a diverse European linguistic heritage. They have produced very little documentation on learning languages coming into Europe from other continents. Second, Chinese teachers teaching in Scottish Chinese complementary schools are outside the mainstream school sector. They have very little access to curricular or support from any sources, be it European, Scottish or UK. Therefore, the problem of the native speaker teacher as outlined by Whitehead and Taylor (2000) does appear relevant to the Chinese teachers in the present study.

Edwards and Nwemely (2000) point out differences in worldview can impinge on literacy practices. A worldview is something within people's mindset through which

they view the world they live in and interact with people they meet. Edwards and Nwemely note a clear division between work and play in Chinese culture. Learning through repetition and memorisation, children need to practise reading and writing of characters until they get them right. An Ran (2000) reports Chinese parents use a structured instructional teaching approach of their own schooling to teach their children to read and write Chinese at home in the UK. They use textbooks instead of materials associated with reading for enjoyment as used in UK schools.

Walker (2004) points out the importance of teachers' worldviews in understanding teaching in different social and cultural contexts in the century of globalisation. For teachers working in a culture different from their own, they may not be aware they have taken with them "unchallenged view" of what teaching and learning should be like (p.433). Their past educational experiences can shape their thoughts and practices, providing a basis on which they make implicit assumptions about teaching, learning, and roles of teachers and pupils.

In short, the nature of Chinese requires substantial degree of memorisation and practice in learning, which could be at odds with Scottish pupils' foreign language learning experiences. It is fair to say that 'work hard', 'memorise' and 'revise' constitute the learning experience of most Chinese teachers educated in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong (HK). Given that effortful learning and memorisation is at the core of Chinese culture of learning, this may not be in tune with the learning experiences of Scottish-Chinese youngsters in Scotland.

#### **1.1.4 Teaching Chinese language to pupils in a different culture of learning**

Whitehead and Taylor (2000:375) reason that overseas teachers may have experienced schooling or training which led them to develop diverse beliefs about language and learning. They lack familiarity with the UK education system and need to adapt their different teaching approaches. They encounter problems with classroom management and discipline, lacking the respect and power local teachers have in England.

In the case of teaching Mandarin Chinese, teachers from China are described as "lovely," but their lack of familiarity with the English system of discipline, target

setting, etc. is a problem. They also tend to have a different, perhaps unrealistic, expectation of pupils (CILT, 2007:12).

Dissimilar cultures of learning can be an issue to both Scottish-Chinese and Scottish pupils who learn Mandarin. While complementary Chinese school teachers have found their pupils hard to teach, the Chinese Language Assistants (CLAs) from China in mainstream schools also experienced disparities between their teaching and Scottish pupils' Chinese learning. Doughty and McLachlan (2007) interviewed some young CLAs from China. According to them, writing Chinese characters appears to be difficult and intriguing to Scottish pupils. Pupils are often not confident enough to tackle challenging tasks. The CLAs said smaller class sizes compared to China should provide a better environment to learn, but the progress Scottish pupils made was not as satisfactory as expected. One CLA noted: "They have no homework and do not make notes. They learn fast but they forget fast also. Every class is like a new class" (Doughty & McLachlan, 2007:3). In this light, even though teachers in Chinese schools may have good knowledge of Chinese language and its pedagogy, they may be new to the modes of teaching and learning in Scotland.

Marton and Ramsden (1988:276) point out there is often "a paradoxical relation between teachers' views of learning and their conceptions of teaching". Hancock (2011a) states the diverse conceptions of teaching and learning of Chinese teachers in complementary schools in Scotland have influenced their pedagogic approaches. Wu (2006:72) points out the personal experiences of Chinese teachers have a profound influence on their attitudes towards teaching, learning and expectation of pupils. In other words, a close relationship exists between teachers' experiences and their teaching practices. This view is in line with Marton and Booth (1997), who posit that people's ways of acting in a situation are connected with how they experience the situation - a relational view of the world as in phenomenography.

### 1.1.5 Phenomenography as an approach to exploring human conceptions

Phenomenography is a research specialisation which investigates the different ways people experience or understand phenomena in their life (Marton, 1986; Svensson, 1997). It is widely used to explore and describe how teachers perceive teaching and learning. According to Marton (1994), phenomenography is:

the empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which various phenomena in, and aspects of, the world around us are experienced, conceptualized, understood, perceived and apprehended. (p.4424)

Phenomenography emerged from a series of empirical research in the 1970s developed by a Swedish educational research group headed by Ference Marton (Marton, 1981, 1986; Marton, Dahlgren, Svensson & Säljö, 1977; Säljö, 1979). It attempts to “replace the abstract and empirically unverifiable conceptual frameworks, such as those which implied that people ‘process’ or ‘store’ information in various processing devices” in the brain (Entwistle, 1997:128). In brief, phenomenography attempts to capture the *variation* or different dimensions of a phenomenon as it appears to people through a set of *categories of description* which form a *hierarchically inclusive relationship* - the *outcome space*.

Marton and Booth (1997) posit that people’s *awareness* is the world as experienced by them. It is the sum of acts such as discernment, relating and focusing. As one cannot be the same person without the world he or she is experiencing, Chinese teachers’ education, culture of learning and experiences living and teaching Chinese abroad undoubtedly have impacts on their thinking. These should shape their *conceptions* and the ways they interact with pupils.

Phenomenography has been extensively used in studies on conceptions of teaching and learning among teachers from a Confucian-heritage culture background<sup>2</sup> (Gao, 1998; Marton et al., 1996; Pratt, 1992a, 1992b; Watkins, 1996a, 1996b; Watkins & Biggs, 1996, 2001a; Wong & Wen, 2001). From a phenomenographic point of view, teachers’ teaching and learning conceptions depict how they view, interpret, and interact with their environment (Marton, 1981). Their conceptions can have significant implications for their choice of teaching strategies which in turn influence the quality

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<sup>2</sup> Countries such as China, HK, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Singapore.

and outcome of learners' learning (Kember & Gow, 1994; Tang 2001; Trigwell, Prosser & Waterhouse, 1999).

As such, phenomenography has much to offer for the study of Chinese school teachers' teaching and learning conceptions. Its methodology, limitations and role in the present research will be fully discussed in Chapter 3.

## 1.2 Problem statement

Globalisation shrinks the boundaries of countries and enables people to move around the world for study and for work. They bring to the host countries their talents, skills, languages and cultural belongings (Blommaert, 2010). They continue to use their native languages in their communities. Some are international languages taught to their children at home or through complementary schools. The teaching and learning of Mandarin and Cantonese in UK Chinese schools is a case in point.

Teachers' teaching and learning conceptions are crucial as these conceptions, knowingly or not, guide teaching practices and shape teacher-pupil relations, and can subsequently influence pupils' motivation and learning outcomes. This is especially true when teachers are from places which are linguistically, educationally and culturally different from the host country, for instance, teachers from a Confucian-heritage culture now teaching Scottish-Chinese children in Chinese schools.

Confucian-heritage culture (CHC) refers to Chinese belief systems with Confucian values, which emphasise academic achievement, diligence, effortful learning, and moral self-cultivation (Lee, 1996). Watkins and Biggs (1996) use the term '*Chinese learner*' to refer to Chinese students in CHC classrooms. Jin and Cortazzi (2011) point out *Chinese learner* should be plural since it includes not only local and overseas Chinese students but also learners in Chinese communities such as Taiwan, HK or diaspora Chinese communities worldwide. In this respect, Chinese school teachers are nevertheless current or former *Chinese learners* grown up and educated in CHC background.

This thesis focuses on Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' conceptions of Chinese teaching and learning. Unlike the term *concept*, which stands for precise meaning of things or necessary and/or sufficient conditions for an exact definition, the

present study explores teachers' *conception*, i.e., their personal understanding of the concept in their contexts (Entwistle & Peterson, 2004:408). Given Chinese teachers' specific linguistic, cultural and educational background, it is of great research interest to explore what they are aware of or unaware of when teaching Chinese to Scottish-Chinese pupils.

### **1.3 A personal statement in conducting the study**

While the researcher confirms that she has had no prior personal relationship with the teachers participating in the present study, and has not told them about her experiences teaching in a Cantonese school, there might still be potential for bias in the research process since she is herself Chinese grown up and educated in HK. To minimise this risk, the researcher explains here in detail her background and researcher role as a means of self-reflection. The whole research process will be described in a thoroughly transparent way in Chapter 4.

The undertaking of this research originated from my experience and passion in language teaching and learning. I am Chinese, a native Cantonese speaker born and educated in HK. My Bachelor and Master degree in language education were achieved in Scotland. Other than having a good command of English, I can speak fluent Mandarin, and basic German as I lived for two years in Germany where I learned German at the Goethe Institute in Frankfurt. These experiences enable me to know first-hand how languages can be learned and taught by different approaches in different cultural contexts.

My interest in languages led me to choose language teaching as my career. As a Chinese and English teacher over a decade in HK, I observed how pupils learned English and Chinese in their formative years. In addition, I had also worked as a part-time tutor at a university in HK in a B.Ed. degree programme for primary school language teachers, which gave me opportunities to understand how school teachers thought about effective language teaching. These experiences prompted me to reflect on the difference between learning the morphosyllabic Chinese as a first language via the traditional way of memorisation and learning an alphabetic English language as a second language through a communicative or grammar approach.

These experiences helped me reflect on the different teaching intentions, methods and approaches involved. They widened my perspective in viewing language learning through the eyes of both a learner and a language teacher. Since then, questions like “what are the beliefs which motivate and guide teachers’ teaching?” and “how could teachers help learners learn effectively in different social and cultural contexts?” have been at the back of my mind.

Shortly after moving to Scotland, I taught ethnic Chinese children in a weekend Cantonese school, where my then 6-year-old son also attended. As a qualified primary school teacher and TESOL teacher in Scotland, I also assisted Scottish pupils’ learning in a local primary school for three years. In the Scottish classroom, I observed how teachers taught and how pupils learned. I assisted the day-to-day learning of individual pupils and helped with teaching Chinese language and culture in their China project. I thereby experienced first-hand the different cultures of teaching and learning in a Chinese school and a Scottish school.

In the Cantonese school where I worked, teaching and learning appears to be quite traditional, teacher-centred and textbook-based, even though pupils are encouraged to ask questions, participate in activities and experience joy in learning. I saw more learner-centred and activity-oriented approaches in the Scottish school. Though children are mostly obedient and well-mannered in the Cantonese school, they appear to lack a real interest to learn, perhaps because Cantonese is a language difficult to learn. Given these differences in the culture of teaching and learning between the two types of school, I have become interested in what could be done to motivate children to learn Chinese. Discussion with teachers has revealed that they may lack proper ideas of teaching Chinese as a community or foreign language to pupils who grow up in Scotland. It appears that these teachers’ educational background, life experience, and personal experience of learning Chinese language determine to a great extent how they perceive Chinese learning and how they teach their pupils.

But admittedly, I am aware that my understanding of their teaching could be superficial and simplistic, somehow like what Edward Said (1978) terms a kind of cross-cultural ideological construct in the (mis)representation of the East by the West. For instance, the seemingly teacher-centred approach and teaching for memorisation may be due to the nature of the language. Chinese characters cannot be pronounced phonetically like English, and are ideographic with visual properties demanding lots of

explicit instruction and learning. Therefore teachers have to encourage pupils to repeat reading and emphasise writing out characters in the correct stroke order to recognise the structure.

Amid these puzzles and questions, it appears worthwhile to explore in greater depth teachers' views and to find out what conceptions of learning and teaching they possess. With these thoughts in mind, this PhD research study has begun to take shape.

#### **1.4 Reflexivity of the researcher**

Reflexivity is about how researchers identify their own preconceptions that are being brought into the studies and the actions taken to minimise their influence. Guba and Lincoln (1985) point out the issue of objectivity lies in how the researchers' influence is addressed in the process. They have to be aware of their engagement with participants, and their position and judgment in data interpretation. It would be problematic if these aspects are overlooked (Patton, 1990). In the present study, reflexivity is first addressed through documenting the researcher's identity, roles and the possible impact her gender and status as an academic could bring upon the research and her interaction with participants in the process (Peshkin, 1988; Fox & Allan, 2014).

There are merits and disadvantages if a research is conducted by members of the same ethnic group with shared language, cultural background and values. I must bear in mind that I will be interviewing both Mandarin and Cantonese teachers. They will recognise that I was from HK and my first language is Cantonese. In their minds might be the thought that I might have an easier, more intuitive and possibly sympathetic understanding of issues relating to Cantonese than to Mandarin. I must be cautious to present myself as a researcher who is equally interested in both groups. Necessary precautions have been taken to minimise any potential for bias and to guarantee impartiality.

## **1.5 Research questions**

1. What overall conceptions of teaching and of learning are held by Chinese teachers teaching Cantonese and/or Mandarin in complementary Chinese schools in Scotland?
2. What are the dimensions of variation within the group of teachers with regard to their conceptions of teaching and learning?
3. What factors are perceived by these teachers as having possibly influenced the formation of their conceptions of teaching and learning?

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

Chapter 1 introduces the socio-cultural background of this research, poses the problem statement, briefly discusses the chosen research method, and sets down the research questions. Chapter 2 discusses published policy and research literature on complementary Chinese education in the UK, Chinese culture of learning, and international research on conceptions of teaching and learning. This facilitates the understanding of Chinese teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. Chapters 3 and 4 present the research methodology and research design covering all four subsequent chapters (5-8) on findings.

Chapter 5 presents classroom observations that help to describe the context of the study. Chapters 6 and 7 present the core findings on the teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. Both chapters adopt the phenomenographic approach that considers the teachers as a collective group and identifies the "outcome space" and degrees of "variation" within. Chapter 8 presents findings from a broader qualitative perspective focussing on teachers as individuals in order to identify factors that they themselves considered to have influenced their conceptions, and the chapter offers further insights through an analysis of the metaphors that teachers used to describe teaching and learning. Throughout Chapters 5 to 8 the differences and similarities between Cantonese and Mandarin teachers are also identified.

Chapter 9 focuses on answering the three research questions based on findings of the identified teachers' conceptions. The reviewed literature is discussed in the light of the findings. It examines how findings support or do not support the previous research, points out what findings could enrich the existing literature, and draws implications for Chinese teachers, complementary and mainstream schools, and for future research.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

We are in a globalisation age in which the world has become increasingly connected. While the Cold War was marked by ‘division’ between friends and enemies, globalisation is recognised as a post-Cold War international system featured by ‘integration’ through which friends and enemies become competitors. Globalisation is characterised by the internet, which illustrates the ways and the extent people are connected. It helps integrate markets, countries and technologies people never know before, facilitating easy access to the world by individuals, countries and businesses. It could mean equalising since the internet enables people to reach farther and deeper than before, offering people opportunities to connect, collaborate and compete (Friedman, 2000, 2006).

However, the downsides are in the globalised world one finds both homogenisation as well as clashes of civilisations, booming capitalism and a backlash against it. It generates fierce criticisms from those being badly affected by it. In globalisation, “innovation replaces tradition” (Friedman, 2001:11). The present and/or the future take the place of the past. As what will come next can only arrive if what is here and now gets turned over, there is insecurity and the future is uncertain. In this regard, globalisation makes the world a great place for change but not a nice place for everyone to live (Blommaert, 2010; Friedman, 2001).

As stated in Section 1.1.1, with people moving around the world, there is increasing multiculturalism and language exchanges. However, a language with greater political influence, power and social status often affects the choice and replaces the functions of a minority language (May, 2012), which thereby leads to the diminishing of minority languages (Fishman, 1991; Pearson, 2014). For instance, the number of Scottish Gaelic speakers in Scotland has been in decline. Johnstone (1994) also shows that minority languages have been declining world-wide and that a body of research has been undertaken to understand what factors appear to cause their decline and what might be done to revert this.

In the UK, however, all languages other than English, whether they are ‘heritage’ languages such as Scottish Gaelic or Welsh, or so-called ‘community’ languages such as Cantonese, Mandarin or Gujarati are considered as ‘minority’

language in relation to the dominant English language. An important function of teaching Mandarin and Cantonese in Scottish complementary schools is to enable these languages to continue into the future as community languages in Scotland, with each generation of children inducted into learning and using them as L1 or L2. However, community school teachers often find it difficult to maintain in their younger generation the ethnic language while living in a foreign country with dissimilar language(s) and learning culture.

Trigwell and Prosser (1996:282) point out that *conceptualization* is a likely precondition of good teaching since teachers are unlikely to adopt approaches which reach beyond the sophistication of their teaching conceptions. Improvements in the quality of learning are unlikely to occur if there is a lack of reflection and congruence with teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning.

## **2.1 Chinese teachers and complementary Chinese education in the UK**

*Teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled... they are individuals... prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms... much of what teachers know about teaching comes from their memories as students, as language learners, and as students of language teaching.*

Freeman and Johnson (1998, p.401)

As the above quote states, a myriad of factors influence teachers' conceptions or personal understanding of teaching and the ways they manage it. Among them are the society they live in, the schools in which they teach, the culture of learning in which they grow up, and the prior educational and personal experiences they have as students and language learners. Chapter 2 looks systematically into these areas to shed light on teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning.

Section 2.1 examines the educational and socio-cultural context, i.e. the Chinese complementary schools teachers are in. It starts with a quick sketch of UK supplementary schools. Special attention is put on the linguistic and socio-cultural differences of the Cantonese and Mandarin language teachers teach, the medium of instruction, their different attitudes towards Chinese language, teachers' and pupils' varied language preferences and cultural identity, and the impacts of these on teachers' understanding of Chinese teaching and learning.

Section 2.2 deals with the learning culture teachers are from. It discusses the possible influences of Confucian culture of learning on teachers, the sense of self or identity, the special role of Chinese literacy in people's cultural identity, the Chinese metaphors used to describe teaching and learning, and some socio-educational differences between Cantonese and Mandarin teachers.

As a ground for understanding and comparison, Section 2.3 reviews international research on conceptions of teaching and learning across different subjects, the Chinese conceptions of teaching and learning and the paradox of Chinese learners. Chapter 2 aims to set the theoretical framework for the present study.

### **2.1.1 Supplementary schools in the UK**

*The volunteers... working in our supplementary schools have a very good professional background. The vast majority of them have professional qualifications from the home country; they have professional jobs in this country... they're doctors, they're lawyers.*

Maylor et al. (2010, p.141)

Chinese complementary schools are one type of UK supplementary schools. They are voluntary institutions set up by ethnic minorities to teach literacy in their heritage languages to British-born ethnic minority children (Creese & Martin, 2006). Also known as complementary or community schools, they have a long history in the UK. They differ from school to school on the contents they teach and the communities they serve (Abdelrazak, 2001), catering for the educational needs of minority children not met by mainstream schools (Martin, Creese & Bhatt, 2003).

Supplementary schools provide bi/multilingual pupils from Bengali, Chinese, Turkish and other communities a way “*counter to the hegemony of the monolingualising mainstream*” (Maylor et al., 2010:34). They represent efforts of communities to maintain their histories, languages and cultures and pass them onto their younger generations. The term *complementary* is often used over *supplementary* to stress their non-hierarchical relationship or positive values in comparison to mainstream schooling (Mau, Francis & Archer, 2009). Being away from the mainstream, they have freedom to determine and develop their curriculum, but receive no or minimal financial subsidy from the government, and must seek support from parents and funding bodies.

In short, these schools provide children with social networks, space from racism, opportunities to access their linguistic and cultural heritage and increase their self-confidence (Creese, Wu, & Li Wei, 2007). They help develop learners' dynamic and multiple identities (Creese, Bhatt, Bhojani & Martin, 2006) and encourage positive successful learner identity. Children attending these schools can take qualification exams of their ethnic language. Those who attend supplementary schools often achieve higher in national assessment tests than those who do not (Maylor et al., 2010).

However, the mainstream is suspicious towards cooperating with them, claiming that they are “a kind of a voluntary agency,” “run by people who are not entirely professionally trained,” and so “the value of that education isn't taken or deemed as appropriate” (Maylor et al., 2010:141). In March 2015 the examination board AQA and OCR planned to axe some A-levels exams in several community languages<sup>1</sup>.

### **2.1.2 Chinese complementary schools worldwide**

Elsewhere in the world Chinese immigrant communities set up schools for their younger generation to learn Chinese language and culture (Sun & Braeye, 2012). They are called community language schools in Australia and heritage language schools in the US (Li Wei & Zhu, 2014). They have their own characteristics and challenges.

**In the Netherlands**, according to Li and Juffermans (2014), Chinese schools are community-run, offering a community-specific curriculum in addition to the mainstream. The first registered Chinese school was set up in the late 1970s, and schools are now established in all big cities. Due to demographic and linguistic changes of Chinese immigrants after 2000s, there is an increasing demand for Mandarin learning over Cantonese. As textbooks are published in China targeted originally for English-speaking overseas Chinese children in the US and Canada, English is spoken in addition to Chinese and Dutch in class. Some schools nowadays offer only Mandarin classes.

**In Belgium**, according to Sun and Braeye (2012), the first Chinese school was set up in 1982 by a Chinese Protestant missionary in Dutch-speaking Flanders. In 1985 a Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> In March 2015 the examination board AQA planned to axe A-levels in Bengali, Modern Hebrew, Panjabi and Polish, and the board OCR planned to axe both GCSEs and A-levels in Dutch, Gujarati, Persian, Portuguese and Turkish due to cost-effectiveness consideration.

association organised after-school Chinese classes. By 2012 Flanders had 3 Chinese schools. While one serves ethnic Chinese or mixed-race ethnic Chinese children, the other two schools adopt an open-door policy, welcoming native Belgian children to learn Chinese language and culture. Owing to insufficient financial resources and teacher availability, they aim at preserving Chinese language and cultural heritage in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and succeeding generations, without offering supplementary courses relating to mainstream education.

**In the United States**, according to Chan (2014), Chinese has become a popular language in schools and universities. First set up during the Gold Rush era (1848-1855), Chinese heritage language schools (CHL) now play a key role in supporting the mainstream educational attainment of ethnic Chinese children. The recent influx of immigrants from China has shaped the schools' population. More than 70% of Chinese learners in the US attend CHL schools, which are "regarded as legitimate stakeholders in the development of Chinese language educational resources in the US" (McGinnis, 2005, cited in Chan, 2014:81). Nowadays they work together with high schools and universities to enable CHL learners to continue Chinese learning at universities. Chinese teachers have good chances to teach in mainstream schools after obtaining necessary qualifications (Chan, 2014). In short, despite originally operating outside the mainstream, CHL schools have developed into dynamic and creative institutions serving both the Chinese community and the US society (Wang, X., 1996).

**In Canada**, the first Chinese school dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when the Presbyterian Church opened it to teach Chinese to Canadian-born Chinese children and English to Chinese immigrants in the French-speaking Quebec (Sun & Braeye, 2012). In the 1980s Chinese schools were set up in Montreal and Chinatown. Some provide cultural enrichment courses such as Chinese handicrafts, classic Chinese painting, and Kung Fu to ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese children, or offer Western cultural courses like baking and etiquette to assist new immigrants to integrate into the society.

Many Chinese schools in Montreal foster the academic achievement of ethnic Chinese youth by offering French and English classes. They provide after-school tutoring classes for school subjects such as mathematics and sciences taught in French. They prepare pupils for high school admission exams, make connection with mainstream communities and encourage Chinese families to reach out to the society.

**In Australia**, according to Chen and Zhang (2014), community Chinese schools have been established all over Australia to meet the needs of Chinese immigrant families. The first school was set up in 1909. Australia is a typical example of “an English-speaking country that has progressive language policies to promote Asian languages, Chinese in particular” (p.181).

Chinese teaching and learning has progressed in three stages. First, local Chinese community schools initiated Chinese classes with curricula developed by different sub-groups. Then, the multicultural policies of the Australian government supported Chinese learning in community schools, and finally, Chinese teaching expanded to mainstream schools based on state-based curricula. Nowadays, quality assurance issue of community languages schools in Australia are managed and coordinated by Community Languages Australia (Cardona, Noble & Di Biase, 2008), and schools are accredited and receive financial support from the government (Maylor et al., 2010).

In short, despite the diverse characteristics Chinese schools worldwide have, they share similar challenges such as limited time, resources and difficulties in teacher recruitment (Chan, 2014; Orton, 2008; Sun & Braeye, 2012; Tsow, 1984; Wang, S., 1996). They have different degree of development in the globalised world due to varying degrees of government support.

### **2.1.3 Chinese complementary schools in the UK**

*Chinese schools were positioned... as providing a pivotal role in the transmission of the Chinese language and culture, and in their provision of an additional source of learning ... parents and pupils portrayed ... schools as contributing both to the educational achievement of British-Chinese pupils, and to their ethnic identity.*

Francis et al. (2008:5)

Tinsley and Board (2014:5) note there is “a thriving supplementary sector in England which ensures that many pupils from Chinese speaking homes are literate in Chinese and gain qualifications in the language”. A number of studies have been conducted on the educational, cultural and social role of UK Chinese schools, which include research on the purpose of schools and learners’ identities and achievement

(Francis, Archer & Mau, 2008, 2009, 2010), code-switching and culture of learning in school (Wu, 2006; Li Wei, 2011; Li Wei & Wu, 2009), language choice and language shift (Li Wei, 1994, 2000), methods, approaches and practices in Chinese teaching and learning (An Ran, 2000; Gregory, 1993, 2008; Hancock, 2011a; Mau, 2007; Mau et al., 2009), and literacy and socialisation teaching in Chinese schools (Li Wei & Wu, 2010). To understand the specific socio-cultural and educational context Chinese teachers are in, we briefly trace the development of these schools.

**History.** Chung Hwa School, the first Chinese school was founded in 1928 in London's East End (Ng, 1968; Wong, 1992). After World War II Chinese schools started to thrive when Cantonese-speaking HK immigrants came to settle in London, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh to start their catering business (Bailey, Bowes & Sim, 1994; Li Wei, 2007; Seawright, 2009). Later political, economic and educational changes in China have transformed the linguistic landscape of UK Chinese communities. In the 1980s, students and professionals from China started to come to the UK under Deng Xiaoping's 'reform and opening up' policies. Some professionals from HK also moved over after the 1997 transition of HK's sovereignty from Britain to China<sup>2</sup>.

**Purposes.** Knowing their children could speak but not read or write Chinese, parents set up weekend classes for them to learn Chinese literacy in order to develop a sense of 'Chineseness', gain knowledge of Chinese culture, participate in community life, and retain links with Chinese communities in China, Taiwan or HK (Wong, 1992). These schools help maintain children's heritage identity (Francis et al. 2009; Li Wei, 1994; Wu, 2006), promote their social and educational capital, foster future job opportunities (Archer & Francis, 2006; Francis, Archer & Mau, 2008), and bridge the communication gap with their parents (Archer & Francis, 2006). Newly-opened Mandarin schools are run by well-educated immigrants. Being open and flexible, they attract many non-Chinese to learn Mandarin (Zhang & Li, 2010).

**Development.** There are over 200 Chinese schools in the UK (Li Wei & Wu, 2009). Li Wei (2006) considers the rapid expansion as the result of Britain's monolingual language policies whereby minority languages are marginalised. Li Wei and Wu (2009)

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<sup>2</sup> The 2011 census recorded a total of 394,141 Chinese in the UK, which accounted for 0.7 % of the national population. The Scotland Census 2011 recorded 27,801 Chinese in Scotland.

list four types of UK Chinese schools. Some serve non-Chinese children and adults who want to learn Chinese language and culture.

Chinese schools are mostly under-funded and under-resourced. Despite paying high rent for premises, they often have no access to facilities like copiers, computers and interactive whiteboards (Mau, 2007). Some classrooms are too small to allow pupils to move around or work in groups (Tinsley & Board, 2014). The lack of teaching resources is detrimental to teaching and learning (Mau et al., 2009), making it impossible to keep pace with pupils' learning experiences in their day schools. The UK Federation of Chinese Schools (UKFCS) and the UK Association for the Promotion of Chinese Education (UKAPCE) are the two organisations<sup>3</sup> which support Chinese schools and provide teacher training (Thorpe, 2011).

Like those in the UK, heritage language teachers in the US develop a weak sense of professional identity because they view teaching Chinese as 'secondary' and 'voluntary' (Wu, Palmer & Field, 2011). Feuerverger (1997) points out the lack of certification constrains teachers' feelings of being professional. Opportunities to pursue professional training and a teacher certificate might enable teachers to feel empowered in teaching (Liu, 2006).

Mau et al. (2009) point out training of teachers is costly and hard to address. Routes to qualified teacher status are only for Mandarin; limited systematic professional training exists for Cantonese teachers (Mau, 2007). In the 2010s this situation has been improved when the UKFCS collaborated with Goldsmiths, University of London to organise a one-year 'Certificate in the Teaching of Community Languages' course to bring Chinese teaching to a certified status.

Hancock (2011b, 2011c, 2012) observes that the language provision and policy in Scotland operate in an ad hoc fashion, and the dominant discourses reflect mainly the interests of English monolingualism. Scotland's Our Languages Project's Toolkit for Partnership outlines how complementary school teaching can be enhanced by cooperating with mainstream schools through joint training and mutual paired observations of teaching (Hancock, 2011a). But suggestions have little to do with

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<sup>3</sup> Founded in 1994 and 1993 respectively, UKFCS and UKAPCE aim to raise standard, enhance teaching, and promote Chinese education and culture. The UKFCS, with which Cantonese schools often link, publishes Chinese textbooks and organises annual training conference. The UKAPCE works closely with Mandarin schools, organising refresher courses and summer camps in China to improve teaching quality.

Chinese schools since they lack an agenda to be implemented and partnership between mainstream and the complementary sector remain unequal (Francis et al., 2008).

In addition to the community they are in, teachers' interaction with the various stakeholders of Chinese schools and the Cantonese or Mandarin they teach also shape their understanding of teaching and learning, to which we now turn.

#### **2.1.4 Stakeholders of Chinese schools and challenges to teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning**

*Experience is an internal relationship between the person and the world.*

Marton and Booth (1997, p.208)

**Headteachers.** There is a saying that '*parents pay, parents govern and parents teach*' in Chinese schools (Li Wei & Wu, 2009). Thorpe (2011) interviewed headteachers to see how they perceived their roles and how well they felt equipped to do their job. Findings indicate some headteachers first associated with the schools through their children's Chinese learning. Some took up the post when the original heads left schools to return to their homeland. While some are current or former teachers, many are professionals who only have administrative but not teaching experience. Headteachers look after teacher recruitment, regulations and day-to-day administration of the school. They perceive their roles as handling problems, dealing with parents, and working with communities/organisations outside school.

**Parents.** Chinese parents worldwide know the benefit of Chinese learning in facilitating their children's cultural identity and home communication (Li, 2003). Studies indicate parents' active support (Chao & Sue, 1996; Wu, Palmer & Field, 2011) and home language use (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013, 2014; Li & Duff, 2014) are crucial in children's effective Chinese learning. Many parents are also teachers in their children's Chinese schools. Grandparents are also a key resource in maintaining and developing children's knowledge of heritage and culture (Kenner, Ruby, Jessel, Gregory & Arju, 2007). As pointed out by Fishman (2001) regarding the role of family in minority language maintenance, Cantonese has long been passed on through intergenerational transmission in the home.

**Teachers.** While most Mandarin teachers are university students, academics or professionals, Cantonese teachers are mostly local residents in the catering trade, university students or professionals from HK. Teachers are non-paid volunteers or just paid a travel allowance (Mau, 2007). The lack of teaching time, motivation of pupils (and their parents), and a shared understanding of learners' diverse needs in Chinese learning are the key challenges for teachers (Tinsley & Board, 2014).

Tinsley and Board (2014) point out there is a rich supply of UK-based Chinese native-speakers teaching in Chinese schools. Some are also qualified teachers in China. The advantages of these UK-based teachers of Chinese background are their "ability to understand and connect with UK children and teenagers, as well as their permanence and immediate availability" (p.83).

In general they are competent in their work (Mau et al., 2009). Their teaching methods may be traditional but they know the importance of learner motivation. As they also need to deal with hyperactivity and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHA) in pupils, training is necessary to enhance their work. Despite great efforts they devote to teaching their pupils, there is scepticism of their teaching quality since they are mostly untrained (Mau, 2007).

**Learners.** Due to their diverse backgrounds, proficiency levels and attachment to Chinese culture, ethnic Chinese learners are hard to motivate and their learning needs hard to be addressed (Li & Duff, 2014). Children of Chinese heritage in Scotland are the most likely to attend complementary schools (McPake, 2004). They are high-achievers outperforming other ethnic groups and even their Scottish schoolmates in exams (Hancock, 2014). Many attend Chinese classes for family reasons and they value meeting other youngsters of Chinese descent (Tinsley & Board, 2014). They are aware of their multilingual identity to be 'Chinese', 'English', 'Chinese-English' or 'English-Chinese' in different situations (Creese, Wu & Li Wei, 2007).

Learners are active, skilful but not necessarily obedient in Chinese schools since they can challenge authority and use their bilingual proficiency to exercise influence in class (Li Wei & Wu, 2009). In general primary-age children are more eager to learn Chinese than older ones, and girls have greater *integrative* or *instrumental motivation* in learning than boys, who stop learning when they become busy with schoolwork and other activities (Chan, 2014; Sung & Padilla, 1998; Taylor, 1987).

However, ethnic Chinese children are not alone in gradually losing motivation for Chinese learning. High school pupils in England “lose interest and give up” if they find Chinese hard to learn (Tinsley & Board, 2014:91). Doughty and McLachlan (2007) also point out that Scottish pupils lose confidence and interest when tackling challenging Mandarin tasks (Section 1.1.4).

**Disparities between teachers and learners.** Li and Juffermans (2014:112) note Chinese teachers may bring with them a teaching style and a set of “*language ideological assumptions*” which can be at odds with those of their pupils. Some personal, linguistic, educational and cultural differences between teachers and pupils can make mutual understanding difficult (Francis et al., 2008; Li, Juffermans, Kroon & Blommaert, 2012; Li Wei, 2011; Li Wei & Zhu, 2014; Wang, 2011).

Personally, they have little in common in terms of life experiences. While most pupils were UK born and schooled, teachers were educated in China or HK which share common Confucius values. As pupils are away from their motherland and have weak connection with Chinese culture, they may consider themselves British, British-Chinese or Scottish-Chinese and associate more with British culture and ways of life.

Linguistically, while teachers are Chinese native-speakers, their pupils speak various forms of Scottish English in school, with their pals out-of-school and possibly at home. They probably have to face the challenge of bridging the gap between their own Scottish English and the more standard form of English that they encounter in textbooks, and at Chinese school they face with the challenges of bridging the gap between the spoken and written forms of Cantonese/Mandarin they are learning. Their different linguistic preferences and proficiency can weaken their learning incentive and dilute teachers’ efforts (Li Wei & Wu, 2010).

Educationally, while teachers emphasise good learning efforts, pupils may view Chinese as a minor subject and consider the workload as too demanding (Li, Juffermans, Kroon & Blommaert, 2012). Some consider Chinese schools as a place to meet friends rather than for serious Chinese learning (Li Wei & Zhu, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2014). Wang (2011) found many teachers were frustrated by pupils’ lack of commitment in learning Chinese. While pupils may be interested in learning Chinese expressions for communication, teachers are more concerned with their learning of

Chinese culture. They wish pupils to become ‘proper Chinese’ through literacy learning (Francis et al., 2008; Li Wei & Zhu, 2014).

### **2.1.5 The Cantonese and Mandarin language taught and learned**

Learning Cantonese and Mandarin in Chinese schools is mainly about learning literacy in reading and writing (Li Wei, 2007). Chinese has very unusual features in its orthographic, phonological, lexical, and syntactic structures (Tse & Cheung, 2010), which is extremely difficult to learn as a second language. It consists of a body of mutually unintelligible dialects such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Wu, Xiang, Hakka, Gan and Min (Zhang, 2013). Dialects are unified by a writing system *zhongwen* (中文). The unification dates back to Qin Shi Huang (260–210 BC), the first emperor who initiated nation-wide reforms including the writing system (Li & Juffermans, 2014).

As the notion of ‘Chineseness’ associated with the written language began to take shape since then, and continued to exercise its influence until today, Chinese literacy and tradition tend to weigh heavily on Chinese people and their offspring.

**Mandarin and Cantonese.** Mandarin (Pǔtōnghuà) is based on the Beijing dialect and spoken by over 960 million people in China. It is the official language of China and Taiwan and one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Cantonese, the prestige dialect of Yue, is spoken by 70 million people in HK, Macau, southern China and immigrant communities worldwide. Speaking Cantonese is part of the cultural identity for native-speakers across southern China, HK and overseas. HK movies, TV and Cantopop have big appeal in China and south-east Asia.

**Traditional and simplified scripts.** Zhongwen (中文) is divided into *traditional* and *simplified* scripts. Traditional scripts are used in HK, Taiwan and Macau. Mandarin and Cantonese shared the same scripts before the simplification of written Chinese introduced by the China government to facilitate literacy acquisition. It was done by simplifying the structure, reducing the strokes of traditional scripts and adopting existing cursive forms. It started first with 515 simplified characters in 1956 and then 2236 simplified ones in 1964 (Zhang, 2013:566-567). Characters like 龍 (dragon) changed to 龙 and 髮 (hair) to 发 indicate the simplified form is much easier to write.

Mandarin promotion continues to be prominent in China's national identity and unity (Zhang, 2013). However, the difference in scripts has led to discrepancies in people's linguistic identity. Some regard the simplified scripts have lost the aesthetic features of the original characters (Wong, 1992). There are discussions on restoring some simplified characters back to the traditional to retain semantic meanings. Common examples are: in the traditional script 親愛 (dear), the character 親 means 'closeness', and 愛 'love'. In the simplified version 亲爱, the radical 見 (see) in 親 (closeness) and the radical 心 (heart) in 愛 (love) are gone. Vital meanings are taken away, leaving closeness (亲) without seeing (見) and love (愛) without a heart (心).

**Tones and pronunciation.** Tones in English often express emphasis or emotion, but lexical tones in Chinese serve to distinguish semantic meanings. Chinese has a large number of homophones which are only distinguishable by tones (Tse & Cheung, 2010) Mandarin has four<sup>4</sup>, and Cantonese nine tones<sup>5</sup> in which six are frequently used which make them difficult for Westerners (Orton, 2008; Tsai, 2011). You can form an interesting sentence with three of these four Mandarin tonal variants, namely, 'mā mà mǎ' meaning 'mother scolds the horse', which can only be understood if spoken in the correct tones. The nuances in Cantonese tones make it near impossible for non-natives to learn.

Mandarin and Cantonese are mutually unintelligible due to their pronunciation and grammatical differences. For instance, 'I like him' is 我喜歡他 (wo xi huan ta) in Mandarin, but 我中意佢 (ngo zung ji heoi) in Cantonese. Sentences in Mandarin can generally be written down in the way they are spoken, but many colloquial Cantonese words have no corresponding written scripts to match with. This leads people to consider Mandarin as more standard (Li Wei & Zhu, 2014).

In brief, due to the differences in pronunciation, tones, scripts, colloquialism and idioms (Kirkpatrick, 1995; Taylor, 1987; Wong, 1992), Cantonese and Mandarin can be seen as two languages. That Cantonese as L2 is much more difficult to learn than

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<sup>4</sup> In Mandarin the *high* tone *Mā* means 'mother'; the *rising* tone *Má* means 'linen'; the *falling and rising* tone *Mǎ* means 'horse'; and the *falling* tone *Mà* means 'scold'.

<sup>5</sup> In Cantonese the six main tones are the high level, high rising, mid level, low level, low rising, and low falling.

Mandarin as L2 could influence Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' conceptions towards Chinese teaching and learning.

### 2.1.6 Challenges for non-natives to learn Chinese and ethnic Chinese to learn Cantonese

**Challenges for English speakers to learn Chinese.** The nature of reading in Chinese is often oversimplified in the literature in the Western world (Hancock, 2006b). Chinese is a 'meaning-based' language (Tinsley & Board, 2014:70). It has no inflectional morphology, case or gender marking. Chinese and English are not cognate in scripts and tones. While English is alphabetic with symbols representing individual sounds, Chinese has no such hints in pronunciation. It differs from English in word order in sentence formation. It has no declensions in terms of plurals, nouns, adjectives and personal pronouns, and often lacks definite or indefinite articles (Taylor, 1987; Wong, 1992).

Unlike English, which may have Latin or Greek roots to help with comprehension, Chinese characters have to be memorised individually. They consist of separate horizontal, vertical and slanting strokes and blending hooks. Learners need to memorise individual morphemes to make a multi-syllable word, for instance, 明天 (tomorrow) = 明 (next) + 天 (day). Most characters are compound ones consisting of a *semantic radical* imparting meaning and a *phonetic radical* giving a clue to the sound<sup>6</sup>.

With more than 200 radicals, thousands of stems and inconsistent phonetic radicals due to dialectic variations and changes over time, characters are extremely hard to learn. A character can have multiple meanings. As one needs to master over 2500 characters to be literate enough to read an average newspaper article (Tse, Marton, Ki & Loh, 2010), it is daunting even for the most dedicated learners. Since great effort and attention to detail is vital to combine radicals into correct characters, this gives the impression that learning Chinese requires rote-learning. This could cause problems in learning and affect teachers' practice in teaching Cantonese and Mandarin.

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, 枯 (*wither*) is made up of the semantic radical 木 signalling *wood* and the phonetic radical (also the stem here) signalling the sound 古.

**Difficulties of ethnic Chinese children in learning Cantonese.** Research into “the interfaces between morphology, syntax and semantics in the acquisition of Chinese reveals that some features ... which are salient of learning Chinese, are likely to cause consistent difficulties to learners” (Tinsley & Board, 2014:70). Children of HK Cantonese background are likely to encounter more problems in Chinese learning than those from a China Mandarin background. First, they are likely to be learning more complicated traditional characters. Second, they face more challenges in character-recognition, reading and writing since Cantonese is less aligned in grammar and vocabulary than Mandarin. The lack of *pinyin* in Cantonese to bridge pronunciation, word-recognition and meaning-making of traditional scripts renders Cantonese learning difficult, while Mandarin-speaking children have a smaller gap to bridge with the help of pinyin in learning spoken Mandarin and written simplified scripts.

In sum, the nature of Chinese script has a strong influence on approaches to teaching and learning literacy (Hancock, 2006b). This partly explains why children tend to resist learning Cantonese as L2. As the disparate nature of Cantonese and Mandarin poses different problems for their teachers, there could be variations in the conceptions of teaching and learning between the two groups of teachers.

### **2.1.7 Challenges in Chinese teaching and learning in schools**

**Teaching Chinese literacy.** Two decades ago, Gregory (1993) pointed out a possible disparity between teachers’ approaches to literacy learning in weekend Chinese schools and British schools. Chinese teachers were described as emphasising to pupils details in character-writing and recitation, with a lack of interaction among pupils in class. Today Chinese teaching tends to be partially didactic due to insufficient time, resources and the nature of the language (Francis et al., 2008). Teachers demonstrate pronunciation, explain usages, and help with unfamiliar characters. They use direct instructional methods to introduce texts, guide pupils to write characters and make sentences with new words. They are in line with Chinese teaching in the US where direct questions and correct language modelling are used (Chan, 2014). Word games, tongue-twisters, discussions and group work are employed to make lesson fun (Francis et al., 2008; Hancock, 2011a).

Hancock (2011a) points out literacy activities in Scotland classroom are shaped by teachers' own educational experiences and pupils' participation. While teachers stimulate their interest, pupils draw on their bilingual/biliterate resources to help with learning. Contrary to the view that Chinese teaching is strict, Mau (2007) notes that classroom atmosphere is quite relaxed and not controlled. Pupils are often given much freedom to explore their learner identity.

**Medium of instruction.** Chinese is the main language in teaching and learning, supplemented by English to enhance understanding (Mau et al., 2009). Code-switching is viewed as a resource in learning among bi/multilingual pupils (Canagarajah, 2011; Hancock, 2014; Li Wei, 2013; Li Wei & Wu, 2009; Mau et al., 2009). Hancock (2014) considers it a natural phenomenon and an integral part of Scottish-Chinese children's identity formation. They switch codes to bridge Chinese and English language systems in Chinese learning and use English and phonics to help with memorisation and pronunciation. Drawing on the critical sociolinguistics of globalisation, Hornberger and Link (2012) argue that translanguaging in classrooms is a necessary and desirable educational practice.

Creese and Blackledge (2010) report bilingual pedagogic practices in Gujarati and Chinese schools. The target language-only approach in teaching and learning does not represent the bi/multilingual realities of many young learners (Blackledge & Creese, 2010). Li Wei and Wu (2009) call for teachers to acknowledge pupils' bilingual identity and adopt code-switching as a resource to negotiate meanings to make Chinese easier to learn.

**Co-learning.** There are instances in which pupils learn Chinese from their teachers and teachers learn knowledge from their pupils. According to Li Wei (2014), co-learning is a process in which teachers and pupils adapt to each other's behaviour to produce desirable shared results. It could challenge the unequal power relation between the two parties and allow them to draw on their multilingual resources in teaching and knowledge construction. Li Wei (2014) opines co-learning enables teachers to become facilitators, scaffolders and enhancers of pupils' learning when they guide pupils' learning processes and remind them to reflect on what is learned. The process also enables pupils to become empowered explorers in knowledge construction which is significant to their lives.

This view is in tune with Hancock's (2011a, 2014) observation that Scottish Chinese school teachers often put aside the textbook and integrate literacy-related group activities to stimulate pupils' interest. Pupils use methods like peer-group interaction from their day school to scaffold Chinese learning.

In L2 learning, learners often associate themselves with people across time and space. Anderson (1991:6) coined the term '*imagined*' community to refer to people one never knows, meets or even hears of but yet in one's mind they interact like in a community. Norton (2000, 2001, 2014) uses the term *investment* to make a connection between learners' desire to learn a language. She argues that a lack of awareness of learners' *imagined* communities and identities could weaken a teacher's ability to arrange activities in which learners can invest in learning.

That said, a meaningful question is: Do Chinese teachers in their conceptions also attach importance to the use of modern technologies to enhance learning and to help them imagine the types of community they could *invest* in their Chinese learning?

**Teaching Chinese culture.** Geertz (1973) considers culture as the sets of meaning with which human beings interpret their experience and guide their actions. Biggs and Moore (1993) define it as "the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings which is transmitted from one generation to another" (p.117). Scollon and Scollon (1995) refer culture as "customs, worldview, language, kinship system ... and other taken-for-granted day-to-day practices of a people which set that group apart as a distinctive group" (p.126). In short, culture is about beliefs, attitudes, values and social rules that may influence how people think and act.

Chinese literacy learning links closely to transmission and maintenance of culture. Francis et al. (2009) assert that Chinese schools function as institutional providers of a particular version of Chinese identity and culture. Teachers tend to see Chinese culture as fixed, replicable and beneficial (Francis et al., 2008:11). Li Wei and Zhu (2014) point out textbooks are full of folktales with moral messages to socialise learners. This echoes Curdt-Christiansen's (2006, 2008) research where she notes the complex links between Chinese language, literacy and identity, and how teachers combine teaching with cultural socialisation like perseverance, filial piety and obedience.

However, a mismatch can arise if teachers emphasise the learning of cultural values, whereas pupils are more interested in Chinese pop and youth culture (Li Wei & Wu, 2009). Li and Juffermans (2014) point out Chinese culture is not a fixed object, but rather is dynamic, changing and contested in transformation. Given that culture has been part of Chinese teaching overseas for a long time, teachers need to reflect on their assumptions about culture, to accept diversity and avoid stereotyping in their teaching (Francis et al., 2008).

There has been considerable interest in a dimension that ranges from ‘*essentialism*’ to ‘*cosmopolitanism*’ in the literature on culture. According to Holliday (2011), “essentialism presents people’s individual behavior as entirely defined and constrained by the cultures in which they live so that the stereotype becomes the essence of who they are” (p.4). By contrast, a non-essentialist or cosmopolitan view of culture is that culture works like “a social force which is evident where it is significant; complex, with difficult to pin down characteristics; can relate to any type of size of group for any period of time and can be characterised by a discourse as much as by a language; can flow, change, intermingle, cut across and through each other, regardless of national frontiers, and have blurred boundaries” (p.5).

In sum, the researcher needs to bear in mind the distinction between ‘essentialism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ in trying to make sense of Chinese teachers’ teaching and learning conceptions when reflecting on the interview data. For instance, do they convey a sense of ‘Chineseness’ in largely essentialist or cosmopolitan terms, or both, or in another form?

### **2.1.8 Chinese schools and their teachers’ conceptions of teaching and learning**

*The economic rise of mainland China, whose official language is Mandarin... is pushing Cantonese off the streets and out of the academy... A decade ago, dignitaries at Chinese-new-year festivities gave speeches in Cantonese; today they speak Mandarin.*

The Economist (15 August 2015)

Li Wei and Zhu (2014:117) point out Chinese schools are “an interesting, complex and forever changing context where teaching and learning of Chinese language, especially literacy is intertwined with the teaching and learning of Chinese

cultural values and ideologies.” With good efforts of teachers, Chinese teaching and learning today is very different from what Gregory (1993:58) previously described - teachers tell children what they should do; children keep quiet, learn by recitation, receive homework, practise choral repetition and have no choice of activity.

Despite Cantonese schools being praised by pupils and parents as enhancing pupils’ learning confidence and providing “a high-quality education experience from extremely limited resources” (Francis et al., 2008:5), challenges lie ahead of them in the globalised world. Li Wei (2007) points out a ‘three generational language shift’ has taken place in Cantonese community. While the older generation has remained monolingual, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation has Cantonese as a first language but use English in various contexts. English has become the main language of the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation may speak some Chinese at home, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation tend not to speak it in daily life. This situation adds burden on Cantonese teaching and learning in schools.

Until the 2000s Cantonese was widely taught at the UK since immigrants mostly came from HK. However, Mandarin is being promoted as the new lingua franca (Li Wei, 2011; Mau et.al, 2009; Li Wei & Zhu, 2014) and now many Cantonese parents encourage their children to learn Mandarin rather than Cantonese (Hancock, 2006a, 2014; Wong, 1992).

The trend is evident in Scotland. In 2014-15, a Chinese school in Glasgow with over 900 pupils offered 33 Mandarin classes (levels 1 to 10) for Scottish-Chinese children when compared to just 10 Cantonese classes (one class per level 1-10). The 33 Mandarin classes included six level 1 classes, five level 1/2 classes, five level 2 classes and three classes at level 3.<sup>7</sup>

Francis et al. (2008) assert that the future of Cantonese schools depends on the teaching quality and the admission of children of the second and succeeding generations. In view of the current overwhelming 2<sup>nd</sup> but under-represented 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Chinese children, a bright future for Cantonese schools is in question. The changing linguistic and socio-cultural situations of the two types of schools would have influence on Cantonese teachers’ teaching and learning conceptions.

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<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from [http://glasgowchineseschool.org/staff\\_s.html](http://glasgowchineseschool.org/staff_s.html) on 30th May 2015.

## 2.2 Confucianism and cultures of learning

*Men, one and all, in infancy are virtuous at heart.  
Their natures are much the same, the practice wide apart.  
Without instruction's aid, our instant grew less pure.  
By aiming at thoroughness only can teaching ensure.*  
...  
*To feed the body, not the mind – fathers, on you to blame!  
Instruction without severity, the idle teacher's shame.  
If a child does not learn, this is not as it should be.  
How, with a youth of idleness, can age escape the blight?*  
...  
*Diligence has its reward; play has no gain.  
Be on your guard, and put forth your strength.*

The Three-Character Classic (cited from Lee, 1996, p.26)

Education in China is based on Confucian principles even though people may not be aware of it (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, 2008, 2011). The term 'Confucian' refers to the traditional attitudes and practices derived from the teachings of Confucius (551-479 BC) and his followers. As this classic poem depicts, high value is placed on education and its role in learners' moral development. Among them are: everyone is educable, human nature is good, learning is a moral duty, efforts can balance the lack of talent, progress can be achieved through hard work, and parents and teachers have an inescapable responsibility in educating the young.

### 2.2.1 Queries on stereotyping Confucianism in education

Hu (2002) summarises the essence of education as: first, a process to accumulate knowledge which brings social recognition, material rewards and upward social mobility, and second, a way to cultivate the soul, bring inner satisfaction and develop moral qualities like loyalty, fidelity, modesty and filial piety to relate well with others in the society. Other concepts include individual perfectibility: innate ability does not account for educational success/failure, just like a Chinese saying goes, 'diligence can compensate for stupidity'.

Though varied and complex, Confucian education tradition has become simplified into a few stereotypes: the importance of examinations, the emphasis on rote-learn and memorisation, and an authoritarian-teacher-and-obedient-student type of relationship (Biggs, 1996a; Lee, 1996; Watkins, 2000; Watkins & Biggs, 2001a).

Kennedy (2002) highlights some ‘Confucian confusions’. First, Confucius emphasises individuality in learning. For instance, he said, “in ancient times, men learned with a view to their own improvement” (The Analects, 14:25). Focusing on one’s ‘own improvement’ through learning implies self-cultivation is an active and independent process (Lee, 1996). Second, Confucian tradition stresses a deep approach to learning (Biggs, 1991). For instance, “seeking knowledge without thinking is labour lost; thinking without seeking knowledge is perilous” (The Analects, 2:15).

Cheng (2000) points out the term ‘knowledge’, ‘*xue wen*’ (學問) in Chinese is made up of two characters - ‘*xue*’ (學) means *to learn* and ‘*wen*’ (問) means *to ask* - implying that asking, enquiring or questioning is central to the quest for knowledge. Given that understanding, memorising, thinking, reflecting and questioning are basic components of learning, there are queries on whether memorisation is equivalent to rote-learning (Starr, 2012; Stigler & Stevenson, 1991).

Ho (2001) raises questions about authoritarian-obedient types of teacher-student relationship. She said this needs to be seen in the light of how teachers discipline students and the mutual responsibilities and norms between them, e.g., whether there is any expectation for conformity, any harsh measures in discipline, or guidance based on moral principles.

Li (2001, 2002, 2003) pinpoints the cultural value of ‘*hao-xue-xin*’ (好學心, heart and mind for wanting to learn) in Chinese learners, with which large classes in China may not be a barrier to quality learning, since apart from teacher quality, pupils’ efforts are essential in the process. Thus, motivation may not be as big an issue in learning as among Western students who are raised to be assertive, curious and independent, and yet may need extrinsic motivation when doing uninteresting school tasks. On the contrary, Chinese learners readily climb the academic mountain because it is there and they are expected to do so (Biggs, 1996a; Hess & Azuma, 1991).

### 2.2.2 Differences between Chinese and Western culture of learning

Past studies which include psychological research (Bond, 1991, 1996), socialisation and self-concept development (Biggs, 1996b; Lau, 1996), as well as conceptions and approaches in learning (Biggs, 1987, 1994; Lee, 1996; Watkins & Biggs, 1996) have revealed distinctive features of how Chinese people think, study and learn. The phenomenon is said to be associated with Chinese culture of learning, sometimes referred to as *vernacular Confucianism* which prescribes the attitudes of learners and the society in general (Starr, 2012) as interpreted by ordinary Chinese today (Watkins & Biggs, 2001a).

Jin and Cortazzi (2006:9) state that a culture of learning “frames what teachers and students expect to happen in classrooms and how participants interpret the format of classroom instruction, the language of teaching and learning, and how interaction should be accomplished as part of the social construction of an educational discourse system”. Though the term is used to describe certain cultural aspects which hinder or facilitate English language teaching and intercultural understanding (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996), ‘culture of learning’ is also a useful concept in understanding Chinese teachers’ thinking and behaviour in the UK Chinese classrooms.

In the 1990s Western educators began to explore culture of learning after many Chinese students travelled abroad to study and Western teachers went to China to teach English using the communicative approach. Chinese students overseas were observed to be passive learners, inactive in class, unwilling to engage in debates, and reluctant to join in group activities or present arguments in written assessments (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991).

Western educators in China found the teaching approaches Chinese teachers used in class were very different from the West. Things like student-centred learning, peer-learning and teachers as facilitators in learning were largely not seen. Instead they saw large classes, teacher-centred whole-class direct teaching, apparent rote-learning and students’ lack of acceptance of communicative teaching methods not only in China but also in countries of Confucian heritage culture (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998b).

In addition, students of British and of Chinese culture have different perception of good teachers. Jin and Cortazzi (1998a) found that both groups of students share common views such as good teachers use effective methods to teach, make clear

explanations, arouse students' interest, and help pupils study independently. While British students see good teachers as capable of organising activities and controlling student discipline, Chinese students consider good teachers as knowledgeable, good moral examples and having answers to students' questions.

Following this line of thought, we may argue that in teaching Chinese to Scottish-Chinese youngsters Chinese teachers may tend to interpret and evaluate pupils' behaviour and learning practices from a Chinese cultural framework, while their Scottish-Chinese pupils are likely to view their Chinese teachers' teaching and teacher-pupil interactions from a British/Scottish cultural perspective. This possible mismatch should warrant more attention.

### **2.2.3 Literacy, social relationships and the self**

**Literacy.** As aforementioned, learning Cantonese or Mandarin in Chinese schools is mainly about literacy learning. Literacy in Chinese is the symbol of cultural heritage and an identity which links directly to traditional value transmission (Hancock, 2006a; Li Wei, 2007; Li Wei & Wu, 2010). Chinese writing is the defining core of culture (Scollon, & Scollon, 1995) and the unifying bond of diverse groups in China, south-east Asia and Chinese communities overseas.

Hancock (2006a) points out the uniqueness of Chinese orthography is a symbol of community identity for UK Chinese immigrants. The ability to read for knowledge, write coherently and understand texts is the key to gain access to its cultural heritage (Taylor, 1987). Kam (2008) points out in the Chinese term *wenhua* 文化 (culture), *wen* (文) means 'writing' and *hua* (化) signals a 'process of change', making *wenhua* (culture) as "*a process of transformation by wen, or writing*" (p.14). In China a person who 'has culture' also means one 'can write' through the education received.

**Social relationships.** Scollon and Scollon (1995) point out the emphasis on hierarchical social relationship in China takes place in an early age. People show respect to those above and learn to guide those who come after. Yu (1996) states that Confucianism is noted for *Wu Lun*, literally the *five* cardinal relationships, namely, the relations between ruler and minister, father and son, elder and younger brother, husband and wife, and between friends. It is a humanistic philosophy centred around *ren* (benevolence), *yi*

(righteousness), and *li* (ritual propriety). *Wu Lun* outlines the expectations and obligations of the parties concerned and helps maintain harmony within society. Filial piety is a crucial value relating to one's father, elders and ancestors. To respect and support the old and care for the young is the duty of a person (Yu, 1996).

**The self.** Confucius's best-known follower Mencius (372-289 BC) states that the *self*, the *family* and the *nation* are interrelated in Confucian thoughts (Xu, 2011). People's self-improvement and cultivation contributes to the well-being of the family and the harmony of the society and the nation. 'Everyone' (大家) in Chinese is literally 'big' (大) 'family' (家); 'nation' (國家) is literally 'nation' (國) and 'family' (家).

Lau (1996) notes that in traditional Confucian thinking the *self* or identity is collectivistic, defined within the social context. The *self* of an individual comes from relations with others. There are rules for behaviour which people are not expected to go beyond. A distinction is made between 'big me' and 'small me', in which 'big me' is put before 'small me'. Selflessness is regarded as a virtue and self-sacrifice is expected to be made for the greater good such as for the family, the society and the nation. Along this line of thought, while Confucianism apparently has a concept of *self* defined in terms of the hierarchy of relationships, where the *self* is always conceived as part of the family or the society (Scollon & Scollon, 1995), there can be no *self* since it is more a concept of 'we' rather than 'I'.

As with the identity of overseas Chinese, Lau (1996) suggests that they may manifest more of a feeling of 'Chineseness' than the Chinese in local Chinese communities, because the greater the contrast one perceives between oneself and the environment, the greater is the tendency for one to find ways to reassure one's identity. As the sense of *self* is based on how others (e.g., parents and teachers) see oneself, how people see themselves may depend on how they think others see them.

British-Chinese youngsters attending Chinese schools often see fluency in Chinese language as inevitably tied up with identity. While many people view those who cannot speak the language as not 'properly Chinese' (Francis et al., 2008:5), those ethnic Chinese youngsters not able to speak Chinese language do not refrain from identifying themselves as Chinese, as they can draw on a range of Chinese cultural aspects such as food, movies, pop culture and other connection to position themselves as totally or partially 'Chinese'. This diverse understanding of 'Chineseness' is in

contrast to some commonly conceived essential features of Chinese identity (Francis et al., 2014).

#### **2.2.4 Understanding of teaching and learning as reflected in metaphors**

*“If a picture is worth 1,000 words, a metaphor is worth 1,000 pictures”. It is because a metaphor provides a conceptual framework to think about things rather than just give a static image.*

Shuell (1990, p.102)

Both Chinese and Western research use metaphors to understand people’s views on teaching and learning. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors provide people with ways to understand experiences because they can highlight and make coherent what people have in common with others. A major part of our self-understanding is “the search for appropriate metaphors that make sense of our lives” (p.233) and make coherent our own past and our present activities. Alger (2009) argues that studying teachers’ use of metaphors is a good way to explore their teaching and learning conceptions, since metaphors affect how people think within a shared culture.

A substantial amount of research uses metaphors to explore the teaching and learning conceptions of pre-service (Gurney, 1995; Saban, 2010; Saban, Kocbeker & Saban, 2007) and in-service teachers (Alger, 2009; Martinez, Sauleda & Huber, 2001; Shuell, 1990; Tobin, 1990). Research also explores how metaphors can be used to conceptualise teaching, learning and reflection (Marshall, 1990), to improve teaching (Tobin & Tippins, 1996) and to capture the ways teachers perceive their professional identities (Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011).

**Chinese metaphors about teaching and learning.** Metaphors have long been used in China to describe education, teaching and learning. They represent Chinese conceptions of learning which in turn represent what it is to be Chinese (Jin & Cortazzi, 2008). They carry cultural characteristics such as ideological and philosophical thinking, social values and people’s understanding of their world.

Rooted in a Confucius tradition, metaphors, analogies, proverbs or idioms are value-laden. Education is consistently portrayed as a precious thing. Examples below

depict what learning and teaching is like in China (Jin & Cortazzi, 2008:190-193): *'Live to old age, learn to old age'*, *'There is no stopping place for learning'* to describe the learning journey. *'If you make enough effort, you can grind an iron rod into a needle'*, *'Tempering for a hundred time makes steel'*, and *'The master leads one to the door, but attainment depends on the learner's own effort'* are used to describe effortful learning.

*'One day teacher whole life father'*, *'A strict teacher produces talented pupils'*, and *'Three people in a group, one must be my teacher'* are used to portray teacher-pupil relationship. In short, learning is a long-term activity which demands efforts and persistence and involves teacher-learner cooperation to reach highly valued goals (Cortazzi, Jin & Wang, 2009).

Official metaphors for teachers in different periods of Chinese national development can reveal the teacher images as imposed by the communist authority. Cortazzi, Jin and Wang (2009) note that the influence of Confucian heritage in education has had its ups and downs since 1949, including the anti-Confucius campaign of the Cultural Revolution, which brought massive disruption to the society.

In the period of reconstruction (1949-1957) teachers were *gardeners* and *brain-power labourers*. In the First Five Year Plan (1953-1957) they were *people's heroes* and *engineers of the soul*. During the Great Leap Forward (1958-1959) they were *obstacles* and *common labourers*. In the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) they were *freaks* and *monsters*. Nowadays they are the *professionals* and *cultivators of talents* in the millennium economic development.

**Metaphors for a good teacher in different cultures.** In a study involving university students from China, HK, Japan, Lebanon and Turkey on their ideas of a good teacher (Cortazzi, Jin & Wang, 2009), findings indicate a dominance of *friend* and *parent* metaphors from students of all five places. Others include the *guide* metaphor found in China, HK, Lebanon and Turkey, the *model* metaphor found in China, Japan, Lebanon and Turkey, and the *source of knowledge* metaphor in China, Japan, Lebanon and Turkey.

More importantly, while the *parent* and *friend* metaphors for a good teacher are common elsewhere and are strong in places with a Confucius tradition like China, HK and Japan, the *parent* and *friend* metaphors are not found among British teachers in an earlier study (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). British teachers tend to see themselves as *guides*

but not as *parents*, are *friendly* but not as *friends* to students; they are *facilitators* of learning but do not regard themselves as *models* or *sources of knowledge*. This resonates with Alger's (2009) assertion that although some metaphors about teaching and learning are common and universal, others are culture-specific.

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) state that different cultural frames can lead to different cross-cultural interpretations. They reason that British teachers are working within a different culture of learning, expecting pupils to be independent who come to ask for help when in need. However, there could be a mismatch between British teachers and Chinese students from a culture of learning where mutual responsibility and reciprocal relation are stressed and students see a good teacher as *a friend* or *a parent* who is sensitive and active in offering help.

In Cortazzi, Jin and Wang's (2009) study, variations are also found among China and Hong Kong students. The two share in common the *parent*, *friend*, *guide* and *gardener* metaphors. However, while students from China view good teachers as a *model* and *a source of knowledge*, HK students view them as *advisor*, *lighthouse*, *sibling*, *superman* and *the sun*. HK students appear to possess a wider and richer image of a good teacher when compared with their counterparts in China.

### **2.2.5 Cantonese and Mandarin teachers of Chinese culture of learning**

Though both influenced by Confucian traditions, apart from personal and educational factors, there are disparities between Cantonese and Mandarin teachers due to political and socio-cultural differences in their respective homelands. While both HK and Taiwan are currently governed to some extent on democratic principles, China is governed on different standards. A new set of values have been developed in HK and Mainland China respectively, which may influence the teaching and learning conceptions of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers.

**Cantonese teachers from Hong Kong.** Literally 'Fragrant Harbour', HK is a world leading international financial centre with over 7 million inhabitants of which 95 percent are ethnic Chinese (Zhang, 2013). Its official name after 1997 is Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China. Due to its Chinese cultural root and the legacy of British colonial rule (1842-1997), HK is a place

where ‘East meets West’. Life in HK has long been a blending of Chinese collectivism and Western individualism (Bond, 1996). ‘Chinese language’ in HK refers to the use of Cantonese as the spoken and the traditional scripts as the written form.

There is a strong British influence on education, identity and thinking of HK people (Watkins & Biggs, 2001a). According to Wong (2002), faced with the growing patriotism in HK after World War II, the colonial government in 1950s set out to de-nationalise local Chinese culture by removing nationalistic and anti-imperialist themes from school curriculum to foster stability and to consolidate its rule. To de-locate nationalistic bias, the Chinese Studies curriculum (Chinese language, literature and history) of HK schools was re-focused with an aim to develop pupils’ abilities to express in their native-tongue Cantonese, and to understand and appreciate Chinese philosophy, literature and traditions.

The education policy enables pupils to know and appreciate China’s rich cultural heritage without being emotionally associated with it (Wong, 2002). It not only does not aim at stripping pupils off their Chinese identity, but rather empowering them to become ‘better Chinese’. Along with these curriculum changes, the West is redefined as an area for academic interest and a way for HK pupils to deepen their self-understanding. The curriculum was a means to cultivate harmonious East-West relation and develop in pupils a more liberal and balanced international outlook on life.

Despite changes in curriculum and Chinese culture being influenced by colonial rule, there is a strong belief in education and the power of hard work. Norm-referenced assessment brings about heavy pressure in schooling (Watkins & Biggs, 2001a). The pressure for academic success is huge and the education system is fiercely competitive (Ebbeck, 1995). Children are expected to go to kindergartens to learn academic skills such as reading and writing, as Ebbeck (1995:30) puts it, “*to learn but not to play*”. Another academic Sham (Sham & Woodrow, 1998) describes her own schooling experience in HK as rote learning, copying, memorising and repetition of practical skills, whereas her later higher education in Britain as with more creative thinking, discussion, group and project work to build up knowledge.

**Mandarin teachers from China.** Despite prevalent Chinese cultural values in Mainland China, the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) brought about ten years of destruction to the society and a near halt to school and university education (Cleverley,

1985; Wong, 1992). After Mao's era, traditional attitudes to education and old values returned. Billioud and Thoraval (2007) note a Confucian revival in China in the education of the classic Chinese tradition wherein pupils are encouraged to read the classics and to rediscover '*jiaohua*' (教化), which literally means 'instructing and transforming' or to transform the *self*.

Having lost their opportunities to a good education due to political upheavals, parents from the Cultural Revolution generation were determined to compensate their deficiencies through their children. The one-child policy introduced in 1978 means two parents invest in one child. Increasing concerns are put on their child's education. Chen, Lee and Stevenson (1996) state that although elementary schools enrol 98% of school-aged children in China in the late 1980s to early 1990s, only two-thirds could go on to junior high, less than 40% of them were able to continue in high school, and only about 20% of high school graduates could enter into some sort of higher education. The chance a child could obtain a college education was less than one in twenty.

Two decades ago, Ingulsrud and Allen (1999) observed that the large-class classrooms in China were strict-disciplined and teacher-oriented due to a lack of resources. Pupils sat in rows with their eyes fixed on teachers. They practised choral repetition, did dictation and copied characters. They were taught to keep quiet and pay attention in learning. Teachers decided teaching contents, methods and the ways pupils were to learn.

However, the above picture is changing due to globalisation and China's educational reform (Zhang, 2013). The New Curriculum reforms in the 2000s seek to improve teacher quality and maximise students' all-round development. In the field of English language teaching and learning, improvement has been made to develop communicative and student-centred approaches (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and interactive approaches have been widely used in some schools.

According to Jin and Cortazzi (2006), more attention has been put on students' learning processes, experience and strategies, to develop in them a collaborative spirit which stresses active participation and the ability to apply knowledge in real contexts.

Teachers are advised to be more of a ‘conductor’ in teaching. At university level, they are reminded to develop students’ learning strategies, whereas students are encouraged to develop confidence and greater classroom participation.

### **2.2.6 Impacts of culture of learning on Chinese teachers’ teaching and learning conceptions**

Disparities between Cantonese and Mandarin teachers from different geographical and educational contexts are noted above. As both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers have been educated in societies where Confucian cultural values are prevalent, Chinese culture of learning has inevitably influenced their personal understanding of teaching/learning. In their Chinese schools, these teachers might be enthusiastic in assisting pupils’ Cantonese and Mandarin learning, but their UK-educated Scottish-Chinese pupils might not be equally enthusiastic. They might instead want to have more independent learning space.

Despite the fact that exact connections between conceptions, metaphors and actions are difficult to pin down, culture of learning and metaphors nevertheless can play a role in understanding teachers’ teaching and learning conceptions. We can explore, for instance, whether their conceptions and metaphors are compatible with the specific socio-cultural contexts and the globalised world they are currently in.

Recently there have been demonstrations in both HK and Taiwan in which substantial proportion of the respective populations sought to assert their differences from Mainland China for various reasons. Thus, when reflecting on teachers’ interview data, differences in socio-political culture that might have influenced the conceptions of teachers would also be assessed.

## 2.3 International research on conceptions of teaching and learning

### 2.3.1 Conceptions

It is almost taken for granted that “conceptions of learning refer to the beliefs and understanding held by the learners about learning” (Lai & Chan, 2005:3), and so can conceptions of teaching be understood in the same vein. The importance of these notions in educational research is beyond doubt when, for example, Prawat (1992) argues that teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning can be major obstacles to educational reform such as new constructivist approaches to teaching and learning, though one might add that they can also be major facilitators of the same processes.

A perusal of the research literature reveals that while some users of the term ‘conception’ or ‘belief’ have not defined precisely what they mean, other terms are also used by different researchers to mean similar conceptualisations with different emphases in different theoretical frameworks. As Pajares (1992) has delineated, the notion of ‘belief’ has long been a ‘messy construct’ in research, which impedes the progress of educational inquiry into teachers’ beliefs. Fives and Buehl (2012) comment that the lack of coherent definitions of this construct has limited its potential for explanation and prediction.

In a review of studies of beliefs about teaching, Kember (1997) has found that “orientations, conceptions, beliefs, approaches and intentions” (p.256) have been used by various researchers synonymously in some cases, or with broader levels of inclusion in others, and that among the studies reviewed, the most commonly used term is conceptions. Entwistle and Peterson (2004) discuss a series of concepts linked to student learning, and try to distinguish between “a shared understanding of a ‘concept’ and an individual’s personal and therefore variable response to a concept—their ‘conception’” (p.408). It is beyond the scope of this review to clean up a messy construct like conception, the use of the term ‘conception’ in the present study follows that of research studies in phenomenography.

Currently there are *three* lines of phenomenographic research (Dall’Alba, 2000; Marton, 1988). The first one concerns general aspects of learning and looks at the qualitative differences in learners’ learning approaches with reference to learning outcomes. The second focuses on the learning of specific concepts and principles in

subject areas like economics, mathematics and physics, with emphasis on the mapping of learners' ideas of the phenomena that make up the subject content.

The third one belongs to a 'pure' phenomenographic knowledge interest which focuses on describing how people conceive of different aspects of their life-world. Individual interview is the predominant method used. Past studies include nurses' conceptions of contemporary surgical nursing (Barnard & Gerber, 1999), students' conceptions of learning process in different learning environments (Tynjala, 1997), teachers' conceptions of teaching statistics courses (Gordon, et. al, 2007), and prospective teachers' conceptions of the environment (Demirkaya, 2009). The present study belongs to this third line of phenomenographic research.

While putting forth arguments for phenomenography, Marton (1981) distinguishes a second-order perspective which aims at describing people's experience of different aspects of the world. In this connection, "*conceptions and ways of understanding are not seen as individual qualities,*" and rather, conceptions of reality are considered as "*categories of description to be used in facilitating the grasp of concrete cases of human functioning*" (p.177).

Regarding their ontological status, Marton, Dall'Alba and Beaty (1993) state that "conceptions have an experiential reality" and "categories of description... are simply abstract tools used to characterise the conceptions, ... an attempt to formalise the researcher's understanding of the conceptions" (p.283).

For phenomenographic studies, Marton and Booth (1997) state that:

... terms such as "conceptions," "ways of understanding," "ways of comprehending," and "conceptualizations" have been used as synonyms for "ways of experiencing"; they should all be interpreted in the experiential sense and not in the psychological, cognitivist sense. (p.114)

It has to be noted that research studies which claim to use phenomenography may differ from this theoretical orientation in the understanding of conception.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Pratt (1992a), has based his study of teaching conceptions among adults and teachers of adults on phenomenography as a research method, and gives the following definition: "Conceptions are specific meanings attached to phenomena which then mediate our response to situations involving those phenomena. We form conceptions of virtually every aspect of our perceived world, and in so doing, use those abstract representations to delimit something from, and relate it to, other aspects of our world. In

Therefore, in reviewing and comparing studies, one has to be cautious about different terms meaning roughly the same notion, and the same term conception used in different orientations.

### 2.3.2 Research on conception of learning

Particularly relevant to the present study are investigations into conceptions of learning since the 1970s (Marton & Säljö, 1976a, 1976b). Säljö's (1979) influential phenomenographic study was carried out through individual interviews in the context of academic learning, and has demonstrated that students think about learning in qualitatively different ways. He also identified a *hierarchy* of learning conceptions where the more *advanced* learning conceptions are *inclusive*.

Säljö's five distinctive *hierarchically-inclusive* conceptions of learning identified are: (1) increase of knowledge, (2) memorizing and reproducing, (3) acquisition of facts, procedures etc. to be retained or applied, (4) abstraction of meaning, and (5) understanding of reality. He justified his *hierarchical claim* partly on William Perry's (1970) study which had similarities with his findings. Perry notes that students go through *nine* positions with respect to intellectual development or *progression*, ranging from dualist thinking, multiplicity, later to relativist thinking, and then the evolving to commitments.

Since Säljö, other researchers have also explored relationship between these conceptions and other variables in learning (e.g., Entwistle & Peterson, 2004). Van Rossum and Schenk (1984) examined the relationship between Säljö's five conceptions and the use of *deep* or *surface* strategy in learning. They found that students who view learning as an active meaning-seeking process are more likely to adopt a *deep* learning strategy, whereas those who see learning as a passive memorising process are more likely to adopt a *surface* strategy.

Marton, Dall'Alba and Beaty (1993) carried out a longitudinal phenomenographic study of students from the Open University in the UK over a period

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effect, we view the world through the lenses of our conceptions, interpreting and acting in accordance with our understanding of the world" (p.204). This definition of conception, which emphasises its mediating function, vaguely hints at its being like some kind of cognitive representation without using the word explicitly.

of 6 years. Apart from the five conceptions similar to Säljö's (1979), they identified an additional *sixth* one which sees learning as *a change in oneself*. They named the six *hierarchically-related* conceptions as follows (pp.283-284): (1) increasing one's knowledge, (2) memorizing and reproducing, (3) applying, (4) understanding, (5) seeing something in a different way, and (6) changing as a person.

Within these, conceptions (1) to (3) link to a learning view of relatively passive experiences of absorbing knowledge and viewing it as given, something to be taken in and kept, whereas conceptions (4) and (5) emphasise the importance of understanding and gaining meaning from knowledge, representing a more active approach to learning in which students attempt to create personal meaning from what they learn.

In this sense, conception (4) marks the watershed of a qualitative conception of learning vis-à-vis the quantitative conceptions of (1) to (3) which primarily imply acquisition of pieces of information. In other words, students with conception (4) start making sense of knowledge for themselves by relating it to their life world, or in Entwistle and Peterson's (2004) words, "information becomes transformed into personal meaning" (p.411). When students reach conception (5), they start seeing things differently and learning takes place as a transformation (Marton & Tsui, 2004). This series of *hierarchically-related* learning conceptions culminates in the final conception (6) of changing as a person, a fundamental change in the sense of 'being'.

### **2.3.3 Cross-cultural differences in conception of learning**

Pillay, Purdie and Boulton-Lewis (2000) argue that an individual's conceptions of learning are often influenced by their previous experiences such as cultural background, intentions and situational demands. Conceptions of learning, being a complex mix of motives, beliefs and other circumstantial considerations, are shaped by the dominant values and beliefs of the societies they live in.

Drawing evidence from their longitudinal study of socialisation and education in Japan, the US and other related studies, Hess and Azuma (1991) conclude that children in Japan are thought to be good if they are obedient, mild, gentle and self-controlled, whereas good children in the United States have to be assertive, independent, courteous and socially-competent with peers. They reason that Japanese culture values conformity

(accepting group rules), obedience (respectfully following instructions) and persistence (persisting in face of boredom), and Japanese learners may thus appear submissive and be unjustly linked to lower level in learning conceptions from a Western perspective. However, there can be new conceptions underlying this perceived passive predisposition which are not apparent in the prevailing Western models of learning.

Purdie, Hattie and Douglas (1996) compared the learning conceptions of Japanese and Australian high school students and identified *nine* categories of learning conception, *six* of which are similar to those of Marton et al.'s (1993) study. *Three* newly emerged categories, though of minor occurrence, are “*learning as a duty*,” “*learning as a process not bound by time or context*” and “*learning as developing social competence*” (p.93), with the first and the last being almost exclusively the preserve of Japanese students. This result agrees with the Japanese cultural orientation. Purdie and Hattie (2002) used their previously developed instrument (Purdie et al., 1996) to compare learners from Australia, Malaysia and America, and concluded that the best interpretation of results from learners of these different cultural groups is a model with *six* categories slightly different from those of Marton et al.'s (1993) study.

In studying Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' conceptions of learning, Boulton-Lewis, Marton, Lewis and Wilss (2000) found that some students do not see a separation between informal and formal learning. This non-fragmented view of learning can be considered sophisticated, and yet they do not perform well in a formal western education system. As their traditional learning is a holistic process tightly embedded in their everyday practice, there is an apparent discrepancy between their culturally-induced conceptions of learning and the conception of learning tacit in the formal Western education system.

Examples cited above suffice to demonstrate that because different cultures emphasise different aspects of learning, we may expect to find new categories in conceptions of learning if we conduct such investigation in a socio-cultural context different from previous studies. Obviously, complementary Chinese school in Scotland is an interesting socio-cultural context for research, given the special cultural and ethnic characteristics of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers and their ethnic Chinese pupils.

### 2.3.4 School teachers' teaching and learning conceptions in different subject areas<sup>9</sup>

The 1990s saw a substantial amount of studies on teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. While most are on university teachers' teaching conceptions and their approaches to learning, some are on school teachers of different subject areas. Studies suggest the qualitatively different conceptions of teaching and learning teachers possess are related to their different teaching approaches, the ways their learners manage their learning, and the learning outcomes (Kember, 1997; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996).

There has been a body of research on school teachers' and pre-service teachers' teaching and learning conceptions (e.g., Alexandersson, 1994; Boulton-Lewis et al., 2001; Chen, 2007; Chen et al., 2012; Mellado, 1998; Patrick, 1992, cited in Marton & Booth, 1997; Patrick, 2000; Sang et al., 2012), which are sometimes studied in conjunction with learning environments and student learning variables (Campbell et al., 1996, 2001; Dart et al., 2000; Fives & Buehl, 2012), and in recent years, with conceptions of assessment (Brown & Gao, 2015; Chen & Brown, 2013).

Patrick (1992, cited in Marton & Booth, 1997) examined how secondary school teachers perceive and handle the teaching of their subjects, history and physics in the study. Based on the ways teachers described their discipline and how they taught it, Patrick has identified *three* different groups of teachers for each subject. The *first* group of history teachers emphasised content delivery, presentation and techniques, and considered the relation of their students to the subject content as direct and unquestionable. The *second* group saw their students' learning in two stages: first acquiring and accumulating information, and then, through teacher's help, interpreting to achieve the same understanding shared by the teacher. The *third* group saw history teaching as a process of engaging students in developing their own interpretations right from the beginning.

As for physics teachers, *three* groups of teaching conceptions were also identified (Patrick, 1992, cited in Marton & Booth, 1997). The *first* group understood

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<sup>9</sup> There has been a rich body of research on university teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning, but this is not discussed here, because a) I need to work within a stipulated thesis word count and b) pupils attending Chinese complementary schools are of pre-primary, primary or secondary-school age, and so in my discussion I focus mainly on general phenomenographic studies of teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning that feature this age-range of pupils.

physics as a set of formulae and related calculations and saw physics learning as the recall and application of these. The *second* group understood physics as a set of theories providing an explanatory system and saw learning as engaging in this practice of problem solving. The *third* group understood physics as a way of understanding the natural world and thus physics learning as the construction of such understanding.

As Patrick (2000) explained how she integrated several research approaches including phenomenography to identify teachers' focus in their views of subject matter and teaching and to examine students' construction of objects of study, we can understand the aforementioned teaching conceptions in terms of how teachers experience the 'what' and the 'how' of teaching the subject. The *three* groups are manifestations of the different ways of experiencing the subject matter and the corresponding ways of teaching and learning of the subject.

In another study of the ways teachers directed their awareness in teaching, Alexandersson (1994) collected data from primary school teachers of different subjects and identified *three* categories, (1) towards the activity taking place at the time (65% of utterances), (2) towards general aims (22% of utterances), and (3) towards some specific content being taught (13% of utterances). Alexandersson (1994) asserted that "the three main categories – and possibly others – exist irrespective of the concrete teaching context," and "these categories appear upon different occasions, and teachers – regardless of the grade or subject they are teaching – can then be carriers of the structural content in each category" (p.147).

In this regard, Marton and Booth (1997) comment that other studies also show that school teachers focus generally on pupils more than contents, and when teachers talk about teaching, they rarely mention ways of dealing with specific contents to enhance learning. This view is however contested by Boulton-Lewis et al. (2001), whose study showed a different picture, to which we now turn.

Research has revealed that teachers of different school subjects perceive teaching and learning differently (Boulton-Lewis et al., 2001). Through a phenomenographic analysis of interview protocols of 16 Australian secondary teachers of various subjects, Boulton-Lewis et al. (2001) identified *four* qualitatively different conceptions of teaching and *four* of learning. The *four* teaching conceptions are: (1)

transmission of content/skills, (2) development of skills/understanding, (3) facilitation of understanding in student as learner, and (4) transformation of students.

The *four* learning conceptions are: (1) acquisition and reproduction of content/skills, (2) development and application of skills/understanding, (3) development of understanding in student as learner, and (4) transformation of learners. For most teachers interviewed, their conceptions of teaching and of learning were congruent. There were minor inconsistencies though, with several teachers holding more sophisticated conceptions in teaching than in learning.

Boulton-Lewis et al.'s (2001) study has revealed that sophisticated conceptions are more likely to be with teachers in certain subject areas than others. Second language teachers believed that teaching is basically transmission of content/skills, while science and mathematics teachers displayed intermediate conceptions. The highest conceptions emphasising on personal development were held by teachers of English literature, personal and spiritual development, and art. This can be attributed to the nature and contexts of the subjects to be taught, requiring mostly skills and knowledge in some and more personal understanding in others for achieving success.

### **2.3.5 Relationship between conceptions of teaching, teaching approaches and students' learning**

In a study conducted in an Australian secondary school, Campbell, Brownlee and Smith (1996) observed a situation where students' conceptions of teaching and learning have a great impact on how they understand and approach their learning and the bias they have in conceptualising what the teacher is trying to do in class.

With traditional expository teaching approaches, most students use rote learning strategies. When teachers adopt constructivist strategies and encourage interaction, students with quantitative, surface approaches to learning focus only on the expository or repetitive learning aspects of the subject, but unlike their counterparts with qualitative, deep learning approaches, fail to benefit from more complex learning opportunities offered. It is suggested that for students to benefit from constructivist teaching strategies, they may need explicit instruction in meta-cognitive strategies for learning.

According to a phenomenographic perspective, the fundamental difference between *teacher-centred* and *student-centred* conceptions of teaching lies in that the former emphasises what teachers do and regards what happens for learners as taken-for-granted, whereas the latter stresses learners' experiences in the teaching-learning situation and possible effects of teachers' actions on learning (Åkerlind, 2008). In this light, a student-centred teaching conception is considered more sophisticated as it is more complex and incorporates/goes beyond a teacher-centred thinking about learning.

Since a student-centred conception is concerned with what happens to both students and teachers in teaching-learning situations, its understanding of teaching is more apt to bring about better learning as teachers take into account students' roles/needs in the process when designing lessons and monitoring teaching-learning situations (Åkerlind, 2004, 2008; Dall'Alba, 1991; Martin & Balla, 1991).

Studies on the relationship between teachers' conceptions of teaching and students' approaches to learning also suggest that a student-centred understanding of teaching is more likely to lead to better learning outcomes because it supports learners' deep approach to learning when they engage in an active search for meaning (Kember & Gow, 1994). In contrast, a teacher-centred understanding among teachers is more likely to link with learners' surface approach to learning where learners focus more on memorisation leading to a less meaningful understanding.

In sum, these studies indicate that to bring about meaningful changes to the quality of teaching and learning, conceptions of teaching and learning of both teachers and students play important parts, and measures of intervention and support for their changes are necessary too.

### **2.3.6 Research on Chinese teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning<sup>10</sup>**

In a study which integrates interview data from earlier single-culture studies of adults and teachers of adults (253 in total) in Canada, China, HK, Singapore and the United States, Pratt (1992a) has identified *five* qualitatively different teaching conceptions: (1) delivering content, (2) modelling ways of being, (3) cultivating the

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<sup>10</sup> From now on I include some research on adults, in cases where the adults (teachers or students) include groups that are of Chinese ethnicity, since their conceptions may be of relevance to my study.

intellect, (4) facilitating personal agency, and (5) seeking a better society. These conceptions are often present in all five cultures, albeit in different forms.

Pratt (1992a) observes that helping adult learners develop intellectually towards greater autonomy was expressed for higher/continuing education in Canada and the United States, but this was not found among interviewees in China. With personal development, in Canada and the United States it was mainly about humanistic values and individualism, but it was more familial in China, HK and Singapore.

As Pratt (1992a) points out,

Conceptions of teaching represent normative beliefs about what ought to be and causal beliefs about means-ends. Each is impregnated with values and assumptions which inform actions and guide judgments and decisions regarding effectiveness. Such judgments and decisions are quite often manifestations of political ideologies, social norms, and/or cultural ways of knowing, whatever one has to know or believe in order to operate in an acceptable manner... Cultural contexts serve as tacit paradigms for how people think about teaching. What one culture opens as possibility may be closed by another. (p.217)

Another study by Pratt (1992b) involved 57 Chinese adult educators (of Mainland China) has identified *four* learning conceptions: (1) acquisition of knowledge or skill from others, (2) fulfilment of responsibility to society, (3) change in understanding of something external to self, and (4) change in understanding oneself; together with *three* teaching conceptions: (1) delivery of content, (2) development of character, and (3) a particular type of relationship.

With learning, personal fulfilment was often expressed as part of duty or responsibility towards society, whereas teaching was seen with commitment to being model of both competence and morality. At a higher level, teaching was seen as a shift from knowledge delivery and character development to fostering a teacher-student relationship of mutual understanding, honesty, trust, care and respect similar to parent-child relationship.

Pratt (1992b) argues that these characteristics are compatible with and possibly derived from cultural, social, political and economic contexts in China. Similar findings from Pratt, Kelly and Wong (1999) on conceptions of 'effective teaching' among

Chinese university students and university teachers in HK provide further evidence to support this view.

Gao (1998, 2002; Gao & Watkins, 2001) conducted the first study investigating secondary school science teachers' conceptions of teaching from both qualitative and quantitative aspects in China, involving the interview of 18 physics teachers and surveys of 450 teachers and 1451 students. He developed a multi-level model in which *five* teaching conceptions were identified: (a) knowledge delivery, (b) exam preparation, (c) ability development, (d) attitude promotion, and (e) conduct guidance. While conceptions (a) and (b) formed the *moulding* orientation, conceptions (c), (d) and (e) formed the *cultivating* one.

Noteworthy is that these science teachers viewed students' examination performance as a good indicator of good teaching and successful schooling. In two other conceptions, teachers seemed to blend classroom teaching with cultivating good learning attitudes and conduct.

These distinctions aside, the conceptions of science teachers identified by Gao (1998) are in line with most teaching conceptions found in Western cultures. While conceptions (a) and (b) correspond roughly to the 'knowledge transmission' orientation as identified in Kember and Gow (1994), conceptions (d) and (e) encompass a cultivating aspect. They not only involve a concern with developing students' higher quality learning outcomes as in the 'learning facilitating' orientation (Kember & Gow, 1994), but broaden to include affective aspects such as developing students' love of science and moral aspects like the responsibilities to the society.

Chen's (2007) phenomenographic study investigates conceptions of 'excellent teaching' held by 20 middle school teachers in north China. *Four* major characteristics have been identified: (1) caring for students, (2) guiding students' all-round development, (3) connecting school knowledge/work to other areas, and (4) planning and preparing structured lessons. In contrast to previous Chinese and Western descriptions of excellent teaching, these teachers were less transmission-and examination-focused, but more facilitative and nurturing in viewing their role.

A later questionnaire survey by Chen, Brown, Hattie and Millward (2012) regarding the conception of excellent teaching of (951) middle school teachers in China yielded an examination-oriented dimension, together with *four* interactive pedagogical

dimensions using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling, though the examination-oriented factor had only a weak relationship to the conception of excellent teaching.

In a comparative study of content and sources of pedagogical beliefs of Chinese and American pre-service teachers, He, Levin and Li (2011) have observed that Chinese teachers' understanding of teaching and learning, their consistent use of Chinese proverbs and perceptions of their moral responsibilities show certain unique culturally-embedded values they embraced. This distinctive feature suggests some continuing impact of traditional Chinese culture on education.

Sang, Valcke, Tondeur, Zhu, and van Braak (2012) used an adapted version of the Teacher Beliefs Scale (originally developed in a Western context) to survey 727 primary education student teachers from four teacher education universities in China. They noted that not all findings of studies involving Western pre-service teachers could be replicated (e.g. beliefs about textbooks). They point out that culture plays an important part in teacher beliefs. 'Global' judgments about teacher beliefs are generally not valid.

Given that Chinese education is dominated by high-stakes examinations at the end of middle school and senior secondary school, how teachers understand teaching and learning in terms of assessment and examination performance may shed further light on Chinese complementary school teachers' teaching and learning conceptions. Some researchers on Chinese education are pursuing this line of study on teachers' conceptions of assessment (Brown & Gao, 2015; Chen & Brown, 2013; Lin, Lee & Tsai, 2014).

### **2.3.7 Confucian heritage culture (CHC) and the paradox of the Chinese learner**

As stated in Chapter 1, Watkins and Biggs (1996) use the term 'Chinese learner' to refer to Chinese students in Confucian heritage culture (CHC) classrooms. Chinese school teachers are mostly current or former 'Chinese learners' grown up in a CHC context. Research has established that quality learning involves the use of deep approaches to learning (Biggs, 1979; Marton & Säljö, 1976a, 1976b; Ramsden, 1988). The stereotypical case of Asian learners as passive rote learners depicted in anecdotal accounts (Kember & Gow, 1991; Biggs, 2001; Kennedy, 2002) has appeared to be

incompatible with their success in contexts such as high performance of HK and Japanese students in the Second International Mathematics Study and the Science Study in the 1980's, followed by more Asian countries gaining high rankings in international studies in the 1990's.

Education in Asian countries influenced by a CHC is often characterised by large classes, numerous examinations and inflexible educational settings. These conditions are not thought to be conducive to good learning by Western standards. Yet their students outperform Western countries in mathematics and science and have shown high levels of understanding and deep meaning-oriented approaches to learning. This incompatibility is known as the 'paradox of the Asian learner', or 'Chinese learner' (Biggs, 1996a, 2001; Chan & Rao, 2009; Marton, Watkins & Tang, 1997; Rao & Chan, 2009; Watkins & Biggs, 1996, 2001a, 2001b).

Attempts to resolve the paradox have revealed that the answer is complex. First, studies have shown that rote learning is only one way of memorisation, though memorisation can also be meaningful and deep with reflective rather than mechanical repetition and the two are usually equated in western countries (Marton, Dall'Alba & Tse, 1996; Marton, Watkins & Tang, 1997). Memorisation with understanding can be experienced as memorising what is understood, or as understanding through memorisation. The Chinese practice of repetition/memorisation can serve many purposes, and is an important strategy used in teaching – "*repetition is the route to understanding*" as the saying goes (Marton, Wen & Wong, 2005). Part of the paradox has come from previous misinterpretation of the learning methods Chinese learners use as merely mechanical rote learning.

Second, the cultural context for Chinese learners has been over-simplified and misunderstood by researchers based on criteria taken from Western cultures (Biggs, 1998, 2001; Rao & Chan, 2009). Children reared in the CHC are more prone to put in effort in learning, to persist in the face of boredom or failure, to show respect to teachers and to conform to classroom discipline. They are more ready for formal schooling, whereas their Western counterparts often need to be motivated to engage in learning tasks which have to be made attractive (Biggs, 1996a, 1998).

Management of student behaviour in CHC classrooms presents less of a problem than in Western schools. Achievement motivation is cultivated differently in CHC in

which success in academic studies and career is perceived by students as closely related to success in family and social life instead of the individualistic and ego-enhancing notion in Western societies (Salili, 1996).

Attributions for success and failure to effort or lack of effort in CHCs foster persistence after failure, contrary to ability attributions which do not (Biggs, 1996a; Hong, 2001). Learning to Chinese learners is a moral duty, and studying hard is a responsibility to the family (Lee, 1996). With students' characteristics mentioned above and their readiness to learn, Chinese students can engage in higher cognitive processes of learning with more time on task in spite of large classes and expository teaching (Biggs, 1996a; Rao & Chan, 2009; Watkins & Biggs, 2001a).

Studies focused on teachers and teaching in CHC classrooms (Biggs, 1996a, 1998, 2001; Chen, 2007; Gao, 2002; Lee, 1996; Tang, 2001; Watkins, 2000; Watkins & Biggs, 2001a) have demonstrated that education has to be understood as a socio-cultural system and the focussing on superficial characteristics cannot help understand what goes on in reality. Contrary to Western perception, expository teaching does not imply a teacher-centred classroom and students are not coerced into submission. Teachers can be firmly in charge in class for the smooth running of teaching and learning. Teacher-student interactions work well based on respect in a hierarchical collective culture. Teachers see their role as guiding students in the correct ways of learning and behaving.

Good teaching in CHC has to be a model both of knowledge and morality. Good teacher-student relationships are seen to be friendly and warm and go beyond the classroom. Whole-class direct teaching does not mean lecturing as it usually does in the West. It is rather a combination of lecturing, presenting problems, posing questions and guiding (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001). Despite large classes, teachers find time to interact one-to-one with students.

By putting these pieces of the puzzle together, the 'paradox of the Chinese/Asian learner' can hence be resolved (Watkins & Biggs, 1996, 2001a). The past two decades have seen socio-economic changes and educational reforms in China. In globalisation the socio-educational contexts of Chinese learners have been changing so rapidly that the former picture of the Chinese learner may need to be reviewed (Chan & Rao, 2009).

## 2.4 Reflection

This chapter has drawn together research literature from Chinese language learning, complementary Chinese education in Scotland, cultures of learning, conceptions of teaching and learning, and teaching and learning in Confucian heritage culture. It is made clear that teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning have a bearing upon their teaching approaches, which in turn affect learners' approaches to learning and the quality of learning outcomes. Given that conceptions of teaching and learning are context-dependent, differences in curriculum, subject area, teacher training, social and cultural background can contribute to differences in teachers' conceptions.

In this light, the complementary Chinese education in Scotland presents a unique context at this point in time in which teachers from different parts of China, educated in the traditional Chinese culture, are now teaching Mandarin and Cantonese to pupils of ethnic Chinese origin born and/or educated in Scotland. Most teachers may espouse to some extent traditional Confucian beliefs about education, and the way of teaching Chinese is inevitably intertwined with Chinese moral and cultural elements. Yet their pupils are growing up and schooled in Scottish culture which is different from that of CHC. There may be a mismatch in learning culture between the two parties worth exploring.

To complicate the situation, Mandarin has become the dominant Chinese language in global politics/economics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and Cantonese-speaking families are sending their children to learn Mandarin, which is no longer their native-tongue. With this change in pupils' linguistic background, complementary Chinese education is undergoing a transformation in pedagogical terms.

Until now, there have been no in-depth studies regarding teachers' understanding of teaching and learning in this context of complementary Chinese education in Scotland. As an exploratory study, the focus will be on the teaching and learning conceptions of this group of Chinese teachers and the factors they perceive to have shaped their thoughts.

### **2.4.1 Research questions: A reminder**

Three research questions of the study have been derived earlier in Chapter 1, as follows:

1. What overall conceptions of teaching and of learning are held by Chinese teachers teaching Cantonese and/or Mandarin in complementary Chinese schools in Scotland?
2. What are the dimensions of variation within the group of teachers with regard to their conceptions of teaching and learning?
3. What factors are perceived by these teachers as having possibly influenced the formation of their conceptions of teaching and learning?

## **CHAPTER 3: THE RESEARCH APPROACH**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The literature review in Chapter 2 has identified a gap and therefore a set of interesting questions in the research concerning Chinese teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning in the Scottish context. Chapter 3 discusses the extent to which quantitative and qualitative research approach might best suit the present study. Attention is focussed on why phenomenography can provide a suitable theoretical framework and a feasible method in understanding teachers' conceptions. Core principles are explained to see how they can be applied to give a collective picture of teachers' conceptions through identifying the qualitatively different ways they experience teaching and learning. The issues of validity, reliability, quality and rigour in phenomenographic research are addressed.

### **3.2 Quantitative and qualitative research methods**

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are valuable in their respective domains. While quantitative research refers to systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena mainly through standardised statistical methods which aim to quantify data and generalise results from a sample to a population of interest, qualitative research is a form of social inquiry which focuses on how people make sense of their experience and the world they live in (Langdrige, 2007; Patton, 1987, 1990). In contrast to quantitative methods which can measure the response of a large number of people to a limited set of questions so that outcomes can be compared against some predetermined standards, qualitative methods are concerned with the description of phenomena in terms of the meanings they have for people experiencing them (Langdrige, 2007). Qualitative approaches are based on the assumption that an existing situation under investigation is either unclear or not known in detail, thus rendering an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon necessary (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004; Gubrium & Holstein, 2002; Patton, 1987, 1990).

Choosing an appropriate research method needs to take into account the objects of the enquiry, its specific nature, purpose, educational, cultural, social or linguistic

context and the role of the researcher. The choice roots from the researcher's assumptions about the nature of reality and how it can be communicated to others. Whilst researchers using positivistic/scientific methods tend to believe the social world exists as an objective reality that can be investigated by scientific and quantifiable means, researchers adhering to the interpretative tradition incline to consider the world as existing in people's minds. There is not one reality, but multiple or even conflicting realities (Bowden, 2005; Green, 2005).

Marshall and Rossman (1999:3) characterise qualitative research as fundamentally interpretative which aims to investigate complex social phenomena as experienced by people for meaningful understanding. It explores people's behaviour, perspectives, experiences and feelings. It takes place in the natural world and uses methods that are interactive and humanistic. As it gathers information for a comprehensive understanding of people's behaviour and the factors affecting them, it often involves collecting, organising and interpreting data obtained from interviews or observations. Researchers of qualitative research need to be sensitive to their own biography. They reflect on who they are in the inquiry and how they could shape the research outcomes.

The purpose of the present research can be better served by a qualitative approach. First, the researcher intends to understand teachers' teaching and learning conceptions and the challenges they face in Chinese schools in their own accounts. Second, she proposes to build up her understanding from the data rather than to test hypotheses on what teachers would think about Chinese teaching and learning. Thus, it is inappropriate to have predetermined assumptions regarding their responses. As research into people's conceptions cannot be effectively carried out by quantitative methods when the conception itself is unclear, a qualitative approach which focuses on describing participants' experiences appears to be more suitable.

There are different paradigms in qualitative research which have diverse epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 2003). As the answers that different approaches seek vary in nature, they hold different assumptions regarding data collection and handling. With methods which are descriptive and enable the 'voice' of the participants to be heard, there are narrative analysis and descriptions like in phenomenology, a mix of description and interpretation to gain in-depth understanding like in hermeneutic research, or a combination of

description, interpretation, explanation and actions to improve existing practice like in action research.

Analysing the various qualitative approaches, Marshall and Rossman (1999:3) point out three major genres with respective focus, namely, on individual lived experience, on society and culture, and on language and communication. The second genre focussing on society and culture relates more to ethnography and qualitative sociology and does not suit this study. The third one focussing on language and communication adopts mainly sociolinguistic and semiotic approaches, and is unrelated to this research.

The present study falls into the first genre - about individual lived experience. Investigating people's lived experience usually adopts a phenomenographic or phenomenological approach. The phenomenographic approach is chosen over the phenomenological one, since the present study aims at investigating the qualitatively different ways a specific group of teachers understand Chinese teaching and learning in complementary schools, and focuses on *collective* meanings rather than any thick description of individual experiences.

### **3.3 The origin and core principles of phenomenography**

**Origin.** Phenomenography<sup>1</sup> originated from a body of empirical research which aimed at understanding students' experiences of learning at the University of Göteborg, Sweden. In studies investigating students' comprehension of texts (Booth, 1997; Marton & Säljö, 1976a; 1976b; Säljö, 1982), several noteworthy results were documented. First, there was always a *variation* in what students understood as the core message of a given text. Second, in any text used, researchers were able to identify a limited number of qualitatively different ways students understood it. Third, students' understandings were consistently related to the ways they read the text and how they referred to it.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'phenomenography' has its etymological roots in the Greek noun '*fainemenon*', which means the apparent or that which manifests itself, and the verb '*grafia*', which means to describe something in words or images (Marton & Booth, 1997:110). Thus, it conveys the meaning as a description of appearances.

The third point reinforces the *intentionality* argument that there is an interrelated relationship between the *act* of understanding and *what* is understood. In addition, the qualitatively different ways of understanding were found possible to be delineated into categories of description, which could be further organised logically into a logically-related *hierarchical* structure based on the common phenomenon being experienced (Marton & Booth, 1997). Phenomenography regards learning as an “on-going exploration of the world as experienced” (Marton & Booth, 1997:156) and a “qualitative change in a person’s way of seeing, experiencing, understanding, conceptualizing something in the real world – rather than as a quantitative change in the amount of knowledge someone possesses” (Marton & Ramsden, 1988:271).

**The adoption of second-order perspective.** Marton and Booth (1997) state *two* different perspectives to study the world around us. Studying it from the first-order perspective is to orient ourselves towards the world and make statements about it. Studying it from the second-order perspective is to orient ourselves towards people’s thinking about the world and describe their ideas about it. While psychology and natural science adopt the first-order, phenomenography adopts the second-order perspective. For instance, regarding the two questions ‘what is teaching and learning’ and ‘how do people experience or understand teaching and learning,’ phenomenographers concern themselves only with the latter.

**Structural relationships between different ways of experiencing.** An epistemological viewpoint fundamental to phenomenography is the structural relationships between different ways of experiencing. To experience a phenomenon is to be aware of some features of that phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). In analysing the notion of experience, phenomenographers draw on phenomenological theories including the German philosopher Franz Brentano’s concept of intentionality and Gurwitsch’s theory of consciousness (Marton & Booth, 1997). To experience something as something, we need to be able to discern it from and relate it to a context. Marton (1988) argues that the differences in how people understand a phenomenon come from *what* people notice about it and *how* they see its parts as being related to the whole.

Consider an example of seeing a bird in the tree. For people to be aware of the bird, they have to experience/understand it as something distinct from parts of the tree. In this way they assign it a meaning. Meaning is the *referential* aspect of the experience, telling us what it is that we discern. The *structural* aspect of an experience includes the

*external structure* of the way of experiencing, to discern the *figure* (the bird) from the *background* (the tree), and the *internal structure*, the relationship between the different parts/features of the experienced phenomenon, i.e., the feather, the beak, the wings, the tail and how they are related to constitute a bird.

As explained, to discern the bird in order to see it in the tree, we have to see its parts and their relationships with each other and the whole. Once a part is discerned, its relationships with other parts and with the whole may become clear. The bird may hence stand out. The same is true for seeing and experiencing other phenomena, for instance, to understand teaching and learning in a specific social, linguistic and educational context in time.

According to Marton and Booth (1997), the outer structure is called the *external horizon* of the phenomenon: in the example above, the tree, the sky and background against which the bird is discerned. The structure between the different parts of the experienced phenomenon is called the *internal horizon*, which in this case comprises the bird, its parts and its structural presence. Thus, a way of experiencing something can be described in terms of the structure of *awareness* at a particular moment of time.

Marton and Booth (1997) suggest that human awareness is composed of layers. Due to differences in personal experiences and background, people facing the same situation do not necessarily discern the relationships between parts and the whole in the same way. That is, while we can be aware of everything simultaneously, we may not be aware of everything in the same way. For anything to be understood, it must be seen against its background or horizon. By understanding people's varying ways of experiencing a phenomenon, we can gain knowledge of the *collective* as well as *individual* awareness of a phenomenon under investigation.

In this study, when analysing Chinese teachers' conceptions, efforts will be made to identify the possible structure of participants' conceptions on teaching and learning to ensure the meaning of a conception is properly located. The *meaning* will be examined along with the *focus* of what it is said. The data obtained will be analysed into *categories of description* to reveal the *variation*.

**Categories of description.** Phenomenography focuses on the descriptive level of the subjects' understanding. It sorts out the conceptions that emerge from the data into

categories of description (Åkerlind, 2005; Marton, 1981, 1986; Uljens, 1996). While *conception* refers to the qualitatively distinct ways people understand a phenomenon based on their awareness, *categories of description* refers to the means used to denote the conceptions. Thus, *conceptions* are ways of experiencing (that which is described) and *categories of description* are ways it is described (Marton & Booth, 1997:127). There cannot be a description without something to describe, nor can anyone describe something without a description.

Lybeck, Marton, Stromdahl and Tullberg (1988) state that a category of description is expressed typically in the form of “something (x) is seen as something (y),” which details the *referential* and *structural* aspects of how the phenomenon is experienced. This involves describing the difference in meaning in terms of the prime focus of each experience, and the difference in structure in terms of awareness. Description of a category is by *quotations* from interview data (Bruce, 1997) which illustrate how a category differs from other identified categories (Booth, 1997; Bowden, 2000; Marton, 1986, 1994; Walsh, 2000).

Marton (1988:181) characterises the categories of description by *four* important features, namely, *relational*, *experiential*, *content-oriented*, and *qualitative* in nature. As with their *quality*, Marton and Booth (1997) require categories of description to reveal something distinct about a way of experiencing a phenomenon, and to stand in a logical relationship with other categories.

**Outcome space.** *Outcome space* is the logically structured complex of the different ways of experiencing an object. It provides a way of looking holistically at the *collective* human experience and represents *all* possible ways of experiencing a phenomenon by a group of subjects collectively at a particular point in time (Marton & Booth, 1997). It can be depicted by a table or a diagram showing how each category relates structurally to others (Yates, Partridge & Bruce, 2012).

The quality of an outcome space can be judged by whether the categories of description involved stand in clear relation to the phenomenon, whether they constitute a hierarchical structure of increasing complexity/inclusiveness, and whether the system of categories is parsimonious, i.e., as *few* categories should be explicated as is feasible for capturing the *critical* variation in the obtained data (Marton & Booth, 1997).

### **3.4 The limitations of phenomenography**

Phenomenography is based on an assumption that there is no objective reality or absolute truth. So its aim is to describe the world as it is understood (Barnard & Gerber, 1999). There is a limit to what can be observed within a phenomenographic study. As data collection captures only a single ‘snapshot’ image for each individual, it focuses on the ‘experience per se’ without concern to understand previous experience (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Phenomenography is used to study a group of people from whom data have been drawn. Findings do not act as universal statements, though it may act as a starting point to comprehend/compare conceptions of the investigated phenomenon in similar situations (Bowden & Green, 2005). It is hard to report phenomenographic research findings in a convincing way since it requires lots of illustrative quotations to do so.

As it is only concerned with *variation* of aspects, the outcome space is somehow limited. It has been depicted as a *stripped description* and *parsimonious* (Marton & Booth, 1997) and may not be as rich as findings from other qualitative methods. Since it is concerned with discovering *collective* rather than individual experiences (Barnard & Gerber, 1999), the description reached will be a description of variation on the collective level and individual voices may *not* be heard (Marton & Booth, 1997).

### **3.5 Trustworthiness of qualitative research**

Guba and Lincoln (1981:104) posit *four* criteria in judging the *trustworthiness* of qualitative research findings: credibility, fittingness, auditability and confirmability. Credibility concerns the aspect of truth in findings and the need to assess them with the sources from which data are drawn. Fittingness deals with the degree of similarity or applicability of findings in other contexts. Auditability refers to consistency of findings if the research is to be replicated. Confirmability or neutrality concerns whether the findings arose from researchers’ biases.

Morse (2006) considers it inappropriate for qualitative researchers to apply quantitative researchers’ criteria for rigour to evaluate qualitative research because criteria for rigour such as credibility and fittingness are not enough for evaluating qualitative research. Quality in qualitative research should be an inclusive concept.

Apart from rigour, quality research needs to extend to aspects like commitment to reflexivity and transferability of findings to other contexts.

Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis and Dillon (2003) take *four* things as the central quality of qualitative research. They need to be *contributory* in advancing knowledge, *defensible* in design in addressing the research questions, *rigorous* in terms of a systematic and transparent process, and *credible* in claim through persuasive and well-grounded arguments from the study.

Larsson (1993) points out that conducting research is about producing new knowledge, and the *defensibility* in research design is concerned with the internal consistency of the research question, the nature of the knowledge of the object of study, the data, and the methods of data analysis. Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers (2002) note that careful and systematic steps in the process could help ensure research *rigour* and enhance *validity* and *reliability*.

### **3.6 Validity and reliability of phenomenographic research**

Since the 1970s, wide-ranging discussions of the nature and development of the phenomenographic approach have taken place, for instance, the Maryville Symposium (Bowden, 1986), Warburton Symposium (Bowden & Walsh, 1994) and contributions in the journal *Nordisk Pedagogik*. There is a special issue devoted to the study of phenomenography in the journal *Higher Education Research & Development* (1997, Vol.16, No.2). In them, the validity and reliability of phenomenographic research is an important theme.

#### **3.6.1 Validity of the study**

Research validity refers to the internal consistency of the object of study, data and findings (Yates, Partridge, & Bruce, 2012). It refers to the “accuracy of a given techniques, that is, the extent to which the results conform to the characteristics of the phenomena in question” (Briggs, 1986:23). While *internal validity* refers to the rigour related to the research design and care taken to conduct the research, *external validity* concerns whether the study’s findings are generalisable.

**Internal validity.** Phenomenographic research aims at investigating human conceptions for which semi-structured interviews are commonly used. Säljö (1996, 1997) questions the congruence between people's utterances and their conceptions in which their protocols are analysed and reported as findings. Hammersley (2003) notes the problem and reminds researchers to be careful in using data and cautious in interpreting and drawing conclusions from them.

Svensson, Anderberg, Alvegard, and Johansson (2006) and Johansson, Svensson, Anderberg, and Alvegard (2006) address validity by pointing out subjects' choice of words in expressing their meaning is *intentional*. Looking for conceptual meanings of protocols can help address the issue in analyses. Johansson et al. (2006) point out that the process of identifying internal relationships from the participant's perspective and understanding is essential for assessing its conceptual meaning.

In this study, the internal validity is enhanced through the ways the researcher handled interviews and the data obtained. By encouraging participants to reflect and elaborate on their intended meaning during interviews, the researcher could help clarify the meaning the participants expressed, thus facilitating quality data for the research.

**External validity.** External validity is realised through careful re-thinking of the generalisability and transferability of the findings. Schwandt (2007) points out the context-specific nature of meanings of complex phenomena. Given that context-free meaning does not exist, he considers it inappropriate to make generalisation in qualitative research. Spencer et al. (2003) note that qualitative findings may be generalised in the form of case-by-case generalisation through detailed descriptions. Though Larsson (2009) considers generalisability may not be appropriate in qualitative research, he notes that generalisation may be made possible if the researcher could maximise variation, which could allow other researchers to identify similar contexts and relevant patterns.

### 3.6.2 Reliability of the study

Reliability refers to the "probability that the repetition of the same procedures, either by the same researcher or by another investigator, will produce the same results" (Briggs, 1986:23). It can be understood in terms of consistency and replication

(Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). The two issues concerning replicability in the present study are: first, it involves the researcher's own discovery of the qualitative variation in Chinese teachers' teaching and learning conceptions, and second, it concerns whether other researchers could recognise the same conceptions as identified.

Marton (1986) and Säljö (1988) argue that the first issue is not required because the findings of a phenomenographic study are a form of discovery - the product of a process of transcript reading, iterations, analysis, and validation with the data. Discoveries of this kind need not be replicable. But it is reasonable to call for replicability in the second, since useful research results need to reach a high degree of inter-subjective agreement among researchers on the conceptions found. Thus, inter-judge reliability is a way to address this replicability (Johansson, Marton & Svensson, 1985; Marton, 1986; Säljö, 1988). In addition, reliability is also seen as the use of appropriate methodological procedures and techniques to ensure quality and consistency in data interpretations (Guba, 1981; Kvale, 1996). *Inter-judge reliability* and researcher's *interpretative awareness* are therefore often used to judge the reliability of a research.

**Inter-judge reliability.** According to Säljö (1988:45), inter-judge reliability measures the "communicability of categories and thus gives the researcher information that someone else can see the same differences in the materials" as the researcher has identified. It can be measured in terms of percentage agreement with the researcher's original classification of conceptions. The greater the percentage agreed, the higher the reliability is considered to be.

Sandberg (1997) explains inter-judge reliability and member checking are not appropriate verification methods for phenomenographic findings, given that proper procedures have been observed in the research process. However, in this study a co-judge familiar with phenomenography was invited to read a random selection of the data set and look into the conceptions the researcher identified in order to ensure the reliability of classification process. The inter-judge reliability in terms of percentage agreement as well as Cohen's kappa was reported in Section 4.5.5.

**Interpretative awareness.** Sandberg (1996) suggests reliability as interpretative awareness could be more appropriate than reliability as replicability. Kvale (1996) discusses interpretative awareness in terms of the concepts of *biased subjectivity* and

*perspectival subjectivity*. With biased subjectivity, researchers simply focus attention on research data that “support their own opinions, selectively interpreting and reporting statements justifying their own conclusions, overlooking any counter-evidence” (p.212). A perspectival subjectivity appears when researchers who adopt “different perspectives and pose different questions to the same text come up with different interpretations of the meaning” (p.212). Researchers should be aware of how their interpretations in the research process could influence the outcomes.

A researcher’s interpretative awareness of the obtained data is crucial in establishing reliability (Sandberg, 1996). To maintain an interpretative awareness means to acknowledge and deal with the researcher’s own subjectivity in the research process (Sandberg, 1997). To be thorough in handling participants’ conceptions of the phenomena, researchers need to demonstrate how they check their interpretations throughout the process.

Ashworth and Lucas (2000) note that researchers should set their assumptions aside to engage fully with the subjects’ lived experiences in order to understand the conceptual meanings in their sharing. Ihde (2012) states that to take into account phenomenological reduction, the first methodological move is to “*seek to circumvent certain kinds of predefinition*” (p.16), while phenomenological reduction calls for a “*suspension of belief*” (p.20). It does not mean that researchers need to bracket all earlier experiences of the object under investigation, but they should suspend their own ideas so as to be fully present to the individuals’ conceptions under investigation.

In short, throughout the research process, the researcher had been cautious with adherence to the above principles. It is hoped that maximum fidelity to the experiences of Chinese teachers being investigated could be achieved.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 discusses the research design, selection of participants, interview procedures, data collection, data analysis and issues of reflexivity in the process. This study uses semi-structured interviews as the principal method and classroom observation as a means to supplement the interviews. As set down in Chapter 3, all interviews are to be conducted with the aim to work “toward an articulation of the interviewee’s reflections on experience that is as complete as possible” (Marton & Booth, 1997:130).

### **4.2 Selection of participants and Chinese schools**

The selection of teachers is based on purposive sampling commonly used in phenomenography (Bowden, 2000; Dunkin, 2000; Yates, Partridge & Bruce, 2012), which aims to maximise the degree of representativeness of participants through covering a wider range of schools. The selection criteria aim to secure a diversity of experience and background so as to maximise possible conceptual variation in the interview data. Consideration has been more on the background characteristics of teachers than based on gender. Preference has been given to those who have rich teaching experience (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000) since they are expected to have more to share.

Target schools were chosen through an internet search. Initial email contact was made with the headteachers: the researcher introduced herself and explained the aims of the research. With positive responses, school visits were arranged to talk to staff. With their individual consent, teachers were invited to participate in the study (Appendix I). Usually the school would assign a deputy or a senior teacher to help the researcher coordinate the time and venue of interviews to be conducted at school.

Involved in this study were four Chinese schools in central Scotland, two in Edinburgh and two in Glasgow. Among them were one Mandarin school, one Cantonese school, and two schools with both Mandarin and Cantonese section. These four schools varied in size, from around 70 to over 700 pupils. Twenty-four teachers (11

Mandarin, 13 Cantonese) participated in this study. They included established Scottish-Chinese migrants, new migrants and overseas university students. Their personal particulars are reported in Chapter 5.

In this study a sample size of 24 should be about right according to the experience of previous studies. Trigwell (2000) and Bowden (2005) propose that the sample size for a phenomenographic study should be large enough to allow for locating variation in conceptions, whereas the amount of data obtained has to remain manageable. Trigwell (2000) considers 10-15 subjects is the minimum to create a reasonable chance for finding variation of a group. Dunkin (2000) notes between 15 - 20 interviews could reach for saturation of categories.

Bowden and Green (2005) state that interviewing 20 to 30 subjects can meet the criterion of ensuring sufficient variation in ways of seeing a phenomenon and make data handling not too difficult. Sandberg (2000) notes that among more than 50 doctoral dissertations and 1,000 research reports done using the phenomenographic approach, the variations of a phenomenon saturated at around 20 subjects with no new conceptions emerged. In this light, since the 24 participating Chinese teachers were generous in sharing, the verbal data elicited should be rich enough to locate variation in their conceptions.

### **4.3 Research method**

#### **4.3.1 Interviews as co-construction between interviewers and interviewees**

Interviews have long been used in qualitative research to generate insights into social phenomena and to explore participants' experiences, beliefs and identities for in-depth understanding. Talmy (2010) states that interviewing is not a neutral technology or research instrument, but a situated social practice. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) point out the meaning-making nature of interviews, considering all interviews as 'active'. They state that no matter how formal or standardised an interview is, there are social interactions between the interviewer and interviewees through which ideas and attitudes are co-constructed.

An active interview takes into account both the 'whats' (products) and the 'hows' (process) aspects, that is, the contents and the linguistic and interactional

resources used in co-constructing it (Talmy, 2010). As the interview talk is seen as a co-construction, emphasis is placed on the co-constructors of knowledge and their contributions to the contents (Mann, 2011; Roulston, 2010). In short, co-construction is an inevitable aspect of the interview process.

In line with the above, Talmy and Richards (2011:2) consider interviews as an interactional act, a ‘speech event’ in which the interviewers and interviewees make meaning and co-construct knowledge in social practices. They create their own interactional context in which each turn is shaped by previous ones. What respondents say is often contextually shaped and produced in negotiation with the interviewer. In the same vein, Briggs (1986:4) views interviews as a communicative event with presupposed meta-communicative norms. Meta-communication refers to the secondary communication (direct/indirect cues) of how a piece of information is meant to be interpreted. He opines the communicative foundation is tied to its theoretical and methodological issues.

Although appearing simple to conduct, qualitative interviews are hard to do well (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Common problems include the overlooking of interviewer’s role, unavailability of interview set-up, problems with representation of interaction, and failure to consider interviews as social interaction (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Others include the missing of critical dimensions in the interviews process, and under-theorised data collection, analysis and representation (Mann, 2011; Roulston, 2010).

To avoid procedural problems in data collection and interpretation, Briggs (1986:94) proposes a four-phase approach : (1) learning how to ask, (2) designing an appropriate methodology, (3) reflexivity in the interviewing process, and (4) analysing interviews with regard to its structure, and interpreting individual utterances in terms of context and meta-communicative features.

### **4.3.2 The researcher's role in co-construction**

Roulston (2010) highlights the complex interactions between the researcher and participants in interviews. The researcher is a co-participant in the construction of a discourse rather than merely a medium through which interviewees' thinking is conveyed to readers (Briggs, 1986). Roulston (2010) calls on qualitative researchers to justify their use of interviews as a means to gain access to people's experiences. Interviewers need to be alert to the interview 'process' rather than just the 'products', and to make important decisions in areas such as selecting participants, setting up and managing interviews, developing a reflective interview approach, and maintaining sensitivity in data analysis. They need to develop necessary 'technical' skills and adopt an informed way of working with interviewees (Mann, 2011). In short, the researcher needs to be reflective when interacting with participants and to theorise its methodology to carry out high quality research.

The researcher was fully aware of the aforementioned key principles in the pre-pilot, pilot and the main interviews. Things also reflected upon included the identity of interviewer, the set up of interview contexts, the reflective interview practices, and the theoretically informed way she worked with the participants. The phenomenographic interview (Section 4.3.3) described below will also reflect her understanding of interviews as co-construction.

### **4.3.3 The use of phenomenographic interview to achieve co-construction**

A phenomenographic interview requires the interviewer and interviewees to work together to bring forth the experiences and awareness of the topic concerned (Bowden, 2000). The semi-structured interview used in this study allows researchers the flexibility without adhering to a pre-determined sequence of questions in the interviewing process. All participants were briefed in advance on the purpose and mode of the interview.

Despite not every aspect of co-construction being achieved, all possible precautions and steps were taken to maximise co-construction in interviews. In the circumstances of interviews being conducted, the interview set-up, the avoidance of bias, the selection of participants and rapport-building with them were certainly

realised. To facilitate co-construction, interview questions were pilot-tested and their validity was judged by how well interviewees had been engaged in communicating their experiences and ideas.

The researcher polished her technical skills in the pilot stage (Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2). Her gender, personal background and understanding of teachers enabled in-depth communication with them (Section 4.7.1). Her use of pre-set general questions, open-ended follow-up questions and probes helped to obtain quality data in interviews necessary for investigating their teaching and learning conceptions (Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2).

Interviews were allowed to run their full course with promptings to clarify and elicit teachers' ideas. Teachers were encouraged to share freely on whatever they considered relevant to the topic without being led to what to think and say. They were welcome to use Cantonese, Mandarin or English to convey their thoughts in interviews to enable co-construction (Section 4.7.3). Unfinished accounts were followed up by phones and e-mails.

In sum, despite limits to the extent to which interviews of this study could be fully co-constructed in the time available, the interviews were as co-constructed as could be managed in the circumstances. The co-construction in interviews is explained in detail in Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.

#### **4.3.4 Classroom observation**

Interview is the principal means of data collection in phenomenographic studies and classroom observation is regarded as not necessary. However, the researcher decided to conduct a small amount of observations to provide background information to help her understand the school environment, pupils' learning and teachers' perspectives so as to better comprehend what teachers said in interviews. With this in mind, there had been no intention to record in any structured way how teachers behaved in particular classroom situations.

Observations were planned to be conducted before the interviews for several reasons. They could provide the researcher with a chance to build rapport with teachers in a less formal context than an interview setting, to give her some ideas on teachers'

educational thoughts before the interviews, and to provide concrete examples of how they conducted teaching and interacted with pupils. The events observed could act as a ground of reference if teachers wanted to refer to concrete examples in the interview.

Classroom observation was not possible in many cases. The researcher was told that some parents had reservations about strangers entering classrooms. Due to school regulations and health and safety concerns, some schools were hesitant to have visitors stay in class, while others were concerned with whether the visitors would disturb class teaching and learning. As a result, only 11 observations (4 in pilot, 7 in main study) were conducted. The classes observed ranged from Grade 1 to A-level with pupils aged from around 5 to 18. The length of observation varied from 30 minutes to two hours.

Things to observe included whole-class teaching, group teaching, group and individual learning, pupil-pupil and teacher-pupil interactions. The researcher attempted to understand the lessons in terms of the objectives, the tasks assigned to pupils and the ways content was taught. Attention was also paid to pupils' responses to teachers' instruction, their use of language(s), group, pair and individual work, any signs of pupils' de-motivation, disruptive behaviour and resistance to teaching. Special events outside the classroom were also noted. Details of observations are reported in Chapter 5.

The researcher had exercised caution in looking at classroom events and interpreting the meaning in their respective contexts as much as she could make sense. She was aware that she was part of the interaction as well as an observer of teachers and pupils since who she is shapes what she notices, writes down and analyses. As with the 11 observed-teachers, the subsequent interviews were in general livelier than the non-observed ones. They responded eagerly to questions due to the rapport already established in the observations. This enabled interviewees to take an active role in co-constructing the interviews as discussed in Section 4.3.2.

Though interviews were not conducted in a structured way, the researcher followed the principles of Seidel's (1998) three-stage approach in handling and analysing the observations, that is, *noticing things*, *collecting things*, and *thinking about things*. In the *noticing* phase, notes were written down using the language(s) used by teachers. For record-keeping and accuracy-checking, the notes were recorded in traditional characters with occasional English phrases the teachers used. A sample of the observation is reported in Appendix VII.

Observation notes were read multiple times to highlight the main points and the data were sorted into *themes* in the *collecting* phase. In the sorting phase, the researcher went back and forth between what she noticed/recorded and what she sorted in order to build up a picture of how Chinese was taught and learned. This helped her organise the fragmentary data into order. In the *thinking* stage she examined and reflected on what she noticed, collected and sorted out. The aim was to make good sense of the data, and to look for patterns or emphases.

The ways different teachers taught and pupils learned were compared for similarities and differences. Anything in the records the researcher did not understand or wanted to know more would be brought back to the teachers in interviews. In brief, the three stages of *noticing things*, *collecting things*, and *thinking about things* enabled the researcher to manage observations in a systematic way.

#### **4.4 The research procedure**

##### **4.4.1 The pre-pilot**

A pre-pilot was arranged to polish the researcher's interview skills and test the effectiveness of interview questions, since conducting a phenomenographic interview is a complex and demanding task for new researchers (Åkerlind, Bowden & Green, 2005; Bowden, 2000; Bowden & Green, 2005; Sin, 2010). Previous phenomenographic studies point out that researchers should not discuss, debate or comment on what participants said in interviews (Bowden & Green, 2005). They should avoid any unplanned impact during interviews by asking unstructured questions without raising new ideas, prompting without adding a new concept, and rephrasing without altering the words of participants (Green, 2005). To avoid errors which may taint data collection, practices on interview techniques was intended to ensure the researcher could handle the interview and elicit meaningful data for analysis.

A series of practice interviews was carried out between the researcher and an academic familiar with the phenomenographic interview procedure. This phase allowed the researcher to try out the interview questions, polish her techniques, seek clarification and explore contradictions in the interviewees' sharing. Any mishandling of questions

or shifting of focus were noted, reflected upon and clarified. As a result, the set of interview questions were modified accordingly.

#### **4.4.2 The pilot**

In the pilot four teachers (2 Cantonese, 2 Mandarin) from one school were interviewed and their lessons observed. The aim of the pilot was to try out the interview questions: '*What do you understand by teaching?*' and '*What do you understand by learning?*' to see how well the questions could elicit meaningful information of teachers' conceptions on Chinese teaching and learning.

The four interviews were transcribed verbatim, read and re-read in full-set for familiarity. Analysis was carried out adhering to the phenomenographic procedures to uncover the different ways teachers experienced teaching and learning in Chinese schools. Transcripts were repeatedly read and interpreted in the light of newly emerged understanding of the rest of the data (Marton, 1981; Marton et al., 1993; Marton & Booth, 1997).

After a time-consuming iterative process, four initial conceptions of teaching and four of learning were identified. These identified categories were entirely open, which the researcher would revisit at a later stage. The pilot phase allowed the researcher to fine-tune her interview questions and refine her techniques. In line with the practice of other phenomenographers, data from the four pilot interviews and classroom observations were used together with the data obtained in the main study.

#### **4.4.3 The main study**

Twenty teachers (11 Cantonese, 9 Mandarin) participated in the main study. They were interviewed with the same set of interview questions in the form of an interview guide (Appendix III). With the four interviews and observations in the pilot, altogether 24 interviews and 11 classroom observations were conducted. Some interviews were conducted by phone at a time convenient to the teachers. The duration ranged from around 40 minutes to one hour. Elaborations and clarifications were sought in the process to guarantee good understanding of teachers' meanings to ensure quality

data for analysis. Follow-up phone interviews were made if necessary (Gillham, 2000, 2005), and e-mail discussion was employed to ensure the researcher had captured the teachers' responses in full.

## **4.5 Data collection and analysis**

### **4.5.1 Role of researcher**

As teachers' candid reflection is significant to make phenomenographic interviews successful, it is vital to establish good rapport with teachers to gain access to their life-world (Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). Since teachers could refuse to cooperate in interviews, the researcher needs to maintain a balance between closeness and distance, i.e., to be close enough to overcome defence but distant enough to take the role as a researcher.

The interview was seen as a conversational partnership in which the researcher assisted with teachers' reflection. Attention was paid to the interactive style in delivering questions and prompting to confirm or clarify responses. The researcher tried to engage fully in empathic listening to understand teachers' thoughts by withholding her personal concerns, and undertook constant review in the process to avoid her own assumption directing the interview or impeding the follow-up of responses (Åkerlind, 2005; Marton & Booth, 1997).

She did not comment on what teachers said, nor ask any unnecessary questions about their background. To avoid distraction and to maintain impartiality, she had never mentioned to teachers about her own teaching experiences in a Cantonese school. She had to be a learner and a good listener in order to take a good researcher role.

### **4.5.2 Interview strategies and establishing contexts for interviews**

The researcher looked into experiences of previous research to establish a productive context for interviews (Bowden & Green, 2005; Marton & Booth, 1997). If possible, classroom observation was arranged before the interview. When prior observation was not possible, the interview would begin with the same question: *'What*

*do you understand by teaching?*' with an aim to keep the conversation as open as possible to enable teachers to express their views freely.

Interviews taking place after classroom observations would start with the question: *'What do you consider as the most fulfilling or enjoyable part in the lesson taught, and why?'* The aim of this is manifold. First, by opening a conversation with something enjoyable teachers have experienced in the lesson, it makes a good start which breaks the ice between the researcher and teachers. Second, by creating a relaxing atmosphere, teachers are more likely to let down their defence and share openly. Third, by following teachers' line of thoughts, the researcher can rearrange the interview questions in a more natural way.

The question could also be used with some adjustments to elicit other responses. For example: *How about in the eyes of pupils, which part of the lesson do you think they would consider as the most enjoyable or fulfilling, and why?* Once the conversation had started, teachers would be given maximum freedom to share and reflect on their experience.

The two key questions *'What do you understand by teaching?'* and *'What do you understand by learning?'* put forward to teachers were followed up by neutral questions like *'What do you mean by that?'*, *'Can you give an example of what you just said?'* or *'Can you explain that further?'* which aim to seek clarification. In addition, there were also specific questions inviting teachers to reflect on what they had said, such as: "You said X, and then Y. Can you describe how X and Y relate to each other?" (Bowden, 1996, 2000). These follow-up questions allow the researcher to explore contradictions and provide teachers a chance to clarify or confirm the meanings of what they had said. This process would continue until the meaning of what had been said was clear and the sharing on a theme could go no further.

It is worth noting that since this study aims primarily at gauging the "collective" conceptions of the *group as a whole* rather than to detail *individual* profiles or comparison according to the phenomenographic procedures, the use of opening questions would not result in producing different kinds of data. An excerpt of an interview transcript was in Appendix VI.

### **4.5.3 The handling of interview transcription**

All interviews were transcribed verbatim based on the language(s) teachers used, be it Chinese or English. Chinese scripts were written in the researcher's familiar traditional characters. Pauses and hesitations like Chinese equivalents of 'um', 'oh' and 'ah', etc. were transcribed to retain the original outlook. Transcripts enabled the researcher to refer back at various stages of data analysis and for repeated reading to become familiar with teachers' thinking.

Data analysis is based on segments of interviews rather than a complete interview (Åkerlind, 2005). Segments required in data reporting were translated into English for use. The researcher has been aware that translation is not merely a change from Chinese to English code. It is about representing one modality in another - from the spoken to the written - which is both an act of translation and transcription involving "adaption and interpretation" (Copland & Creese, 2015:200). There is not a unique, correct translation. Issues of translatability include the possible extent to which concepts can be translated across languages, the ways to guarantee meanings being carried across languages, and the need to reflect possible differences in views (Temple, 2008).

English-transcribed data used were repeatedly read, carefully checked for accuracy and searched for precise words to convey meanings in context. All translation was read multiple times and compared back and forth against meanings in the original transcripts. In presenting quotations, sometimes Chinese terms are put alongside English translation for the sake of precision.

### **4.5.4 Locating core ideas and identifying categories of description**

Bowden (2000:7) specifies phenomenographic research procedures in terms of research planning, data collection, data analysis and interpretation. They are strictly adhered to in this study. The process of locating core ideas and identifying categories of description includes *four* key steps, namely, intensive reading of transcripts, selection of protocols/quotations based on the criterion of relevance, initial grouping/categories based on criteria emerged, and verifying and affirming of categories based on their distinct characteristics (Marton & Booth, 1997). These steps are shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 The four key steps in locating and identifying categories of description



At the start of locating core ideas was a *sensitisation* process in which the researcher familiarised herself with the thoughts of teachers through repeated reading of individual transcripts for thorough understanding. In line with Briggs (1986), interview transcripts were examined in great detail to ascertain what each question and reply meant to the interviewers and the interviewees in context, and what was said and meant by both parties to prevent misunderstanding.

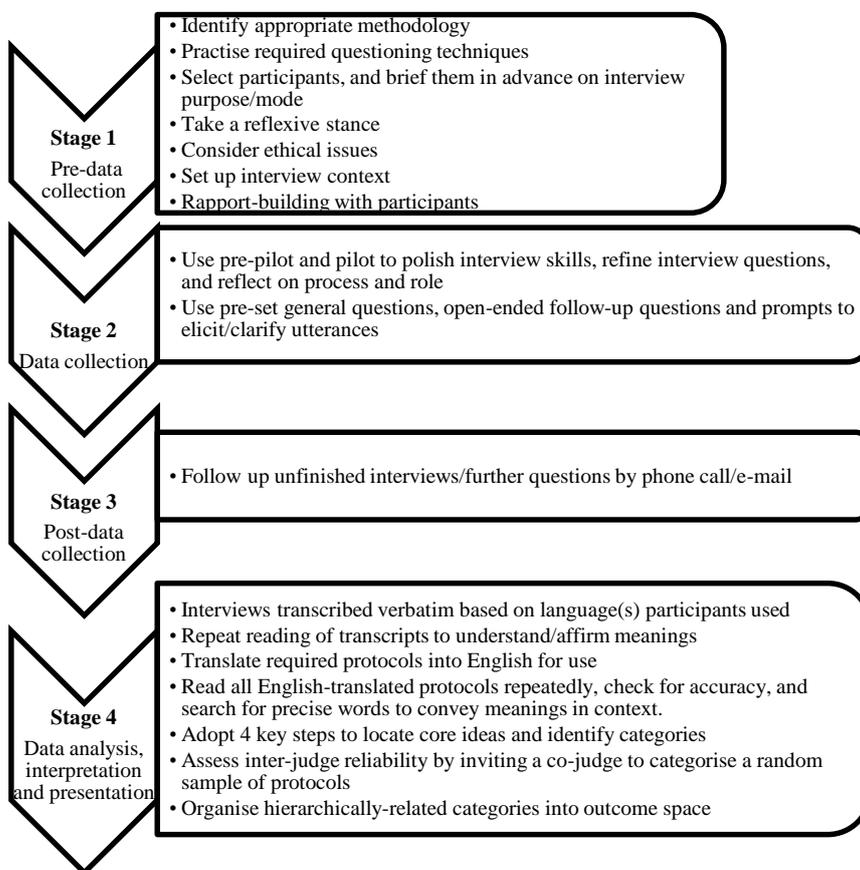
After the *sensitisation* process all transcripts were read again to identify the diverse ways different teachers understood Chinese teaching and learning. In other words, transcripts were first read with a high degree of openness to allow meanings to emerge while later reading focused on particular aspects to ensure in-depth understanding. The different ways teachers understood Chinese teaching and learning were explored in relation to one another. Their diverse understanding was identified to bring out characteristics distinct from the others to form a set of *categories of description*.

In the selection of quotations, the early stage was based on the criterion of relevance. Segments of transcripts relevant to teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning Chinese were marked and selected as quotes. They were put together to form a pool where similarities and differences among them became obvious. They were then grouped and re-grouped according to criteria constructed from the researcher's understanding that emerged out of the data analysis. The quotations were placed under broad headings and then put back in their original interview contexts to be read again to ensure the accuracy of the heading/labels assigned to them based on their meaning. The sorting, re-sorting and comparing process was continued until a satisfactory set of *categories of description* emerged. For instance, adherent to well-defined procedures of data analysis, the present study has identified the six categories of description used to describe the six teaching conceptions revealed in the data, and another six categories of

description used to describe the six learning conceptions, which will be discussed in detail in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

In the process of affirming the identified categories of description, the initial categories emerged from the data would first form an analytical framework for further reading of transcripts to check the validity of the categories discovered. Then modifications were made to the categories in the process to aim at more precise identification of the distinct characteristics within. To avoid early closure of categories of description, the researcher had to avoid holding any predetermined views, seeing the data from any prior constructed hypotheses, and putting teachers' descriptions into existing structures. For readers' ease of reference, Figure 4.2 below summaries the procedures the researchers adhered to in co-constructing phenomenographic interviews in data collection and handling.

Figure 4.2 Co-constructing phenomenographic interviews in data collection and handling



As discussed in Chapter 3, data analysis focuses on the search for variation in teachers' conceptions to make explicit their meaning structure. It consists of the identification of *referential* and *structural* aspects. The question of 'what is the meaning of' a certain quotation has to be checked again with 'what is the focus of' it. By drawing on the logical relationships found between the different ways of understanding Chinese teaching and learning, a hierarchically ordered set of categories called the *outcome space* could be established (Marton, 1981; Marton et al., 1993; Marton & Booth, 1997). The process of producing the teaching and learning categories from findings based on phenomenographic principles is outlined in Figure 6.2 in Chapter 6.

#### **4.5.5 The issue of inter-judge reliability**

To assess the reliability of classification of teachers' protocols according to the categories of description, another Chinese researcher from HK familiar with phenomenography and experienced in handling verbal data was invited to do the categorisation for a random selection of transcript segments. For both conceptions of teaching and of learning, data analysis yielded 6 categories of description in each case.

As with teaching conceptions, 15 segments of interview transcripts were selected at random from the pool of each of the 6 categories. The 90 segments were then randomly re-shuffled. Provided with a detailed description of the identified categories, the co-judge was asked to classify each segment into one of the six teaching conceptions. Results from the co-judge were compared with the researcher's original classification. The same procedure was followed for the case of teachers' conceptions of learning Chinese.

The co-judge came up with codings of 81.1% agreement in the teaching conception categories and 80.0% agreement in the learning conception categories. The corresponding values of Cohen's kappa are 0.7733 and 0.7600 respectively. Both percentage agreement and Cohen's kappa values indicate good agreement of the coding results and hence good inter-judge reliability in the two classification schemes.

## **4.6 Additional data handling**

### **4.6.1 Assigning individual teachers' principal teaching and learning conceptions**

While data analysis focussed on the 'collective' to uncover all qualitatively different ways Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced Chinese teaching and learning, the *categories of description* reached were also used as a scheme for classifying participating teachers in terms of the 'dominant' conception each of them had expressed. The obtained framework was employed to inspect individual teachers' thinking. Each teacher was assigned a 'principal' conception of teaching and of learning after careful assessment of transcripts of the teacher concerned.

Understandably the same teacher might express thoughts pertaining to more than one conception in the interview. Thus, rules were required to handle the classification. First, a teacher's dominant teaching/learning conception was not assigned simply because it was expressed most often. The assigning of a principal conception has to do with the meaning an utterance was pointing to. Second, in line with previous research (Prosser, Trigwell & Taylor, 1994; Tang, 2001), the highest level of conception was basically registered as the principal conception if the teacher could articulate it clearly. Third, although teachers might express more than one conception, they were likely to possess a dominant perspective on teaching and on learning as illustrated by the strength and justification of comments they made.

In dealing with any ambiguous case, the full transcript of the teacher was read again until the emphases of the utterances/ideas were fully grasped. This assignment of a principal conception of teaching and of learning respectively for all teachers provides information that can enhance our understanding of individuals and allow further comparison of them (Section 8.2).

### **4.6.2 Producing individual profiles of teachers**

Though the aim of the research is to understand teachers' *collective mind* (Marton & Booth, 1997), the researcher believes individual profiles of teachers can be very useful. First, the process of portraying a teacher asks her to dwell deeply on his/her experience which is crucial to develop *empathic* understanding towards them (Karlsson,

1993). Second, information about individuals is valuable for understanding the bigger picture when the analysis moves back and forth between the collective and individuals whose experiences are referred to via quotations.

Third, it is vital to ensure individuals' unique experiences are not lost in reporting since teachers' experiences form the background against which the meanings of quotations are to be understood. Lastly, the profiling of teachers helps convey to readers a richer picture of them so that their experiences could be better appreciated. In this study, the researcher has selected 2 Cantonese and 2 Mandarin teachers whose individual profiles will be reported to illustrate how their personal background and experience might have shaped their teaching and learning conceptions (Section 8.3).

#### **4.6.3 Reporting additional themes**

Whenever there were observations and findings deemed relevant but not in any way subsumed under the categories of description, they have been organised into 'themes' and presented in order of significance. Additional themes to be discussed include the *factors* perceived by Cantonese and Mandarin teachers as influencing their thoughts (Section 8.4), and the *metaphors* teachers used to describe Chinese teaching and learning (Section 8.5). It is believed that these thematic reports would be mutually supportive in providing a comprehensive picture of the specific socio-cultural environment in which the teachers lived and worked.

### **4.7 Reflexivity in the process of data collection and analysis**

#### **4.7.1 Reflexivity in collection of data**

Interacting with teachers was a thought-provoking experience. The researcher's gender, cultural background and ability to speak fluent Cantonese and Mandarin empowered her to interact with these predominantly female Cantonese and Mandarin teachers with much ease and gain their trust often after a few minutes into the conversation. Being a Cantonese native-speaker, a professional Chinese and English teacher in HK, and having years of experience teaching in a Cantonese school, she was

cautious about her role when interacting with teachers since her identity could influence the research.

Her professional background enabled her to observe in detail teaching and learning activities in class. She could understand teachers' views and was alert to keep an appropriate distance from teachers and pupils during the fieldwork. Her role as a researcher and a PhD student from a Scottish university invited both welcome and reservation from schools. She was welcome in varying degrees. While some schools were glad to see an academic do research in complementary education as she might bring to the public more about Chinese schools, other schools were hesitant as they were not sure whether their school and teachers would thereby be assessed in some ways after being interviewed. To avoid such worries, the researcher had right from the start made her role and the purpose of the research clear to them.

On two occasions the researcher was cordially invited to give advice to teachers regarding Chinese teaching and to suggest ways to improve the curriculum. But invitations were courteously declined in order not to cause unnecessary confusion of roles. In general the researcher was accepted in friendly ways. During her many visits to different schools, she was offered tea and sometimes a simple Chinese fried rice/noodle lunch during the break. She was invited once to attend a school's end-of-year ceremony of prize-giving and pupils' cultural performance.

#### **4.7.2 Reflexivity in analysis of data**

Walsh (2000) points out a study conducted by an individual researcher is valid if the researcher could make "explicit his or her input into the analysis and allows other researchers to check, test and probe the initial results" (p.30). Åkerlind (2005) notes a large amount of "high-quality phenomenographic research" is done by "an individual researcher working on one's own". In this study data analysis was done entirely by the researcher, with the exception of a small part contributed by an academic who acted as a co-judge in assessing inter-judge reliability. The researcher acted as her own devil's advocate. She is aware that data analysis might be less rigorous when compared with team analysis in which team members can remind and challenge each other in the process.

She has taken suggestions from Åkerlind, Bowden and Green (2005) and Trigwell (2000) to maintain rigour in data analysis by taking a few breaks in the process so as to return to the data with a revitalised mind. She checked the tentative outcomes against the transcript data constantly, and not only looked for supporting but also contradictory examples. During the analysis, her focus was on whether her findings would be capable of generating insights into understanding teachers' teaching and learning conceptions. She also gathered feedback from her supervisors on initial outcomes. Regular discussions were held with supervisors to clarify queries.

The analysis of phenomenographic interviews was more difficult and time-consuming than the researcher first expected. This was due to the need to remain very careful and open throughout the process. She constantly questioned the categories for conceptions of teaching and learning initially identified, and to put aside her prior knowledge on Chinese teaching and learning she was familiar with. She sometimes had the feeling that she was not understanding the data as clearly as she should, so she had to keep coming back to examine it.

#### **4.7.3 Reflexivity in interviews and language use**

As the researcher can recall, long-serving Cantonese teachers were enthusiastic in their sharing. Usually these teachers started to teach in schools as a kind of support to their own children's Chinese learning. After their children had finished their GCSE/A-level and left school, they stayed on to teach as they had developed a love for their work. These long-serving teachers experienced first-hand the changes that took place in the past decades, such as the increasing number of third generation Scottish-Chinese pupils, the expansion of Mandarin classes, and the growing number of Cantonese-speaking children choosing to learn Mandarin. They shared frankly not only the difficulties they experienced in teaching and pupils' learning, but also the history and challenges of their schools such as the shortage of fund and teachers, and the lack of support from parents.

The researcher felt that long-serving Cantonese teachers opened up to her more than some Mandarin teachers. It might be that because she was also from the Cantonese community, these parent teachers felt at ease to share with her what it was really like in their schools. As with the Mandarin, those young teachers who were postgraduate

students were frank, open and sometimes chatty in sharing their thoughts, whereas some middle-aged Mandarin teachers might appear a bit reserved.

As with the use of interview language, the researcher was glad to see one Mandarin teacher who offered to be interviewed in Cantonese. It was a thoughtful gesture on her part to build a good rapport with the researcher by choosing to speak Cantonese. Grown up and educated in northern China, she moved to the Cantonese-speaking southern city Shenzhen many years ago to be with her family working there. Having lived in Shenzhen for years, she could speak good Cantonese. She switched occasionally back to Mandarin when she needed to say some Mandarin idioms. Of course the researcher also switched language with her to maintain smooth flow of conversation. This is again a good example of interview co-construction, since the interviewee took a sympathetic step towards the interviewer by being willing to speak Cantonese, even though the interviewee's first language was Mandarin.

Teachers' choice of interview language and the researcher's ability to navigate between different linguistic varieties were found to be essential in establishing relationship. The simultaneous use of Cantonese and Mandarin helped shorten distance and develop trust between the researcher and the researched who met for the first time. Interestingly, 3 out of the 24 participating teachers chose to be interviewed in English, although they switched occasionally back to Cantonese or Mandarin when they found it natural to express themselves. Among them were two doctoral students and a Mandarin teacher who married a Scot. They found it easier to convey complicated ideas in English after staying many years in Scotland. The researcher switched languages with them to facilitate good interaction.

These teachers' choice of language has indicated their flexible linguistic capability when dealing with varying situations. English, in this light, has taken on an important role in conveying ideas in an interview concerning education. Their use of English has prompted the researcher to think again about the role of English in Chinese learning among bilingual Scottish-Chinese children educated in Scotland. The role of English in Chinese teaching and learning can be 'a cause for concern' to teachers in Chinese schools.

In brief, except Mandarin teacher M-D, the participating teachers expressed their thoughts predominantly in everyday language. They did not talk in academic language

like ‘intrinsic’ or ‘extrinsic’, ‘integrative’ or ‘instrumental’ motivation, or ‘L2 acquisition’; nor did they use terms relating to Scotland education such as ‘Curriculum for Excellence’ or the ‘1+2 policy’. This suggests that they might not have a meta-language to draw on to express their thinking and communicate with colleagues regarding pedagogical matters, and/or they are outsiders in respect of the mainstream education system.

#### **4.8 Ethical considerations**

Maintaining ethical conduct is an important part to ensure research quality. In the present study special care has been taken to ensure good practices and proper procedures throughout. E-mail applications were made to the chosen Chinese schools to gain access and to interview teachers. All headteachers and teachers were assured that names of their schools and identity of individual teachers would be masked and not be disclosed to any third party in any form of reporting.

Informed consent was obtained from each of the Chinese teachers before they took part. The nature and purpose of the research, the use of data, the guarantee of anonymity and their right of withdrawal were agreed between the researcher and teachers (Appendices I and II). The researcher has been responsible for appropriate record-keeping in all stages, and ensuring best management and preservation of relevant primary and personal data. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of data transcription. The researcher is obligated to interpret and present the data accurately and honestly. In view of the possible effects the interpretation, discussion and conclusion of the study might have on the teachers and Chinese schools participated in the research, all information concerning them has been kept confidential throughout.

## **CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS - UNDERSTANDING CHINESE SCHOOL CONTEXT**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 report findings which aim to answer the three research questions of this study. Chapter 5 sets the context for the subsequent three chapters by depicting the various aspects of Chinese schools through data from classroom observation and sharing of some teachers. It conveys a general picture of the learning and teaching activities in these schools, thus providing the background necessary for readers to understand the thoughts of the Cantonese and Mandarin teachers being reported as conceptions in Chapters 6 and 7.

In this chapter, classroom observations are reported according to some prominent themes emerged from the data. Events like the researcher's attendance at a teacher meeting and her dialogues with pupils and teachers are also reported. Observation records preserve in-situ teachers' emotions, feelings, values and beliefs, and portray the many contextual factors which might have played some roles in shaping their teaching and learning conceptions. Chapter 5 sheds light on all three research questions of the study.

### **5.2 Cantonese and Mandarin teachers of the present study**

As said, a total of twenty-four teachers (11 Mandarin, 13 Cantonese) participated in this study. There were twenty-two female and two male teachers of a mixed age range, among whom 11 were from HK, 10 from China, 1 from Taiwan, 1 from Macau, and 1 born and educated in Scotland to a Cantonese family from HK.

**Classification of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers.** There is complexity in deciding how the participating teachers are being classified as Cantonese and Mandarin teachers. As stated in Chapter 2, the Chinese language consists of a body of regional dialects. For various reasons, it is likely that the participating teachers would know additional dialects besides the Cantonese or Mandarin language they taught in Chinese schools. For instance, Cantonese teachers also know how to speak Mandarin through joining Mandarin classes or acquiring it from mass media. Mandarin teachers may also know

Cantonese through watching HK television programmes, living and working in Guangdong province in Southern China. And both Cantonese/Mandarin teachers may know additional Chinese dialects through their home connection or other channels.

In the present study the criteria set for a Cantonese or Mandarin teacher are: except teacher C-S<sup>1</sup>, all Chinese teachers are native speakers of either Cantonese or Mandarin who were born, grown up and educated in their respective Cantonese or Mandarin-speaking community in China, Taiwan, Macau or HK. Before they came to Scotland, they used Cantonese or Mandarin language in their primary and secondary schools, in the community and at home in their daily life. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 list some basic information of the teachers.

**Cantonese teachers.** As shown in Table 5.1, among the 13 Cantonese teachers were 1 postgraduate, 2 undergraduate students, 1 caterer and 9 housewives from HK. The 9 housewives included 2 former school teachers, of whom one was a teacher from Macau. The number of years they had been teaching Cantonese in school ranged from 1 to 18 years.

**Mandarin teachers.** The 11 Mandarin teachers in Table 5.2 include 4 professionals, 4 postgraduate students and 3 housewives. The 3 housewives were all former teachers in China who were graduate or postgraduate from universities in China and abroad. Their teaching experience in Mandarin schools ranged from 1 to 10 years.

For ease of reference, each participating teacher was given a code, such as ‘C-N, Grade 8’ or ‘M-A, Grade 3’. Here ‘C’ stands for Cantonese and ‘M’ for Mandarin, followed by a letter to identify each individual and the grade level the teacher taught. Detailed descriptions of the two groups of teachers are given in Appendices IV and V.

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<sup>1</sup> Teacher C-S was born in Scotland to a Cantonese speaking family from HK. She spoke Cantonese with her family at home.

Table 5.1 Cantonese teachers participating in the study

Teacher code	Place of origin	Sex	Qualification	Occupation	Years taught in Chinese school
C-N	Macau	F	Graduate	Housewife	1
C-O	HK	F	Undergraduate	Student	3
C-P	HK	F	College	Housewife	5
C-Q	HK	F	College	Housewife	11
C-R	HK	F	Secondary	Housewife	10
C-S	Scotland	F	Undergraduate	Student	1
C-T	HK	M	Postgraduate	Student	8
C-U	HK	F	Secondary	Housewife	5
C-V	HK	F	Secondary	Housewife	18
C-W	HK	F	Secondary	Housewife	4
C-X	HK	F	Secondary	Housewife	2
C-Y	HK	F	Secondary	Housewife	7
C-Z	HK	M	Secondary	Cook	1

Table 5.2 Mandarin teachers participating in the study

Teacher code	Place of origin	Sex	Qualification	Occupation	Years taught in Chinese school
M-A	China	F	Graduate	Housewife	3
M-B	China	F	Postgraduate	Interpreter	5
M-C	China	F	Postgraduate	Student	3
M-D	China	F	Postgraduate	Housewife	4
M-E	China	F	Postgraduate	Student	1
M-F	Taiwan	F	Graduate	Teacher	2
M-G	China	F	Graduate	Housewife	5
M-H	China	F	Graduate	Interpreter	10
M-I	China	F	Postgraduate	Student	1
M-J	China	F	Postgraduate	Student	2
M-K	China	F	Graduate	Accountant	1

### 5.3 Teaching and learning as observed in schools

**Teaching and learning materials.** Textbooks and workbooks were the core teaching and learning materials. Schools supplied their own exercise books printed with squares for character-writing. Squared paper is widely used, since it helps children gain a sense of the size and shape of each character they are writing. Pupils brought textbooks and stationery with them. They each had a school handbook to record homework, dictation results and entries for school to communicate with parents. Textbooks convey linguistic, cultural and historical knowledge to pupils and include traditional Chinese cultural contents such as folktales, poems, Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival. There are stories of ancient scholars, painters, calligraphers and brave heroes, which offer opportunities to cultivate pupils' personality and moral character. Some teachers brought with them their own word cards, pictures, laptops and other materials to help with classroom teaching.

**On writing.** Classroom literacy activities observed included paper-and-pencil exercises and free practices which did not require pupils to sit properly while learning. There were language games in which children were asked to match up semantic and phonetic radicals to form correct characters. Pupils were seen writing newly-learned characters in jotters, but no intensive copying or handwriting practice was seen in class. Grade 1 and 2 pupils were constantly reminded by teachers of the proper writing stroke order. Young children appeared to be keen on character-writing. In a class I saw pupils doing their workbook exercise first individually and then other exercises with classmates in pairs.

**On dictation.** In the reading-type dictation teachers would read aloud characters or phrases for pupils to write down. In memorised-tasks pupils were required to recite, learn sentences or short passages by heart and dictate the contents without any hints from the teacher. The dictation content was mostly what pupils had learned in the previous week. Only the reading-type dictation was seen in all observations. Seeing some seven-/eight-year-old children who could dictate complicated characters neatly in their jotters was impressive.

**A dictation game observed.** Worth mentioning is a dictation game I observed in a Grade 1 class. Pupils were divided into three groups. Queued up in three lines, they took turns to dictate on the whiteboard what their teacher read out to them. They were assisted by teammates in the process. The abilities some children showed in writing

characters were notable since they had performed well. Their parents must have helped them revise at home. Later the teacher rewarded the whole class with sweets and stickers. The motivation and learning attitudes of young children were good, much better than many teenage pupils I had observed in senior classes.

**On speaking and listening.** Reading aloud was a common practice in classroom teaching and learning. Teachers read out new vocabularies, the class repeated them, and then some pupils took turns to read them out to the class. A variety of such reading aloud practices were observed, namely, whole-class choral repetition of characters and phrases, whole-class oral practice on language structures, teacher-to-child oral practice based on models, and question-and-answer practice based on word cards and textbook passages. Teachers always helped with unfamiliar or mispronounced words. They explained meanings and usage to pupils. Other observed activities included pupils making up sentences with compound characters with the aid of flash cards, and replacing an original song script by newly-learned characters in singing.

When asked, teachers explained that the choral speaking, chanting and repetition of phrases pupils used in learning were not aimed at rote memorisation (死記硬背), but developing their ability in speaking because they often had difficulties creating sentences of their own. Due to the limited time, there was more teacher-talk than pupil-talk. In some classes, little time was assigned to individual work.

**On teaching approach.** Most observed lessons had clear learning objectives. Teaching comprised learning activities related to teaching objectives to produce meaningful learning. Pedagogical devices were used to warm up pupils at the beginning of a lesson. Contents of the previous lesson were often revised before new content knowledge was introduced. In teaching vocabularies teachers usually compared in detail look-alike Chinese characters to alert pupils not to mix them up. Story-telling, language and role-playing games were widely used in lower grades to encourage pupils to speak/interact with classmates. Teachers might read stories to pupils, ask them information about the texts, and explain new characters and/or the moral themes concerned. Activities with body movements and singing were also seen in junior class.

**The use of morphological awareness as a teaching strategy.** A common way teachers taught Chinese characters was to break down their component parts. For instance, a teacher explained to pupils the character ‘晴’ is made up of the semantic

radical ‘日’ (the sun), which gives information to its meaning, and the phonetic radical ‘青’ (green), which gives a clue to its pronunciation. The two parts ‘日’ (the sun) and ‘青’ (green) make up ‘晴’, which means that *the sun shines* or *no rain*. Using this example, the teacher encouraged pupils to guess the meaning and pronunciation of new characters by examining their semantic and phonetic elements already familiar to them. She also introduced phrases which involved the character 晴, such as 晴天 (dry day) and 晴朗 (sunny). She also talked about other characters with the same semantic radical ‘日’ (the sun), for example, ‘時’ (time) and ‘晚’ (late or night). Through this, the teacher used the strategy of morphological awareness to enhance pupils’ understanding, to develop their meta-linguistic awareness of characters by stimulating their thinking and to enhance their abilities to self-learn.

**An episode on teaching a Chinese poem.** Teacher C-N taught her Grade 8 pupils a Tang Dynasty (618 - 907 AD) poem titled “A Morning in Spring” (春曉) by Meng Haoran (孟浩然). This four-line poem about the poet’s joy in seeing the scenery of a spring morning was taught in an interesting way to facilitate pupils’ learning. Using this millennium-old classic poem, she enabled pupils to connect to a culture that extended far back in time. Pupils could realise thereby that their Chinese identity has very deep roots. The original Chinese poem and the researcher’s English translation of it are as follows:

春眠不覺曉, (I sleep in spring unaware of morning arrives)

處處聞啼鳥。(I hear birds sing everywhere)

夜來風雨聲, (Sounds of winds and rains come in the night)

花落知多少。(I wonder how many petals have fallen)

Instead of using an expository teaching method, C-N started the lesson by conducting a guessing game requiring pupils’ imagination, sharing and presenting of ideas. The class was divided into four groups. Each group was given felt-tip pens and a poster-size colour paper sheet to draw on. They were told to divide the sheet into four

parts. Each part was for the content of one line of the poem. The pupils were free to draw and write as long as they thought the meaning of the poem was effectively conveyed.

Pupils were advised to read and think about the poem individually before sharing their ideas in the group. They were given about half an hour to discuss how their ideas could be put/drawn on paper to display its meaning. Pupils could consult dictionaries and use their textbook. Other than sharing their understanding, these pupils, being a member of a group, took up different roles in drawing, writing and presenting the finished product to the class. In presenting their work they needed to explain what the four-line poem was about and why they thought so.

The teacher monitored pupils' progress and praised their efforts during the process. After the presentation, she supplemented a few points pupils had overlooked. She focused on the main theme and deeper meaning/feelings the author possibly intended to convey underneath his words. Afterwards she moved on to teach the pronunciation and meaning of a few unfamiliar characters in the poem.

It was a well-planned lesson of engaging learning activities. The lesson stimulated thinking, enhanced cooperation and integrated pupils' learning of the four skills - reading, writing, speaking and listening. The class followed the teacher's instruction closely, engaged themselves earnestly in the task and were highly motivated. Laughter was heard during the activity because it was fun. More importantly, pupils took on an active role first by thinking through the poem, and then sharing ideas about it with their classmates before the teacher started to teach the poem to them herself.

As this teaching episode has demonstrated, while many teachers in Chinese schools were not professionally trained as Chinese teachers in Scotland, some were academics or teachers in their place of origin, and therefore not only certain standard practices in foreign language teaching could be observed in their lessons, but there were also innovative and effective strategies used in their teaching of Cantonese and Mandarin. These practices were in line with the spirit of whole-class teaching pedagogies used in teaching languages.

**Junior classes.** Children of junior classes usually came to learn with their siblings/friends in school. They brought with them snacks like juice, crisps and sweets. During breaks they shared snacks and chatted with each other, making their weekly

Chinese learning also a socialising activity. Grade 1 to 4 observed were largely attentive and well-behaved. They chatted but were not noisy. They were respectful to teachers who provided them not only with knowledge but also love and care. Cantonese or Mandarin was rarely used among pupils outside classroom as they chatted in English. The researcher had talked to pupils before lesson, after lesson and during break time. When asked if Chinese was difficult to learn, some said ‘yes’ and some said ‘it’s ok’.

**Senior classes.** The researcher had observed a senior Cantonese class with both a GCSE and an A-level group, five to six pupils in each, taught by one teacher. The teacher told me the school could not afford to recruit two teachers due to a shortage of funds. Pupils of the GCSE and A-level groups sat at separate tables engaging in different tasks. They behaved well and the classroom atmosphere was good. One group was preparing a discussion while the other was doing a writing task. Pupils talked to each other both in Cantonese and in English. The teacher was a doctoral student, quick-witted and humorous. He moved around looking after the two groups and monitoring individual learning. His teaching went on smoothly in class.

With public examinations not far away, these GCSE and A-level pupils were prepared to work hard. Two of his pupils were in fact already in the university. He said the majority of his class did well in their own schools. They did not need the A-level Chinese qualification to get into university. But since they had learned Cantonese for many years, their parents would like them to round up their learning with a recognised academic qualification.

However, pupils in senior classes other than GCSE and A-level classes appeared not much enthusiastic in learning Cantonese. Chatting was observed in class, though pupils still behaved properly. During breaks pupils talked to each other, listened to music, sent texts or played games on their own gadgets. These teenagers were friendly and responsive when the researcher talked to them. They answered mainly in English, obviously feeling very comfortable to talk in English.

When asked how well they understood what their Chinese teacher taught in class, some responded just with a smile while mostly said ‘it’s okay’. They said they were told to come to learn by parents, and at home they seldom revised the content they learned in school. Some considered Cantonese more difficult to learn than French. They said they used Cantonese only with their family or on holiday in HK. The researcher

once talked to two brothers who spoke English with each other at home. Both said they did not particularly like learning languages, be it Chinese or French. One said “French is boring but not too bad,” while another said he simply “hates Spanish”.

### **Summary**

The observed teachers were devoted and did what they could to cater for pupils’ learning needs. Classroom teaching was mostly pupil-oriented, knowledge-based but also quite creative, e.g. the way teacher C-N handled the Tang poem. Code-switching was often seen in class. While most teachers would switch to English when pupils looked puzzled, there were teachers who deliberately avoided using English and used Chinese as much as possible in teaching. Activities like writing exercises, presentation and dictation were often carried out not in traditional but innovative ways. Though senior class pupils appeared not enthusiastic in learning, teachers used versatile methods to motivate them to learn.

### **5.4 Interaction with Cantonese and Mandarin teachers - Six episodes**

Walking in the hall, up and down the stairs and along the corridors in school, the researcher often heard teachers talk to each other in Cantonese or Mandarin, while pupils would chat among themselves predominantly in English. The bilingual identity of young pupils was apparent, which was in sharp contrast to the clear Chinese linguistic identity of their teachers. Below are some noteworthy encounters the researcher had with teachers.

#### **Episode 1 – Communication between Cantonese and Mandarin teachers**

On occasion of an interview appointment in one of the schools, the researcher was invited to join in a teacher meeting chaired by the deputy head. This was a well-established school with both Cantonese and Mandarin section. Sitting at the corner of a big rectangular conference table, the researcher saw teachers gradually moving into the staff room. Cantonese and Mandarin teachers sat at opposite sides of the table discussing things among themselves. As all Cantonese teachers could speak Mandarin,

the first part of the meeting was conducted in Mandarin about things of common concerns before the two groups held their separate meetings.

The deputy head gave all teachers an article on language teaching as part of the school's on-going teacher development programme. As the school was to participate in an inter-school Chinese writing competition, details of the event were passed on to teachers. She talked about things teachers needed to do with pupils in class. Questions were raised, discussed and the atmosphere was good. It was obvious that the school was forward-looking, full of energy and had a will to do well. However, the researcher had an impression at the meeting that the two groups of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers did not communicate much with each other, perhaps because they had their own, different concerns in teaching the language.

### **Episode 2 – To learn Cantonese or Mandarin in Chinese school**

The researcher once talked to a Mandarin teacher at a lunch break. The rapid expansion of Mandarin classes and the increasing number of children learning Mandarin were mentioned, and it was also recognised that Mandarin classes had outnumbered the Cantonese ones in their school. Knowing the researcher was a Cantonese speaker from HK, she asked why Cantonese parents still kept sending their children to learn Cantonese but not Mandarin. She asked why these children needed to learn Cantonese at all, when Cantonese was unlikely to have any long-term need in Scotland and the world. She thought it would be good for Cantonese children to use the opportunity to learn Mandarin instead so as to facilitate their chance to work in China.

Comments like 'Mandarin is more useful' or 'Mandarin has a higher status than Cantonese' are not uncommon. But in the school context of teaching for ethnic heritage language, it would appear quite out of place to have a similar comment from a Mandarin teacher who considered ethnic Cantonese children should learn Mandarin instead because it would be more useful in the future. Her comment challenges, in essence, the basic premise of setting up a Chinese complementary school to teach ethnic heritage language. Cantonese schools are nevertheless "mother-tongue" institutions for migrants' children to maintain their ethnic language Cantonese and possibly also to acquire a HK identity as an important component of their Chineseness within their own multi-faceted identity. Similarly, Mandarin schools are educational institutions, at least

initially, not intended to teach Mandarin as a foreign language for pupils whose ethnic/native language is not Mandarin.

In fact, it has to be admitted that this Mandarin teacher was not alone to have such a thought; on the contrary, it is shared by many Cantonese parents nowadays. Thus the question runs deeper: what should be the role of a Chinese school as an ethnic heritage language institution, be it for Cantonese or Mandarin, in the current socio-economic context? Should it still just focus on “mother-tongue” maintenance to facilitate intergenerational communication, or should it, especially in the case of Mandarin, focus on the practical values of Mandarin as an international language and official language of China? This point should warrant more attention from teachers, parents, pupils, schools, and not least of all, academic researchers in heritage language education.

### **Episode 3 – To use Mandarin or English as the medium of instruction for Mandarin**

As mentioned, pupils’ bilingual identity was apparent and code-switching was observed in class. As regards the medium of instruction, teacher M-A used predominantly Mandarin in teaching. She said she basically did not use much English. She used Mandarin “pinyin”, intonation, facial expression, body gestures and other teaching aids to teach Mandarin. M-A said her ‘use of Mandarin to teach Mandarin approach’ was inspired by her own successful English learning experience. As a secondary school Chinese teacher in China, she spoke very little English when she first moved to Scotland. In the beginning the Scottish accent made spoken English difficult for her to understand. She recalled her experience learning English in a Scottish college. Her teacher spoke only English to students of various origins. She had no choice but to listen carefully. The advantage was that she gradually understood more spoken English and was making good progress.

This all-English approach inspired her to consider an all-Chinese approach since she thought it could be equally useful for her pupils to learn Mandarin in similar ways. She said now she seldom needed to use English in teaching. She considered a *Chinese approach* sound and workable if pupils could be constantly stimulated by Mandarin language in class and in daily life. She believed pupils could eventually understand what their teacher was talking about with an approach like this.

#### **Episode 4 – Pupils learn Mandarin from teachers and teachers learn new things from pupils**

Two Mandarin teachers talked to the researcher about their experiences learning new things from their pupils. Teacher M-G said she learned from pupils while she taught Mandarin to them. She said pupils were imaginative, had lots of new ideas and different knowledge about life, and their thinking was quick. She was glad to see pupils had free minds and their thinking had not yet become rigid and was quite free without pre-set boundary. As she loved to hear new things from pupils, she encouraged them to voice out their thoughts in lessons.

Teacher M-A had established excellent relationship with her pupils. Whilst enjoying teaching Mandarin, she said she also learned things from pupils and she loved to see them learn from each other. She cited an example happened two weeks ago when she invited a Cantonese girl in to explain to her class traditional Chinese characters and to compare them with the simplified characters used in their Mandarin class. Both she and her class enjoyed the experience very much. She also mentioned a boy in her class who loved to come to her during breaks to chat about Chinese Kung-fu stories and cartoons he watched at home. M-A was delighted and eager to maintain a mutual learning relationship with her pupils.

#### **Episode 5 – Parental cooperation as the key to help the third generation learn Cantonese**

Teacher C-Q was a dedicated teacher who went to great lengths to help her pupils learn Cantonese. Every week she arrived early at school to get everything ready for the day and look after those pupils who had to come early because their parents needed to go straight to their take-away shops to begin work after dropping them off.

Despite having taught Cantonese for over 10 years, she told the researcher she still spent two hours per week to prepare her lesson, which included writing lesson plans, preparing exercises and marking dictation and pupils' homework. Though she had rich experience and built up a pool of resources, she said new challenges came up every year because pupils were all different. For instance, she had ten pupils this year. Many did not even have a Chinese name. Their parents were the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Chinese grown up in Scotland knowing no or little Cantonese, and spoke English at home. C-Q said it was hard to get these pupils speak Cantonese or read traditional characters. She

gave up all her break time to offer pupils additional support. She said a two-hour lesson weekly was just too short for teaching Cantonese and Chinese culture.

Though teaching these pupils Cantonese was not easy, she had over the years tremendous satisfaction seeing them learn Cantonese well. She showed the researcher some exercises of her nine- and ten-year-old pupils. The neatly-written characters in dictation and homework jotters were impressive. She avoided using English in teaching to give her pupils more opportunities to speak and listen to Cantonese.

She said children's progress would be very slow with no parental follow-up at home. She felt sad to see parents who did not care about children's Cantonese learning. She said it did not matter whether parents knew Chinese or not as long as they were willing to give children their time. For instance, it could be good encouragement if parents could accompany or simply sit beside their children when they did homework or revised things taught in Chinese school.

### **Episode 6 – Persistence as a way in ethnic language maintenance**

C-U shared how she maintained her daughter's Cantonese learning in Scotland until she got her A-level. She was aware of the importance of insisting that her daughter should speak Cantonese at home. C-U's experience could be useful to many parents in maintaining their children's Cantonese or Mandarin.

This is the story of C-U:

My daughter... came to Scotland when she was in primary five. I arranged her to come to Chinese school at once... She complained and asked me why she needed to attend Chinese classes at weekends rather than joining in other extra-curricular activities. She said she did not need to use Chinese in Scotland and her Chinese was good.

I insisted her to speak Chinese with me at home. I may be a bit authoritative, but I knew if she did not speak it at home she would forget it quickly. I said she did not have a choice because it is a fact that she is Chinese. She must know her Chinese language.

C-U explained why heritage language maintenance is important.

I insisted on this because of my personal experience. My parents were from Hainan and they spoke Hainanese. Before I was born, they moved from Hainan Island to HK. Like me, people born in HK spoke Cantonese and we spoke Cantonese in schools. But my mum said she would not speak to me if I spoke Cantonese but not Hainanese to her.

My mum was actually very clever. Her reason was if I did not speak Hainanese at home, I would not be able to speak it for the rest of my life. At that time I thought it was not necessary for me to speak Hainanese.

C-U later found out her mother was right and Hainanese was very useful to her.

My aunts and uncles left Hainan Island and moved to Thailand many years ago. All my cousins were born in Thailand, so the languages they spoke were Thai and Hainanese. I visited them when I was young. I found out I could only use Hainanese to communicate with them since they did not speak Cantonese and I did not know Thai.

Her experience made her aware *persistence* is vital in ethnic language maintenance.

After that I understand if my mum did not insist on me speaking Hainanese, I would have no way to communicate with my relatives in Thailand. That is why I insist on speaking only Cantonese with my children at home.

## **5.5 Summary of Chapter 5**

Data from observation and discussion with teachers suggest Cantonese and Mandarin teachers might lack understanding of each other's work. The emerging reality of teaching Cantonese as a *foreign* language to the English-speaking 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Chinese children has put extra pressure on Cantonese teachers. Teachers had divided opinions on the role of English as a medium of instruction in teaching Cantonese or Mandarin. They also used different methods to help pupils maintain their ethnic language. While C-U adopted a strict Cantonese policy at home, M-A and M-G built up a mutual learning relationship with pupils. According to them, heritage language maintenance has to be a long process requiring teachers' constant efforts, patience and skills. Cooperation between parents, pupils and teachers is vital to make learning a success. In brief, classroom observation helps link up the many aspects of Chinese teaching and learning, providing the researcher the necessary contextual details to understand what teachers said in their interviews to be reported in Chapter 6 and 7.

## CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS – TEACHERS’ CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHING

### 6.1 Hierarchically inclusive relationships of the six teaching conceptions

Chapter 6 reports the *six* collective teaching conceptions of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers. It aims to answer the first and second research questions of the study. The six teaching conceptions identified are ‘Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills’ (T-1), ‘Service of love to ethnic community’ (T-2), ‘Guidance on learning’ (T-3), ‘Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities’ (T-4), ‘Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest’ (T-5), and ‘Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values’ (T-6).

Each of the *six* conceptions has unique characteristics and links with other categories. They make up the logically-related *outcome space* in terms of meaning, which is reflected in the broadening external horizon from the teaching of fundamental knowledge of Chinese language and skills (T-1) to enhancing pupils’ moral attitudes and Chinese identity (T-6). The part-whole relationship which reflects the connection between each category is discussed under the sub-heading “distinct characteristics and links with other categories” in each category.

According to the phenomenographic proposition, the ways of experiencing represent relationships between the people involved and the phenomenon being experienced. This leads to the assertion that different ways of experiencing are logically-related through the *common* phenomenon being experienced. Thus, there is the assumption that different *categories of description* of the *same* phenomenon are hierarchically structured through a part-whole inclusive relationship (Marton & Booth, 1997).

In exploring teachers’ conceptions, the researcher made no presupposition that the identified categories should be hierarchical. But after the data were analysed, the *six* teaching and the *six* learning conceptions did reveal logically-related part-whole relationships which could be perceived as ordered from less to more complex and at the same time logically subsumed under the next category up the order. A hierarchy of categories did emerge in the outcome space eventually. Marton and Booth (1997) point out the quality of the outcome space is judged by how well the *categories* stand in

relation to the phenomenon, and whether they constitute a hierarchical structure of increasing complexity. Findings of the present study indicate the identified conceptions do meet these criteria.

Findings of this study are in line with Perry (1970), Säljö (1979) and Marton et al. (1993). As discussed in Section 2.3.2, the identified conceptions of these three studies are hierarchical, showing a rise in complexity towards the higher levels. The lowest level is made up of some basic attributes. Once the lower-level understanding has been met, students/teachers move on to the next. In the present study, when the Chinese teachers progressed up the levels, their understanding of Chinese teaching/learning tended to move towards the familial and cultural end.

In the present study the *six* identified teaching conceptions can be organised into *four* levels represented in graphical form in Figure 6.1. The part-whole hierarchical relationships manifest themselves when T-1 focuses first primarily on the fundamental aspect of transmission of knowledge and skills and then becomes more sophisticated as the process involves attitudes and associated practices like serving with love (T-2), guiding and supervising (T-3), and/or catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities (T-4). Teachers come to realise their attitudes, intentions and thoughts through the use of versatile methods (T-5), and eventually to transmit knowledge to learners in order to help enhance and maintain in their pupils Chinese cultural identity and values (T-6).

T-6 can be regarded as the highest goal of Chinese teaching since complementary schools are set up in the first place by the communities to maintain the younger generation's Chinese language, culture and identity. The volunteer teachers probably would not have chosen to spend more than 30 weekends every year to teach Cantonese or Mandarin if their pupils were not descendants of Chinese overseas and did not otherwise have the opportunity to learn Chinese while living abroad in Scotland.

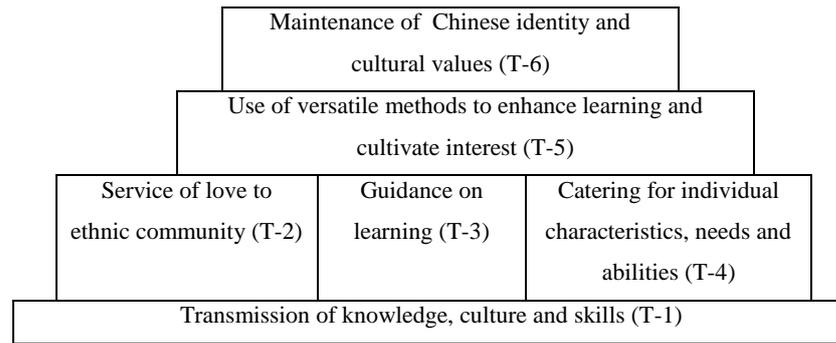
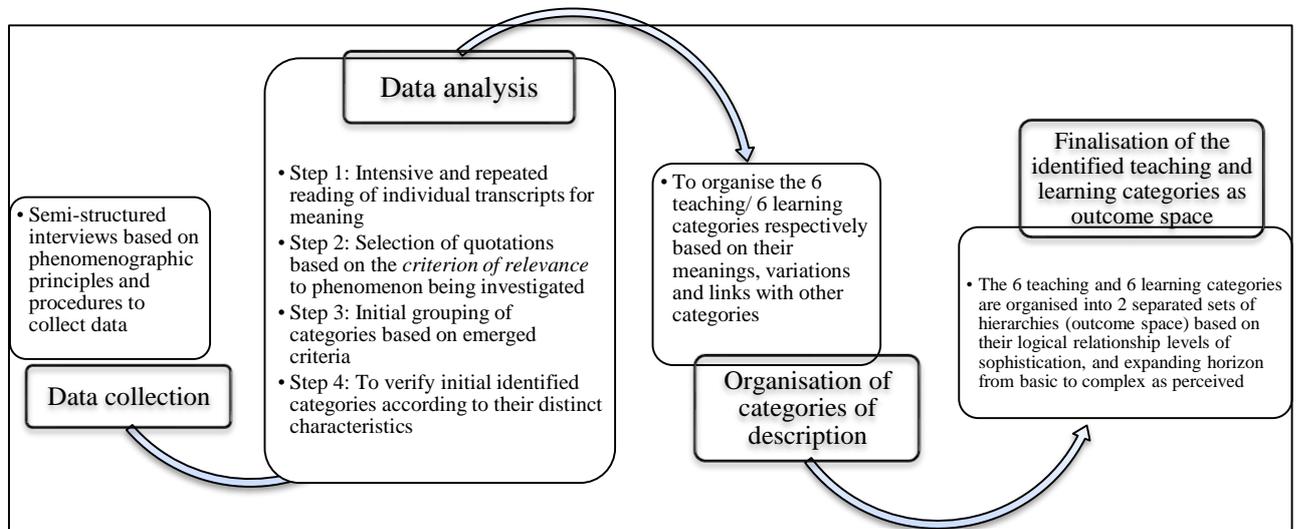


Figure 6.1 The expanding awareness of Chinese teachers on conception of teaching

There are a few things to note when reading Chapter 6. The *referential* and the *structural* aspect of each conception are examined in detail under each category in Section 6.2. Within a category, a section is devoted to highlighting its distinctive features and relationships with other categories.

While the *referential aspect* depicts the core meaning, the *structural aspect* comprises the *internal* and *external* horizon of each category. The internal horizon consists of *dimensions of variation* that have emerged from the data, namely, responsibilities, teacher-pupil relation, concerns, and outcomes. These dimensions will be explained alongside each identified conception. For easy comparison across categories, quotations of Cantonese teachers are cited before Mandarin ones. Figure 6.2 below summarises the procedures in arriving at the teaching and learning conceptions from the findings.

Figure 6.2 The framework of producing teaching and learning categories from findings based on phenomenographic principles



## 6.2 Conception of teaching

### 6.2.1 Category 1: Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills

#### *Referential aspects*

#### **Core meaning**

In *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* (T-1), teaching is experienced as the transmission of knowledge of Chinese language, culture and skills to ethnic young learners to facilitate learning. Knowledge mainly includes Chinese characters and the four language skills.

To teach textbook knowledge and let pupils learn as much as they could. (C-X, Grade 3)

Teaching is mainly to do with teaching Chinese characters and culture... the Tang Dynasty poem ... tea drinking... Chinese New Year and its customs. (C-N, Grade 8)

Teaching is the process of sharing information effectively with others and to inculcate a love of learning... it involves how to transfer knowledge to others. (M-D, Grade 4)

Teaching Chinese characters was considered very important.

To get pupils to learn and memorise characters. (C-W, Grade 7)

To know how to differentiate Chinese characters ... In teaching, I emphasise the differences of [look-alike] characters. (M-J, Grade 3)

Other than textbook contents, general knowledge was taught.

To enrich pupils' general Chinese knowledge, enable them to learn things outside their textbooks... I transmit not only textbook knowledge but also Chinese history... I talk to pupils contemporary Chinese history about Liu Shaoqi [劉少奇, vice-chairman of the Communist Party of China, 1956-1966]. (C-T, A-level)

I do not rely entirely on textbooks... some information is not so accurate... I will supplement some [contents] for them. (M-E, non-native Chinese class)

In the teaching process, teachers emphasised learners' understanding rather than memorisation.

The most important thing is they understand what I teach... what the chapter is about ... and how to do exercises... If there are things they do not understand, I will try my best to make meanings clear to them. (C-X, Grade 3)

Pupils must think about what [they] have learnt, then it could be their knowledge. (M-J, Grade 3)

Teachers held a largely pupil-centred view in teaching.

I adopt their methods to help them... I don't demand they learn everything I have taught... I let them use their own pinyin [symbols] to memorise characters. (C-R, Grade 3)

Mandarin teachers appeared to focus more on speaking and listening.

We need to sort out their listening and speaking first, then their reading and writing. (M-A, Grade 3)

To know Mandarin pinyin, to learn how to speak, then [learn to] read and write. (M-K, Grade 6)

I tell them to face others when performing [in class]. In the process, you will see that when pupils are preparing for the performance, they can correct one another's mistakes (in speaking). (M-E, non-native Chinese class)

In contrast, Cantonese teachers emphasised more on teaching characters, on how to write and on the moral messages of texts.

I stress how to enable pupils to grasp single characters, compound characters and phrases... I teach them the main themes of texts. (C-Z, Grade 4)

To understand the theme, the deep meaning and the [moral] messages of each text. (C-U, GCSE)

It is important to act as a good model (好榜樣) for pupils.

Teaching is you set yourself as an example in front of learners rather than to [just] say things... if a father smokes, it is hard to tell children not to smoke. (C-Y, Grade 6)

The characters and good manner of teachers are very important. (M-B, Grade 1)

To make good preparation for teaching was considered a key aspect.

It is very important for teachers to make good preparation before teaching. (C-W, Grade 7)

I make good preparation... Teachers need to make the best preparation before teaching, especially those teachers who teach children of junior grades. (C-R, Grade 3)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

Teachers in T-1 were aware of the importance of teaching characters, the four skills and deep meanings of texts to learners. They understood textbooks are an essential tool, and they recognised the need to teach general knowledge. They put lots of efforts into lesson preparation to transmit knowledge to learners.

Teaching and learning are intertwined and inseparable. This category *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* deals essentially with knowledge, the basic aspect in teaching Chinese. Awareness of the importance of teaching knowledge of Chinese language and culture could lead teachers to reflect on their role as senior members of the Chinese community, and on what they could do to serve their younger generation to maintain their knowledge of Chinese. This could also lead teachers to think about how to cater for learners' characteristics, needs and abilities, and what teaching methods to use to cultivate their interest, which are the main focus in T-4 and T-5.

## *Structural aspects*

### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills*, teachers focus on who these learners are, and how to transmit the knowledge of language and culture to enable them to learn the textbook contents, general knowledge, and the four skills.

### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** In T-1 the responsibility stays mainly with teachers. They would act as models for pupils. They prepared well before lessons to enable pupils to learn with understanding.

It is very important for teachers to make good preparation before teaching. (C-W, Grade 7)

I need around two hours to prepare a lesson. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Teachers would like to be a model.

I can't say and write things wrong. I cannot be a bad example to pupils. (C-R, Grade 3)

Teacher is a model, needs to be punctual, polite, well-mannered and well-educated. You need to be respected, to be the symbol of knowledge, culture and morality to make you persuasive to people in teaching. (M-B, Grade 1)

Teachers should be strict to pupils.

It is my responsibility to be serious. As said in the Three Character Classic (三字經), if a teacher does not teach in a strict way, pupils will not study hard and not be useful people. Idleness in teaching is teachers' fault (教不嚴, 師之惰). (M-K, Grade 6)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Relation could be traditional. It could also be casual like a mum teaching her child.

Teachers give out information, pupils get it and know about it ... Teachers [therefore] change pupils from not knowing to having some knowledge. (C-O, Grade 1)

I am strict... But they know I love them. I said you are right to view me as your mum. I asked whether their mum would discipline them if they are naughty. (M-K, Grade 6)

**Concerns.** The concern was on which aspects of knowledge to teach and whether pupils could understand and learn it.

Chinese culture is very important. But pupils find this confusing. They do not have a clue. We teach them Chinese language to enable them to think [in the Chinese way]. (C-R, Grade 3)

I teach pupils... the main themes of texts... core vocabularies...for them to use in daily life. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Furthermore, teachers took into account pupils' perspectives when designing activities.

You must think from pupils' perspectives, whether they like to learn in this way... The things [pupils] need to learn are boring, so the ways you teach need to be fun... You [teachers] yourself need to enjoy in teaching (寓教於樂 yù jiāo yú lè). (M-H, Grade 8)

**Outcomes.** They outcome focused on the cognitive aspect, on getting qualification and on gaining knowledge.

To enable them to know more Chinese characters... to be able to listen, to write characters and speak more Chinese. (C-X, Grade 3)

I teach them word meanings, syntax, and grammar... to enable them to have concepts. I teach syntax... They need to know the syntax of Chinese and English are not the same. (C-N, Grade 8)

Cantonese teachers would like to help learners obtain academic qualifications.

With this class, my aim is to help them to pass their A-level exam. (C-T, A-level)

I want to help them get recognised academic qualifications like GCSE and A-level. (C-U, GCSE)

## **External horizon**

In T-1 teaching Chinese has been seen within the boundary of equipping learners with basic knowledge of Chinese language, culture and skills to interact with others, to relate to fellow Chinese and to get qualifications.

## **Variations of the two groups in Category T-1**

In T-1 both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced teaching as transmitting Chinese knowledge to pupils. They upheld traditional values and would like to be a good role model. There were, however, variations in the *type* of language

skills to teach and the *quantity* of knowledge to transmit. Cantonese teachers took lesson preparation seriously. They would like pupils to learn more and to keep practising. They focused more on reading and writing while Mandarin teachers appeared to stress more on speaking and listening.

## **6.2.2 Category 2: Service of love to ethnic community**

### ***Referential aspects***

#### **Core meaning**

In *service of love to ethnic community* (T-2), teaching is experienced as serving the needs of ethnic Chinese children to learn the language with a loving heart (愛心). Teachers understand the lack of opportunity for children to learn Chinese in Scotland. They respond to it by teaching in Chinese schools. T-2 deals with an affective aspect regarding the caring attitudes teachers have adopted in teaching.

Teaching in this Chinese school is a service. (C-W, Grade 7)

Teaching comes to one word - love. We want to follow the love of God to love children. (C-X, Grade 3)

Teachers must put their hearts into teaching (用心教学). It involves love... you need to love teaching. With love, then you could teach well. (M-D, Grade 4)

Teaching is a service... There's a saying from Dr Sun Yat-Sen: "To think for others is the first important thing"...to think more of the needs of others... is a remarkable thing. (M-F, Grade 7)

This conception might have originated from a sense of gratitude and a gesture of reciprocation to the society from which they came.

In the past... other teachers had taught my children... now I would like to contribute my ability... I am willing to serve, to do what I am able to do to help others. (C-V, Grade 1)

In a human world you are basically served by others. We are taught by others like our teachers and parents...I take this as a payback... because in the past we received help or were taught by others. Now when we have the ability and others have the needs, we go to serve others. (M-F, Grade 7)

That is probably love, whatever you say, at the end of the day, to all the teaching or anything, it is love. If you have love and you care, you will work better. (M-F, Grade 7)

Volunteering to teach in a Chinese school needs to be motivated by love because the job is hard. Teachers needed to devote lots of time to make teaching fun.

It is a challenge because this is not just for a day but for a year. You need a loving heart to give and to serve pupils' needs. (C-V, Grade 1)

I design games for pupils to learn through activities, like singing and dancing, to focus their attention on the contents. Love is most important. I love them. Every one of them is lovely. (M-B, Grade 1)

To some teachers of Christian faith, teaching Chinese was also a service to God.

Teaching in this Christian Chinese school is a service to God... If you feel the needs to serve God through teaching, you will take up the job happily and do it well... not half-hearted, because it is a service to God, in addition to people. (C-W, Grade 7)

Most teachers needed to juggle this regular weekend teaching into their busy schedules.

I need to work every Friday until 12.00 midnight. When I get back home it is already one o'clock. And I need to wake up at 8 am in the morning to get ready for the morning Chinese lesson [on Saturday]. Although I am [already] tired on Saturdays, I feel very happy when I see the children. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Every Saturday I need to wake up very early to come here because I live quite far away. But I am very happy... I like children very much... you teach them something and they give you feedback..., when they can say it out or use the things [I have taught them] ... the kind of satisfaction could not be gained from other profession. (M-E, non-native Chinese class)

Teachers would try their best to make learning a happy experience.

I encourage them. I reward them with stickers and sweets. I give them small presents every week to make them happy. (C-V, Grade 1)

Pupils have taken my encouragement well. They often smile at me when they hear me encouraging them. (C-Z, Grade 4)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

As stated in T-1, teachers understand it is not easy to teach Chinese knowledge and culture to ethnic Chinese children. Teachers in T-2 were aware that there was little

opportunity for them to learn Chinese in Scotland. Their concern for their younger generation prompted them to invest large amount of time and energy to undertake their voluntary mission, even though they knew pupils might not appreciate their efforts, nor enjoy learning Chinese.

Their willingness to serve enabled them to eagerly guide pupils ‘to learn how to learn’, which is the focus of T-3. With love, they would be more ready to treat learners as unique individuals with different needs and abilities. This could support them to spend more time preparing lessons, thinking up versatile methods to meet their needs, which is the focus of T-4 and T-5.

### *Structural aspects*

#### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing teaching as *service of love to ethnic community*, teachers focus on how to motivate pupils to love to learn Chinese. Though they were mostly not professional teachers, they believed that with good preparation, patience and love, they could teach well.

#### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** Teachers shared knowledge with pupils. They tried to understand them and did not mind their slow progress.

You need to understand why they have no homework to hand in. Maybe it is too difficult, or they are not interested in it. (C-P, Grade 5)

Apart from [having] good Chinese knowledge, teachers... [need to] understand, care for, and build up good relationship with pupils... to motivate pupils to learn. (C-U, GCSE)

I could not say my teaching methods are very good... I use my heart to teach. I don't feel tired after preparing the lessons. I enjoy it. It is worth it. (M-J, Grade 3)

I know pupils may not like my seriousness. But they know I love them. (M-K, Grade 6)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Teachers understood that pupils would learn better if they feel teachers care about them.

Experiences told me pupils would not be motivated if they did not have a good relationship with teachers... teachers scolded them... they did not want to learn Chinese. (C-U, GCSE)

It would be a problem if teachers think their job is just teaching and do not need to establish good relationship with pupils. (C-U, GCSE)

**They were not traditional. They were more like in a family with trust and mutual understanding.**

In this Scottish social circle, I treat my pupils like the children of my friends. It is like an affectionate relationship between an aunt and her younger generation. (C-W, Grade 7)

I consider myself a sister to them. I love children. I love to see pupils learn more Chinese...I feel happy to see pupils... I like them to be smarter in the future. (C-O, Grade 1)

You need to treat your pupils sincerely, let them feel you really love them... Children could feel if you love them or not...They are very sensitive...they are full of affection and they understand you. (M-A, Grade 3)

**Concerns.** Teachers maintained positive attitudes in teaching.

Teachers should not say negative things...but encourage pupils more... Teachers should keep their negative feelings under control. (C-X, Grade 3)

I care about their minds... I not only teach the language, but also their behaviour ... If you want to teach well, the first thing is to mind your [own] attitudes because your attitudes could affect pupils' learning. (C-Y, Grade 6)

**Outcomes.** Building up a trusting relation with pupils could contribute to smooth and effective teaching.

Teachers should not be put off by children who do not do homework. The day will come when they do their homework. (C-P, Grade 5)

Teaching is two-way because children give me lots of happiness, making me eager to do things for them... To teach is to love children... to know each pupil, to build up a good relation with them. You could do teaching more easily if pupils have good impression of you. (C-V, Grade 1)

**A teacher used her good relation with pupils to motivate a boy to learn Chinese.**

Once there was a boy who... made a sentence with the pattern: "I don't like ... [but] I like..." He wrote "I don't like to come to Chinese school, it is boring, but I like my teacher"... I said if you like the teacher, you should also like learning Chinese. (M-A, Grade 3)

## **External horizon**

In T-2 teaching Chinese is seen within the boundary of encouraging pupils to learn based on teachers' care and attention to them. With love and concern, teachers would have a better chance to direct pupils to learn Chinese and think about what Cantonese and Mandarin could mean to them.

I want them to know what they need to know [about Chinese], what knowledge they now have, and what they could achieve through learning Chinese. (C-Y, Grade 6)

## **Variations of the two groups in Category T-2**

In T-2, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced Chinese teaching as serving pupils with love. They believed love could sustain pupils' enthusiasm and enhance teaching and learning. This however varied on where their love came from. Other than the concern about one's younger generation, the love of God strengthened and sustained some teachers' will to serve pupils. Several Cantonese (HK) teachers talked about the love from their Christian faith, while Mandarin teachers mentioned nothing like this at all.

### **6.2.3 Category 3: Guidance on learning**

#### ***Referential aspects***

#### **Core meaning**

In *guidance on learning* (T-3), teaching is experienced as guiding pupils in learning, to show them the ways to learn, and to bring out their abilities to learn Chinese. Pupils take an active role here, while teachers are the facilitator.

To teach pupils is to guide them. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Teaching is about how teachers supervise pupils' learning of Chinese language and culture. (C-N, Grade 8)

The vital thing is teachers guide pupils well, to guide them to love to learn, to feel learning Chinese is fun and meaningful. (M-D, Grade 4)

To teach is to guide. There is a Chinese saying: Teacher leads you to the door [to knowledge], it is you [pupils] to make it a success. A teacher needs to guide your pupils well. (M-G, Grade 4)

Teaching is about how to open pupil's eyes [to knowledge], to lead them into something. Teachers could be a guide. Then pupils have to explore [knowledge] afterwards on their own. (M-C, Grade 3)

Teachers used the following metaphors to explain 'guiding'.

Pupils are like trees [growing up]. If their stems are not straight in the process, you help straighten and support them. (C-Q, Grade 4)

A teacher is like a compass who shows you a direction, guides you to the door to knowledge. (M-J, Grade 3)

Teachers assisted pupils to learn in an interesting way.

Pupils are the most important. Teachers take only an assisting role. It is not teachers who give knowledge to pupils but pupils grasp the knowledge through discussions and activities. (C-N, Grade 8)

I explain the differences to them if they mix up the radicals of characters... I remind them correct pronunciation and accurate writing of strokes. (C-P, Grade 5)

Teaching is definitely emphasising on learners. Teacher is the organiser, you tell and guide pupils what to learn and how to learn. You say [just] a little but the majority of time you give them practices and then you give them tasks to grasp it. (M-I, Grade 3)

Here are examples of guiding pupils to write and to learn.

Pupils do not know how to write an essay... As a start, I encourage them to make up sentences... to write me one sentence every week. (C-Q, Grade 4)

First, I stress how to help pupils grasp single characters, compound characters and phrases, then... on how to use them to make sentences, and then to write an essay. There is a progression... (C-Z, Grade 4)

To do word games, I give pupils a character 樹 (tree) to make compound characters such as 樹木 (tree), 樹葉 (leaf), 樹林 (wood). If pupils make mistakes, I will correct them and explain why they are wrong... This game could motivate their thinking, help them learn how to form compound characters. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Being typical of this category, a teacher shared how much she appreciated pupils' abilities to think.

Children have their own thinking... and they do not see many boundaries... They are more carefree... As a teacher, I like my pupils to have free thinking, to have more [mental] space and imagination. (M-G, Grade 4)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

While *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* (T-1) focuses on what to teach, and *service of love to ethnic community* (T-2) emphasises on teachers' caring attitudes, this category *guidance on learning* (T-3) focuses on the ways teachers could manage their teaching as a facilitator. In T-3 teachers are aware of the needs to guide pupils to learn. They recognise the active role learners have in constructing knowledge. They want to prepare ground for their long-term learning.

In T-3, teaching is conducted through supervising pupils' learning in a supportive way, which indicates a pupil-centred view in teaching. With a focal awareness of guiding pupils how to learn, teachers would be more ready to use versatile methods to meet learners' needs/abilities, which is the focus of T-4 and T-5.

### ***Structural aspects***

#### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing teaching as *guidance on learning*, teachers focus their attention on their guiding role in learners' learning. They keep an eye on their progress and enhance their self-learning ability. Teaching and learning is viewed as an on-going interaction between teachers and learners.

#### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** In T-3 teachers see themselves as providing opportunities to motivate pupils to learn Chinese.

Pupils need to be willing to learn. (C-O, Grade 1)

Pupils could achieve a lot by working hard. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Teachers are responsible for preparing good lessons.

I think about how to direct pupils to achieve better learning outcomes... When I set up the teaching plan of each lesson, I put myself in the shoes of pupils. (C-Q, Grade 4)

My [lesson] plan may not be all successful. I will evaluate it and mark down the success and failure of the plan... I do revision with pupils to see how much they could take in... I revisit my objectives... I think and evaluate why pupils could or could not take in my teaching so I can guide them better next time. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Well-planned activities and good methods can make lessons fun and easy for pupils to follow.

It is not the teachers who do all the talking. Teachers must arrange activities for pupils to learn. Like today, I used an activity to start the lesson. Through this activity pupils discussed and learned the content of the poem... pupils took the main role... I supplemented at the end. (C-N, Grade 8)

In teaching you need to find things that interest pupils. Now every week I find [interesting] things and think up different methods to attract their attention to learn. (M-J, Grade 3)

Today I taught a lesson about a Dutch who invented the telescope. The passage also mentioned the River Rhine and the names of a few countries. I brought to school a globe to show pupils where Netherlands and the other countries are. I invited pupils to point out those countries [on the globe]. (M-K, Grade 6)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Teachers and pupils are like partners.

In older time, teacher is teacher and pupil is pupil. But I don't think in this way... I think rather like [teachers] helping [pupils]... I tell them what I know... I guide and help them learn. I share my knowledge and experience... (C-P, Grade 5)

You need to enlighten pupils... I encourage them to...ask questions. (C-Q, Grade 4)

**Concerns.** The key concern is on how to support and encourage pupils.

Pupils might think they could not do this or do that. But I think it is sometimes due to their lack of interest... they just need [someone] to guide them onto the right track. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Communication is important... You need to listen... to know their abilities so as to support them better... [to] know how they can improve. (M-F, Grade 7)

**Outcomes.** They centre on pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills, develop interest and master methods to self-learn.

You [teacher] can inspire their wisdom in learning. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Because language learning could be boring, teachers need... spend lots of time to make it interesting... to bring out pupils' initiative to learn. (M-D, Grade 4)

Though I cannot guarantee they know how to use [knowledge learned], they will have ideas when they come across them in the future. (C-P, Grade 5)

If teachers guide them well, point out... the better ways to learn, pupils could gradually develop their own learning styles and find the methods to suit their learning. (M-D, Grade 4)

### **External horizon**

In T-3 teaching Chinese is seen within the boundary of providing opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and necessary skills under teachers' supervision, so that they can learn for themselves. Teachers see it as laying a foundation for pupils to explore the big Chinese world outside schools.

If they think Chinese is useful and they understand it will be helpful to them, they will take the initiative to learn. (M-D, Grade 4)

### **Variations of the two groups in Category T-3**

In T-3, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced teaching as to guide and supervise pupils on what and how to learn. They talked about how to make learning interesting so as to enhance pupils' interest. The two groups varied perhaps on their *seriousness of attitude* towards Chinese learning. Cantonese teachers expected pupils to have a 'will' to learn, to work hard and not to be lazy, whereas Mandarin teachers tended to be more relaxed.

## 6.2.4 Category 4: Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities

### *Referential aspects*

#### **Core meaning**

In *catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities* (T-4), teaching is experienced as taking full account of learners' background, individuality, needs and abilities when teachers teach them Chinese in school.

Teaching is not only about what teachers want to teach, but to meet pupils' different needs and abilities... Pupils are of various Chinese abilities and standard... they have their own difficulties and needs. Teaching is to understand pupils so as to help them. (C-N, Grade 8)

I teach my pupils according to my understanding of them, on what they are able to take in and what will be of interest to them to learn... Teacher should be concerned about individual pupil's learning. (M-B, Grade 1)

You need to prepare different materials for different class levels and use different methods to teach. For kids, it could be songs and games. For teens, it could be more communication, talking and writing... It depends on learners' needs, not just relying on textbooks. Different pupils do different things. (M-F, Grade 7)

The following quotes illustrate the need to care for individual differences.

There is a great variation among pupils' Chinese standard within a class. Some pupils [may] find lessons very difficult, while others [may] find the content so easy that they feel bored. (C-X, Grade 3)

There is a different background behind every child... They are ethnic Chinese... came to Scotland [for different reasons]. (M-F, Grade 7)

Because their mother-tongue is not Chinese, things that look very easy to me may not be easy for my pupils. (M-J, Grade 3)

In catering for individual differences, understanding pupils has been perceived as the first step.

How could you teach well if you do not keep close touch with your pupils, do not know their needs and how much Chinese language they could take in. (C-V, Grade 1)

I try to understand what they could take in... It is meaningless to teach them the prose of Su Shi [prose master of Tang Dynasty] because they cannot take it in. (C-Z, Grade 4)

You need to understand your pupils. I want them to express themselves more so that I can understand their levels. You need to know what your pupils like... to teach according to their abilities. (M-G, Grade 4)

The following things can help cater for pupils' needs and abilities. First, to make clear what they need to learn, are able to learn, and are interested in learning.

First, I will look at the suggested teaching method [in teacher handbook]... to see what are regarded as main points and should be grasped [in by pupils]. Then I think about pupils' actual needs and their situation... [whether] they have the ability to understand and learn. Then I think up suitable ways to teach them. (M-J, Grade 3)

Second, to design tasks appropriate to pupils' standard.

In the past I gave pupils one topic in composition, but now I divide it into three difficulty levels. I give pupils more topics to choose, to cater for their abilities in writing. (C-N, Grade 8)

The topic of wild animals is considered hard to write... I said they can write about their pets... If they still think it is difficult, they can write about a person... close to them in daily life... since the aim of the writing is about describing appearances and physical features. (C-N, Grade 8)

Finally, to attend to individual needs whenever possible.

To those who can take in quickly, I give them extra worksheets to do. Then I go to help the weaker pupils. If pupils do not know how to read or do dictation, I ask them to stay behind and I listen to their problems. (C-Q, Grade 4)

I set a higher standard for the very able, and lower goals for the less able. (M-A, Grade 3)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

In T-4, teachers were aware of the diverse social, educational and linguistic background pupils had come from and the different Chinese ability each pupil could have. Though pupils were educated in Scotland, some were born in Scotland while others in HK or China. Teachers took into account pupils' characteristics and needs before choosing materials and methods to teach them.

T-4 has a focal awareness on viewing learners as individuals, indicating a pupil-centred view of teaching. This awareness can be seen as a pre-requisite of effective transmission of Chinese knowledge and skills to learners and of how to guide them,

which are the focus of T-1 and T-3. This category also has a direct link with the *use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest* (T-5) in the teaching and learning process.

### ***Structural aspects***

#### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing teaching as T-4, teachers focus their attention on understanding learners' individualities, capabilities and needs. Given that every learner has had different Chinese knowledge input in the past from sources like their family and the community they came from, it is significant to understand them well before catering for their needs.

#### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** In T-4 teachers would plan, organise and manage teaching with pupils' needs and abilities in mind.

I chat with them to understand and help them. I tell them to ask me things they do not understand... When I think of something for pupils to learn, I'll go home and look it up for them (C-P, Grade 5)

I look at the [learning] materials... to see if they suit my pupils' level... whether I need to add or to make it easier... to help pupils gain interest in learning. (C-T, A-level)

You need to... know their problems and difficulties... to know how much concentration children need in learning. (C-V, Grade 1)

Teachers need to take care of the weak, to encourage them more. (M-B, Grade 1)

Teachers would attempt to enhance pupils' learning incentive by conducting interesting lessons in relaxing atmosphere.

If teachers could take the place of pupils... making teaching interesting... pupils will be interested to come to learn... if the lesson is plain and merely of factual recall, even teachers will find it boring. (C-X, Grade 3)

I avoid [producing] a boring classroom atmosphere. If I get no response from pupils, I will say something interesting. (C-P, Grade 5)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Teachers maintained good relations with pupils by doing their best to help them learn Chinese.

I give pupils my phone number. I welcome them to phone me if they have questions about homework. (C-U, GCSE)

We should not leave behind the weaker pupils. For those doing very well, we can get them to sing or dance solo or lead the class to sing and dance. For those weaker ones, we can give them small musical instruments to play... so they could gradually follow others. (M-B, Grade 1)

No matter [pupils are] more able or less, they will get prizes [from me] to encourage them to progress. The prize may be just a sticker or a pencil, but pupils are happy. (M-A, Grade 3)

**Concerns.** They were sympathetic with pupils' difficulties in learning Chinese.

Teachers' empathy in pupils' learning is very important. (C-X, Grade 3)

To take into account pupils' ability in teaching...It would be too difficult if you demand them to be perfect in writing every stroke. (C-R, Grade 3)

If you understand their difficulties you could adjust your teaching. In the beginning I had no experience. I gave them too much homework. They did not have the ability to do it. (C-P, Grade 5)

Let the very good pupils fly high, but never leave the weaker behind. If even the teachers would leave them, the society would discriminate against them and give them up. (M-B, Grade 1)

**Outcomes.** Teachers cared about pupils' continual interest in Chinese learning rather than just getting high marks.

If a pupil shows no interest in learning... it is better to talk to him... suggest him/her ways to handle the problem, such as a better arrangement of time and use of learning aids. (C-X, Grade 3)

We have exams... we do not demand them much. Even if they have got only 5 marks, they still have learned the contents for 5 marks... To those in upper grades with lots of work, I would set a lower target for them. Not all pupils need [to achieve] the same targets. (M-A, Grade 3)

### **External horizon**

In T-4 teaching Chinese is seen within the boundary of recognising every learner as unique in their ability, and the key concern is on how to enhance their interest and

abilities to learn Chinese. Teachers have been aware that if they can provide pupils with interesting materials and appropriate amount of work, pupils will stay on to learn.

I do not need them to achieve certain pre-set goals. I do not press them. I teach [them] according to their standards. Say, if they are [just] at level B, if you give them things of level A to do, they cannot do it. This is not good. They may feel pushed and do not want to come to school again.  
(C-P, Grade 5)

### **Variations of the two groups in Category in T-4**

In T-4, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced Chinese teaching as catering for individual pupils' characteristics, needs and abilities. There were variations in perceiving what these notions of an individual, their characteristics and abilities would mean. Data have indicated Cantonese teachers appeared to associate pupils' certain learning needs, different abilities or lack of ability as a kind of *problem/difficulties* in teaching or learning. They inclined to view an individual more as a member of a smarter/weaker group. In contrast, Mandarin teachers appeared to be more at ease to view pupils as individuals with distinct characteristics anchored in their unique background.

### **6.2.5 Category 5: Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest**

#### ***Referential aspects***

#### **Core meaning**

In the *use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest* (T-5), teaching is experienced as using all appropriate methods to transmit/share Chinese knowledge/culture to learners, as long as the methods are effective to their learning.

Reciting texts and doing dictation are ways to help pupils memorise characters. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Activities like using matching games to learn characters could help pupils memorise them easily.  
(C-X, Grade 3)

I make photocopies, print out flash cards, make word cards, or find relevant pictures for teaching. I then stick Chinese characters on the pictures. I get pupils to match Chinese characters with pictures. (C-R, Grade 3)

In some case, pupils would be invited to take part in teaching.

I use the 'little teacher' (小老師) scheme. I let pupils be teachers... Pupils come forward to the front, they hold the board-marker and choose classmates to answer questions. (M-A, Grade 3)

Here are some reasons cited by teachers as to why they used different methods in teaching.

Pupils treat learning Chinese as an extra-curricular activity. If they don't have interest in it...they do not learn. (C-N, Grade 8)

Pupils could be daydreaming in lessons and learn nothing. But it could be different if they could engage in activities. They can take in knowledge through doing it... If they just listen to what teachers say, nothing may stay on their minds. (C-N, Grade 8)

Pupils will lose interest in learning if teaching is dull. They probably will fall asleep if teachers just follow the book...you [need to] use interesting methods to attract their attention. (C-Y, Grade 6)

There are some general principles teachers would apply in teaching. First, to have an overall plan.

It is important... to have teaching plans and schedules to follow so as to avoid confusing pupils by jumping abruptly from topic to topic in teaching. (C-X, Grade 3)

Second, a teacher should use simple and direct methods.

I believe teaching should go from simple to complex... Things include... to introduce systematically the radicals of characters (部首), to enable pupils to have an overall concept of how Chinese characters are formed. (C-X, Grade 3)

I use simple things to teach. As long as they could take in... you do not need to use complicated things to teach them. I use rhymes and games to teach children Chinese. (C-V, Grade 1)

Third, teaching contents need to link with pupils' daily life.

If you connect what you teach with pupils' daily life, pupils will think the learning is about them... They are less likely to get it wrong next time... I often link up characters and sentences with their daily life... when we learn the word 漂亮 (beautiful), I will say, can you see today so-and-so pupil's clothes are very beautiful. (M-A, Grade 3)

Fourth, different methods should be used to teach different age groups.

Teachers need different teaching methods to cater for...kids, teenagers, adults... You need to [take into account] their education levels, their attention span, ability, family and social background... [For children], singing, dancing, telling jokes...are all [ways for] language learning. (M-B, Grade 1)

Lastly, a teacher has to change methods from time to time.

We should not stick to one method forever even pupils love it. Like good food, if you eat it every day, you will not find it tasty. (M-A, Grade 3)

The following ways are used to teach speaking and listening.

First, the whole class could read, speak together. It is hard to memorise [characters] at the beginning. You need to speak aloud, read repeatedly so as to memorise the characters. (C-O, Grade 1)

We play 'follow the dragon' game... One pupil reads a few sentences of a text and then stop. I name another pupil to continue to read until they finish the whole text. (C-Q, Grade 4)

When I teach Grade 3...to train their confidence in speaking, each lesson I will choose a pupil to speak on any topic for 3 minutes. The topic could be a TV programme, a film...or things about their schools. (M-A, Grade 3)

Here are ways to teach writing and reading.

To enhance interest... we do word search games which require reading and writing but not mechanical practice or copying. (C-N, Grade 8)

I divide pupils into groups to do writing competition. They take turns to write words on the board. They get points if they write them correctly. (C-R, Grade 3)

And here are some methods to teach characters.

With action words such as 走 (run), 跳 (jump), 打 (hit), I'll act this out with pupils. I get pupils to look at the characters, guess their meaning by acting them out. If pupils can do the actions correctly, that means they recognise them, they know how to say it. (C-R, Grade 3)

I use A4 paper to make word cards. I write big characters on it and stick them on the board. I cut a [Chinese] character into parts to show them how a character is formed. This process helps deepen their understanding on how [Chinese] characters are structured. This is learning through playing games. (C-X, Grade 3)

Pupils are scared to see so many strokes in characters... I teach them how to memorise a complicated character by unpacking its parts. I change learning into a game. I play games with them by matching up the parts of a character. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Last week I used the character 生 (alive) to teach compound characters. Pupils used it to write down compound characters such as 生活 (daily life), 生命 (life)... Pupils liked to write these on the board. (C-Y, Grade 6)

When I teach the word 門(door), I point to the classroom door. I get children to stick the character 門 on the door.... With words [describing] quantities such as an apple (一隻蘋果), a dog (一隻狗), I stick the phrases beside the pictures. (C-Q, Grade 4)

To enhance learning, teachers brought in their own teaching aids to raise pupils' interest.

Teachers could use pictures to supplement teaching and aid pupils' memory. (C-O, Grade 1)

I brought my [own] laptop to make teaching more interesting. (M-K, Grade 6)

When I teach them the text "The HK Ocean Park" I bring pictures and postcards of HK. I talk about HK population and the Cantonese language to my [Mandarin] pupils. (M-D, Grade 4)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

T-5 emphasises the use of feasible methods in teaching. Teachers were aware that pupils prefer activity-based methods than traditional ones. So they would think up innovative ways to capture their attention. T-5 connects teaching and learning. It focuses on the ways to address pupils' needs, which is the focus of T-4; it also concerns the transmission of knowledge and skills to learners, which is the focus of T-1.

Versatile methods facilitate pupils to acquire Chinese knowledge, culture and values, which are the focus of learning conceptions L-1 and L-2 (see Chapter 7). Teachers guide pupils to use Chinese to communicate with others, which are the focus of L-3 and L-5. Again, T-5 indicates a pupil-centred orientation in teaching. It reflects the efforts teachers would put in to enhance pupils' learning. It links with maintaining their Chinese identity and cultural values, which is the focus of T-6.

## *Structural aspects*

### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing teaching as T-5, teachers focus their attention on using flexible methods to motivate pupils to learn Chinese. These methods can help make learning meaningful to learners who are educated in Scotland.

### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** In T-5 teachers would see responsibility mostly on themselves to motivate pupils to learn.

Because my pupils are only 8 to 9 years old... I try whatever methods to help them learn ... I sometime act as a cat, a mouse or a clown in teaching. (C-X, Grade 3)

There is a text which talks about Chinese paper-cutting. I remembered a teacher had done paper-cutting before and she gave me some of her work. So I brought the paper cutting back to show the class. (C-U, GCSE)

I arrange pupils to do group competitions, to see which group is the quickest in writing words. Pupils always cooperate enthusiastically in doing these activities. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Some teachers would think pupils could learn to be more respectful to others if they could have the experience of being a ‘little teacher’.

‘Little teacher’ (小老師) [scheme] is a training... When pupils stand in front of the class, they can see clearly what their classmates are doing down there. If pupils are not listening to them, the little teacher may ask “why are you not listening to me?” Later, I will remind these little teachers to think about themselves, if they also talk in the class and do not listen to me when I am teaching. It is a way to remind them to pay [mutual] respect to others. (M-A, Grade 3)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Teachers would reward pupils and make learning relaxing.

I invite children to take turns to read/write characters on the board. I then give them marks and reward them with stickers and sweets. (C-V, Grade 1)

Even adults need encouragement. I encourage pupils even though they have only done half of their homework... I say they are doing fine, making progress and I am happy with their work. (C-Z, Grade 4)

The ‘little teacher’ scheme could foster teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil relationships.

I ask pupils to be a ‘little teacher’ [for the class]. I get them to ask their classmates questions... They love it. (C-X, Grade 3)

If there are smart pupils in the class, I will invite them to come out to help me teach the class. To those weaker learners...I get smarter pupils to act as ‘little teachers’ to sit beside them to help too. (C-R, Grade 3)

**Concerns.** The key concern is on what kinds of methods could cultivate learning interest.

Teachers should not stick to the textbook... need to think up more teaching aids.... I think if you can tell pupils a story to attract them, they will be more interested in learning. (C-R, Grade 3)

The best teacher is the one who is able to cultivate pupils’ learning interest. Interest is in the [learning] environment. Interest is in teachers’ praising voice. (M-B, Grade 1)

**Outcomes.** The focus is on the language and culture pupils could acquire.

If you use interesting methods to attract their attention, although not all pupils will be interested...most of them can possibly remember what you teach. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Though pupils of junior grades may not know how to write, they can at least recognise the meaning of characters when they see them. With pictures, they know the word 船 means *boat*. (C-R, Grade 3)

Grade 4 pupils need to know how to use a Chinese dictionary by counting the strokes [of characters]... It is important to know the order of strokes in writing. (C-Q, Grade 4)

### **External horizon**

In T-5 teaching Chinese is seen within the boundary of the use of a wide range of ways to enhance pupils’ skills and interest to learn Cantonese or Mandarin in the Scottish society. Teachers would expect that pupils could develop learning interest through appropriate methods and materials. By equipping pupils with learning skills, they could self-learn.

## Variations of the two groups in Category T-5

In T-5, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced Chinese teaching as using versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest. However, the two groups varied in *what* and *how* these methods could be used to achieve the goals. Cantonese teachers stressed more on the teaching of characters. They inclined to focus on activities which could aid reading and writing, while Mandarin teachers concerned more about speaking and listening. As regards speaking, Cantonese teachers spoke about choral reading to help pupils memorise characters, whereas Mandarin teachers also mentioned the use of presentation, pair work, singing and performing in class. While Cantonese teachers suggested ways to assist pupils to memorise characters, Mandarin teachers talked about how to relate vocabulary teaching to pupils' daily life experience.

### 6.2.6 Category 6: Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values

#### *Referential aspects*

#### **Core meaning**

In *maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values* (T-6), teaching Chinese is experienced as maintaining pupils' Chinese moral values and identity because they are perceived as Chinese. Pupils' learning of Cantonese or Mandarin is regarded as a way to empower them to know more about Chinese identity and values.

Though growing up in Scotland, these children are Chinese. (C-Z, Grade 4)

In this Scottish environment... I want to transmit Chinese knowledge to them because they are Chinese. (C-W, Grade 7)

Chinese people need to respect parents, relatives, brothers and sisters. (C-R, Grade 3)

We teach pupils culture... politeness... Chinese virtues. We teach them traditional Chinese educational stories like "Kong Rong giving up pears" (孔融讓梨). (C-V, Grade 1)

Other than to... gain knowledge, teaching is a transmission of culture and invisible assets like life values, attitudes and philosophy. (M-D, Grade 4)

The first thing you need is to be polite...to behave well... to respect teachers to know the importance of mutual respect. You need to treat others well. (M-K, Grade 6)

Chinese history, customs, stories, and festivals can be used to cultivate pupils' attitudes and their identity.

Teachers can arouse pupils' interest in learning through... Chinese customs, traditional Chinese stories, Chinese food, the Spring Festival, customs... geography and Chinese philosophy... (M-D, Grade 4)

Mastering Chinese is an important means to reaffirm pupils' identity as Chinese.

I encourage pupils to gain more knowledge in Chinese... How could you be a Chinese if you do not know how to speak your mother-tongue. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Though pupils are British [in nationality], they are [ethnic] Chinese. When they grow up, they should know the Chinese language. (C-R, Grade 3)

Learning Chinese is a crucial means to pass on to pupils some values like honesty, politeness and respecting the elderly.

Other than knowledge, we teach pupils how to be a good person, teach them life attitudes which include good manners and politeness. (C-X, Grade 3)

Teaching the Chinese language is a way to spread culture, such as Chinese festivals and New Year, and [cultural] values like respecting others. (M-E, non-Chinese class)

The use of Chinese names can be a way to express identity.

I use Chinese names in school. When pupils first come to my class, I will ask them whether they have a Chinese name. I will make a suggestion... I get their parents to choose for them if they do not have one. Then pupils use it and learn to write their Chinese names. (C-Q, Grade 4)

I stress the use of Chinese names in lesson. In the past my two children used English names. But once a Father [Catholic priest] asked me why Chinese people need to use English names... I replied it is for convenience. He said it is unnecessary because when you look at the Indians, they do not change their names. He said one's name is part of your culture. Since then I have stopped using English names. (C-R, Grade 3)

Some teachers would consider Chinese cultural values and ways of doing things as different from the West.

While in Western culture family members are treated like friends, I consider relatives as relatives... I let pupils learn more Chinese traditions and ways of doing things. (C-R, Grade 3)

Although you and your elder brother are of the same generation, since he teaches you things, you need to respect him. (C-R, Grade 3)

When you meet your older generations, you should greet them properly, but not just say “hi”. We have [formal] names for our [different kinds of] uncles and aunts. I let pupils learn about these and not just say “hi” [to them] because it sounds impolite [to Chinese]. (C-R, Grade 3)

The transmission of Chinese cultural values to pupils can help cultivate a good character.

The thing I emphasise most in class is on how to be a good person, how to take things seriously, how to make good judgements, and how to observe things around us in detail. I hope pupils could handle complicated issues of life in the future. (C-Z, Grade 4)

I want pupils to know more things through learning Chinese, things like respecting teachers and their teaching, to have good behaviour and be polite to others. (M-K, Grade 6)

Some teachers would consider textbooks as a vital source in cultivating a good person, since texts with moral and inspirational stories can stimulate pupils’ thoughts.

I asked pupils what they would like to do when they grow up. Some said they wanted to do this or to do that. I told them, no matter what they do, they need to learn from the famous painter Qi Baishi [mentioned in their textbook]. Qi Baishi devoted great efforts (用功) and a lot of time to perfect his painting, even though he was already very good at it since he was young. (C-Z, Grade 4)

A teacher would relate the moral messages in texts to pupils’ daily life, such as to work hard and be serious with one’s work.

In the future... if you want to be a lawyer, you need to know what qualifications and requirements to fulfil and what to be careful about at work. Just like when you write a Chinese character, if you miss out a point or a stroke, the meaning of the whole word will be changed. In other words, one needs to be conscientious in doing things to make them good. (C-Z, Grade 4)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

Teachers in T-6 were aware of the important role Chinese language could play in learners’ understanding of moral values and their Chinese identity, and with effective

use of textbooks, pupils could know more about Chinese customs and good attitudes. These could help them become a moral person.

Concerns similar to *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* (T-1) are also found in T-6, though not being at the core. Teachers' awareness of teaching as a *service of love to ethnic community* (T-2) and as the *catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities* (T-4) appears to recede to the background. In T-6 teachers' focus is not so much on enabling pupils to gain knowledge but on cultivating their moral character and Chinese identity.

T-6 can be viewed as the end goal of Chinese teaching. Every weekend teachers offer their *service of love* through teaching (T-2), they meet individual *pupils' characteristics, needs and abilities* (T-4), and they use *versatile methods* to enhance pupils' learning (T-5). These are the focus of each of the lower categories T-2, T-4 and T-5. Teachers' aim appears to be more about learners' understanding of their Chinese identity than their knowledge of vocabularies, or skills to read and write Chinese. In this respect, the six teaching conceptions are logically-related and inclusive, suggesting a hierarchical structure.

### ***Structural aspects***

#### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing teaching as *maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values*, teachers focus their attention on what counts as essential to Chinese identity and what kinds of cultural values should be transmitted to learners. The focus of teaching here is to empower learners to identify themselves as a moral person. Chinese culture and people are perceived as different from those of the West.

#### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** Teachers in T-6 hold themselves responsible to provide pupils with opportunities to think about what is morally good or not. As teachers address issues of identity and morality, it is necessary to act as a good model (好榜樣).

Especially to those third generation pupils... at least [in Chinese school] they have more chance to listen to Chinese and get in touch with its culture. (C-R, Grade 3)

If there are themes about people's good behaviour in their textbook, I will use them to teach pupils what sorts of behaviour are not good, and encourage them to think up alternative ways to do things. (C-Y, Grade 6)

You [teacher] need to show pupils a good example... and behave well yourself. (M-C, Grade 3)

You as teachers need to be a model... With poor behaviour, even if teachers have very high academic standard, pupils will not respect you. Then you can't influence them. (M-B, Grade 1)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** There should be mutual respect between teachers and pupils.

We know teachers can't be perfect, but teachers at least need to be a good person morally. (M-C, Grade 3)

Pupils first respect you as a person before they have interest in the language you teach. If they do not like your behaviour, they will not like your teaching. (M-B, Grade 1)

**Concerns.** The key concern is on pupils' learning of good attitudes.

I teach them the fundamentals, start with saying "thank you" in Chinese. I hope they could be very polite to others... I insist they should be polite and have a loving heart towards others. (C-V, Grade 1)

I believe no matter how clever pupils are, if their behaviour is bad, their teachers' hearts will be "wrenched with pain." (C-U, GCSE)

**Outcomes.** The focus is on pupils' understanding of their Chinese root and identity as morally good Chinese people.

Chinese are different from Westerners. (C-V, Grade 1)

I want my pupils to grow up into good, honest, moral persons... have good behaviour in life. (C-U, GCSE)

It is not enough just to help pupils acquire knowledge, to learn [Chinese] characters... it is better to learn to be a good person. (M-K, Grade 6)

**External horizon**

In T-6 teaching Chinese is seen within the boundary of the Scottish society in which the learners are living. As pupils are constantly exposed to Western culture and ways of life, Chinese language is perceived to be a good way to connect them culturally with their Chinese root, their family and community, and to prepare them to take part in the society/world as a Chinese of good moral qualities.

One day when they go back to HK or China, I hope they know how to get along with others, to read Chinese characters and how to be their own person... They know their occupations well... direction in life and the ways to achieve their goals. (C-Z, Grade 4)

### **Variations of the two groups in Category T-6**

In T-6, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced Chinese teaching as the cultivation of Chinese cultural values such as respect, politeness, and friendliness to others and the maintenance of pupils' Chinese identity. Cantonese teachers would emphasise close family ties and the passionate relationships among family members. They inclined to differentiate Chinese culture from Western one. Mandarin teachers, however, did not make any comparison between Chinese and Western culture.

## **6.3 Summary of Chapter 6**

In chapter 6, the six identified teaching conceptions from Cantonese and Mandarin teachers have been reported. As discussed in 6.1, the outcome space represents the complex of the categories of description which capture the different ways Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced Chinese teaching. The six teaching conceptions can be organised into a hierarchy of four levels in which conceptions at higher levels include the lower ones.

A summary of the six conceptions is presented in Table 6.1, followed by Table 6.2, which sums up the variations of teaching conceptions between the two groups of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers.

Table 6.1 Summary of outcome space on conception of teaching of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

Category	T-1	T-2	T-3	T-4	T-5	T-6
<b>Name</b>	<b>Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills</b>	<b>Service of love to ethnic community</b>	<b>Guidance on learning</b>	<b>Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities</b>	<b>Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest</b>	<b>Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values</b>
<b>Core meaning</b>	To transmit knowledge on Chinese language and culture. To provide basic knowledge of Chinese characters and the four skills	To serve young ethnic learners' Chinese learning needs with a loving heart	To guide pupils the ways to learn. To enhance their abilities to learn Chinese	To teach and support pupils' Chinese learning based on understanding their backgrounds, abilities and needs	To use a variety of methods to support and motivate pupils' learning. To make teaching interesting and meaningful to learners	To maintain learners' cultural values and Chinese identity through learning the language, customs and culture such as politeness, respecting elderly and the significant of familial values
<b>Context</b> (teaching in Chinese schools)	Teachers understand that knowledge on Chinese characters and grammar is vital to read and write. The ability to listen and speak is vital in communication.	The lack of opportunities for ethnic learners to learn the language and culture in Scotland prompts volunteers to teach in Chinese schools.	Though not experts, Chinese teachers work hard to lay a foundation for children's Chinese learning by supervising and assisting them.	Teachers recognise the diverse social and linguistic background of pupils. They understand their difficulties learning Chinese in a Scottish context.	Chinese teachers recognise the diverse methods in teaching Chinese. They try out and adapt teaching methods to attract learners to learn.	Chinese school is a place where Scotland-born and educated ethnic Chinese children learn Chinese language, culture, moral values and know their Chinese roots
<b>Internal horizon</b>	<b>Focusing on:</b> •The learners and on how to transmit the knowledge of Chinese language and the four skills effectively to them	<b>Focusing on:</b> •how to teach and serve pupils with love to enhance their Chinese learning	<b>Focusing on:</b> • The needs to guide pupils to learn rather than to transmit knowledge to them •Teachers check on progress and enable learners to self-learn	<b>Focusing on:</b> •Learners' characteristics such as age, background and linguistic ability in teaching and learning •Teachers conduct teaching in line with the needs of learners	<b>Focusing on:</b> •The use of versatile methods to teach Chinese in an interesting way to arouse pupils' learning interest •To make teaching effective to learners live and are educated in Scotland	<b>Focusing on:</b> •To know cultural values and their Chinese roots as an integral part of being Chinese •Knowing the language and culture could enable learners to grow up into moral people with good life attitudes

(Table 6.1 to be continued on next page)

Category	T-1	T-2	T-3	T-4	T-5	T-6
<b>Name</b>	<b>Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills</b>	<b>Service of love to ethnic community</b>	<b>Guidance on learning</b>	<b>Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities</b>	<b>Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest</b>	<b>Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values</b>
<b>Dimensions of variation</b>						
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers make good preparation before lessons</li> <li>•Teachers act as a model to pupils</li> <li>•Pupils should revise their learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers prepare lessons well and teach with love</li> <li>•Pupils should learn and make progress in learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers provide opportunities and guide pupils to learn</li> <li>•Pupils need to love to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers plan, organise and manage their teaching with pupils' needs and abilities in mind</li> <li>•Pupils take the incentive to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers prepare and conduct lessons with versatile methods</li> <li>•Pupils join in activities, interact with classmates to learn Chinese</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers provide chances for learners to know/learn Chinese cultural values and to reflect on their Chinese roots</li> <li>• Pupils reflect on their Chinese identity</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher-pupil relation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Traditional role like a teacher instructing a pupil</li> <li>• Casual role like a mum teaching a child</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers care and concern about pupils, like a caring mum, an aunt or a friend to them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers guide pupils carefully so they do not lose track in learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers take care of individuals' learning needs in the teaching and learning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers create a relaxing environment for pupils to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A mutual respect relationship between teachers and pupils</li> </ul>
<b>Concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The four skills and Chinese characters</li> <li>• To enable pupils to take in knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To teach with love, to encourage, to serve pupils' needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers guide, assist and support pupils' Chinese learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers understand pupils' individual needs and abilities, and to encourage them to keep on learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers organise lessons, use flexible methods and suitable activities for pupils to learn Chinese.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To help learners to know their Chinese roots, cultural values and Chinese identity</li> <li>•To enable pupils to become good, moral Chinese persons</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Pupils learn Chinese language and culture</li> <li>•To learn general knowledge outside textbook</li> <li>•To obtain qualification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils learn Chinese language and culture</li> <li>•To build up a loving, trusting relationship with learners to enhance their learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils learn Chinese language and culture</li> <li>•To learn methods for self-learn and for future learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils learn Chinese language and culture</li> <li>•To learn Chinese according to their needs and abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils learn Chinese language and culture effectively through textbooks, language games, singing, dancing and role-play</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils know Chinese language and culture</li> <li>•To cherish family relationship and Chinese cultural values</li> <li>•To reflect on one's cultural root and Chinese identity</li> </ul>
<b>External Horizon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese language, the social environment, the knowledge, skills and cultural elements within Chinese language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese language, the social environment, the support and concern to enable learners to stay in the Chinese language world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese language, the social environment, multifarious ways to enable learners to participate in the Chinese language world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese language, the social environment, the individual abilities and differences in exploring the Chinese language world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese language, the social environment, flexible approaches and methods to explore and master the Chinese language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chinese language, the social/global environment, teaching approaches, cultural values, Chinese identity, and the individual's links and position in the world</li> </ul>

Table 6.2 Summary of variations of teaching conceptions of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

<b>Conceptions of teaching</b>	<b>Cantonese teachers</b>	<b>Mandarin teachers</b>
<b>T-1:</b> Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills	Focus more on reading, writing and the 'quantity' learned  Teach to enable pupils to know and practise more	Focus more on speaking and listening  Stress more on long-term learning and the quality learned
<b>T-2:</b> Service of love to ethnic community	Serve younger generation with love  Use love (oneself /God) to care for and sustain pupils' learning interest	Serve younger generation with love
<b>T-3:</b> Guidance on learning	Guide, assist and supervise pupils on how to learn  In return would hope pupils could have a serious attitude and a 'will' to learn Cantonese	Guide, assist and supervise pupils on how to learn
<b>T-4:</b> Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities	Care for pupils' characteristics, needs and abilities in teaching Cantonese  Tend to see individual as part of a (weaker or smarter) group	Care for individual pupils' characteristics, needs and abilities in teaching Mandarin
<b>T-5:</b> Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest	Use different methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest  More attention put on reading, writing and knowing characters	Use different methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest  More attention put on listening and speaking
<b>T-6:</b> Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values	Transmit and maintain pupils' cultural values and Chinese identity  Differentiate and compare Chinese culture from Western culture	Transmit and maintain pupils' cultural values and Chinese identity

## CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS – TEACHERS’ CONCEPTIONS OF LEARNING

### 7.1 Hierarchically inclusive relationships of the six learning conceptions

Chapter 7 reports the *six* collective learning conceptions. It aims to answer the first two research questions of the study. The conceptions are: ‘Acquisition of knowledge and skills’ (L-1), ‘Acquisition of culture and moral values’ (L-2), ‘Learning how to learn’ (L-3), ‘Cooperative efforts’ (L-4), ‘Using language for communication’ (L-5), and ‘Knowing oneself’ (L-6). Again, these six learning conceptions reveal a part-whole inclusive relationship in terms of meanings, which support the claim that different categories of description are logically related through a hierarchical relationship (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Similar to teaching conceptions in Chapter 6, the hierarchical nature of the identified conceptions of learning is in line with Perry (1970), Säljö (1979) and Marton et al. (1993). There are parallels between the *first* and the *sixth* learning conceptions of the present study with the hierarchically-structured learning conceptions of Marton et al. (1993). Both *first* conceptions are concerned with *knowledge acquisition*. The *sixth* conception of this study is *knowing oneself* (L-6), which shares features of Marton et al.’s (1993) *fifth* conception - *seeing something in a different way* and the *sixth* conception - *changing as a person*. In brief, they signal a transformative view, i.e., learning can lead to fundamental change of a person in the sense of ‘being’.

The inclusive relationship among the *six* identified learning conceptions is illustrated graphically in Figure 7.1. The six categories can be organised into four hierarchical levels, representing an expanding awareness of different aspects of learning Chinese in complementary schools. Similar to the case of teaching conceptions, this relationship is discerned in the expanding external horizon from the acquisition of fundamental Chinese knowledge, culture and moral values (L-1 and L-2), to ways of learning it (L-3 and L-4), using it for communication (L-5), and finally to knowing more about oneself including one’s Chinese identity (L-6).

Knowing oneself (L-6) can be seen as the highest level of all learning conceptions. Whilst some teachers may discern only one aspect, others may discern more than one, and yet others may be aware of some or all aspects. This means that some ways of experiencing can be fuller than the others.

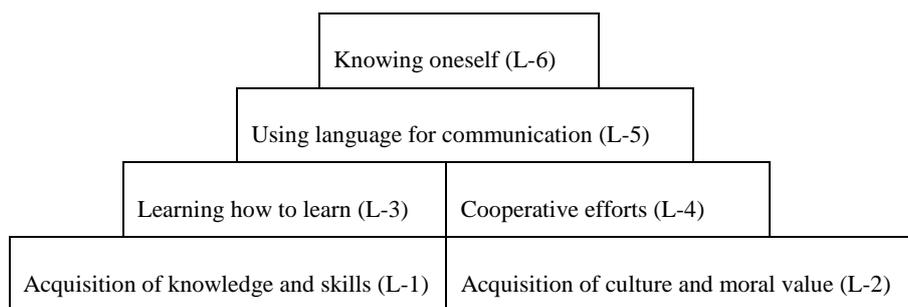


Figure 7.1 The expanding awareness of Chinese teachers on conception of learning

There are a few things to note when reading Chapter 7. First, owing to the inseparable nature of teaching and learning, teachers' descriptions of their learning conception may consist of ideas similar to those articulated earlier in their teaching conception. The small amount of overlapping ideas is likely to be seen in L-1 and L-2 when teachers talked about learning Chinese as acquisition of knowledge, culture and moral values. However, as teachers had their unique focus in learning, these ideas should not be seen merely as a repetition. Through their explications we can achieve a better understanding of teachers' conceptions of learning.

## 7.2 Conception of learning

### 7.2.1 Category 1: Acquisition of knowledge and skills

#### *Referential aspects*

#### **Core meaning**

In *acquisition of knowledge and skills* (L-1), learning is experienced as acquiring knowledge and skills of Chinese.

Learning is a process for people to gain knowledge. (C-T, A-level)

There are three things: to gain knowledge, to acquire positive attitudes to life, and to learn skills in life. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Learning is more than [to learn] the subject matter... It is to learn learning skills... life skills. (M-C, Grade 3)

Learning is the process of accumulation of knowledge, information, skills, and solutions to problems. (M-D, Grade 4)

First, pupils should master the four core skills and other skills.

The four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking... You can't just know how to write... learning has to be all-round. (C-O, Grade 1)

The rote-learning skills... ways to interact with teachers. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Second, pupils should know characters.

To learn characters, to write and to practise them. (C-V, Grade 1)

To learn the skills in writing characters and texts. (C-X, Grade 3)

To know the meanings of characters, to learn how to read and write them. (C-O, Grade 1)

Knowing characters is the pre-requisite to reading and writing.

After you know the characters, you put together the characters to make sentences, and then a passage. (M-G, Grade 4)

One also needs to pay attention to the details of strokes and the differences between Chinese and English language.

It is important to pay attention to details... to write the hooks and dots in a character. (C-V, Grade 1)

The word order in Chinese and English are different. But pupils use the ways they write English to write Chinese sentences. We need to remind them about the differences. (C-P, Grade 5)

Cantonese teachers would think that pupils should not feel ashamed to ask for help.

Pupils can't just say I don't know this and don't know that... You need to ask others for help (不耻下问). (C-Z, Grade 4)

I hope they will come to ask me if they have questions in learning rather than put them aside. It will make learning difficult if you pile up things. (C-U, GCSE)

Learning through playing has been widely used by Mandarin teachers.

I let them feel they come here to play [language game] and learn... play for half a day... they will learn a few words. (M-A, Grade 3)

We use interesting things and games to teach and give pupils things to play. In the process of playing, they will gradually learn. (M-B, Grade 1)

While pupils are playing [language game] they learn it [knowledge]... without even being aware of it. When you teach... you are there to play and learn with them. (M-H, Grade 8)

Activities were used to motivate pupils to learn Cantonese.

There was a lesson which mentioned about plants. I picked beans from my garden and brought seeds to show pupils. I said if you plant the seeds in the soil, they can give out new shoots and grow into plants. (C-Z, Grade 4)

I think up lots of methods to enable pupils to gain knowledge... like today, pupils drew pictures based on a poem. They could comprehend the poem and draw it. (C-N, Grade 8)

Cantonese teachers would encourage pupils to “learn more.”

Pupils learn *more* things... one should learn as much as one could. (C-S, Grade 3)

I believe children could learn Chinese *more* and easier through playing games. (C-X, Grade 3)

We do reading and writing competition. I divide the class into two groups... It is good to play *more* in learning. (C-V, Grade 1)

We play games...my aim is to give pupils the opportunities to know and learn *more* about Chinese language and culture... I let pupils learn *more* Chinese traditions and ways of doing things. (C-R, Grade 3)

I get smarter pupils to sit beside weaker pupils to help them. Pupils can learn *more* by teaching each other. (C-R, Grade 3)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

L-1 focuses on the knowledge aspect, since acquiring knowledge is the basic concern in learning Chinese. Cantonese teachers were aware that learners should work hard and seek help on things they do not know. They considered the acquisition of knowledge and skills impossible without learners' hard work.

L-1 relates to all other learning conceptions. Awareness of the importance of acquiring knowledge and skills can lead teachers to think about how to guide learners to learn, how to use Chinese to communicate with others, and how to view one's identity. These are the focus of L-3, L-5 and L-6.

## *Structural aspects*

### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing learning as L-1, teachers focus their attention on what types of knowledge and skills learners are taking in and what roles learners and teachers should play in the process. Equipped with basic knowledge and skills, learners can know more through self-learning.

### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** Pupils are responsible for their learning, while teachers organise materials for them to learn.

First, pupils need to work hard.

Good learning requires pupils to do revision... That is, don't be lazy. Try harder so as to learn well. (C-V, Grade 1)

I hope pupils could try their best to learn, to work hard (勤學) and be attentive. (C-U, GCSE)

Learners need to use language to do things... use their hands and brains to learn Chinese. (M-G, Grade 4)

Second, pupils should seek help when they come across difficulties.

They need to know what they have not yet grasped and should ask teachers about it. (C-O, Grade 1)

If pupils pile up questions rather than to sort things out, learning outcome will never be good. (C-U, GCSE)

Pupils should not be afraid to be viewed as stupid for not knowing something. Our predecessors did not feel ashamed to seek help or ask questions (不恥下問) with things they did not understand. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Third, pupils need to be open and active in learning.

Learning is to humble (謙虛) oneself and to learn with a receptive mind (虛心學習)... The important thing is to be modest and have an open-mind with people and things. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Learning is about pupils' understanding of what teachers are talking about... They make continual progress after learning in class. (C-O, Grade 1)

If pupils learn some new things, it is good for them to share and to express themselves. (M-G, Grade 4)

Teachers have to work out things to motivate pupils.

I try to find out what can arouse pupils' interest to learn. (C-Y, Grade 6)

I tell pupils interesting things to make learning interesting... I taught a lesson about the Big Dipper. I downloaded pictures for them. I brought a big spoon to show them [what a dipper is like]. (C-Z, Grade 4)

You need to know how to make children like to come to your lesson... to guarantee pupils would love to come [to learn] before you could decide what to teach. (M-A, Grade 3)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Teachers encourage and praise learners and have empathy for their learning.

I encourage pupils to ask questions. If they can give good answers, I will praise them in front of the class. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Teacher can learn a lot from learners... [Learning] is interactive. (M-G, Grade 4)

If you can mix up with pupils, then they will accept you. Once they accept you, then everything is easier to handle. (M-E, non-native Chinese class)

Most teachers would reward pupils with praises and gifts.

If they come with good homework, good handwriting, teacher will praise them. (C-P, Grade 5)

I make little toys, prepare stickers and gifts to reward children's learning. (C-Y, Grade 6)

If they write beautifully, I will reward them with stickers. (C-Z, Grade 4)

If you praise pupils, they will value your praise. They will go home to tell their mum that teachers praise them. (M-A, Grade 3)

To encourage pupils, to praise them, to get them to act in front of the class... let them feel relaxed in class. (M-B, Grade 1)

**Concerns.** The key concern is a good learning atmosphere and how well teaching has worked for pupils.

Good learning is when pupils' can take in what I teach through doing worksheets I have designed... Then I know my teaching works. (C-Q, Grade 4)

I think up many flexible ways to enhance their interest... If they write things wrong, I encourage them and remind them to correct it. (C-Z, Grade 4)

In the process, you [teacher] will make progress and know how to guide them [pupils] to do better. (M-G, Grade 4)

I don't demand pupils to sit quietly... or must put up their hands before answering questions... I like my pupils to keep quiet for a while then active for a while. (M-A, Grade 3)

**Outcomes.** They include gaining knowledge and skills, getting praise, achieving good grades, and correcting shortcomings.

Learning is pupils gaining... knowledge about more things. (C-S, Grade 3)

Learning is to have good exam results and be praised by parents. (C-X, Grade 3)

To learn more Chinese... if you go to HK, you can read Chinese characters. (C-Y, Grade 6)

To take in and digest information, then come up with something themselves. (M-C, Grade 3)

I praise pupils... So this pupil has heard me... he may change his shortcomings. (M-A, Grade 3)

### **External horizon**

In L-1, learning Chinese is seen within the boundary of acquiring knowledge and learning skills of Chinese in the English-speaking Scotland. Mastering Chinese can pave way for learners to live and work in a globalised world.

### **Variations of the two groups in Category L-1**

In L-1 Chinese learning is experienced as acquiring knowledge and skills. In line with teaching conceptions T-1 and T-5, Cantonese teachers stressed more on supporting pupils to read and write. They would think pupils should work hard and like to see them learn more Cantonese. In contrast, Mandarin teachers seemed more at ease with learning tasks. They stressed how to raise pupils' learning interest.

As regards rewarding pupils, Mandarin teachers encouraged and praised pupils and helped them feel relaxed in learning. Cantonese teachers rewarded pupils when they

saw something worthy to be praised. Both groups would use games to enhance learning. While Cantonese teachers were more concerned about the ‘quantity’ of contents learned, no Mandarin teachers mentioned they wanted pupils to learn more. Mandarin teachers appeared not to care so much about the ‘quantity’ pupils grasped as long as they learned something.

## **7.2.2 Category 2: Acquisition of culture and moral values**

### ***Referential aspects***

#### **Core meaning**

In *acquisition of culture and moral values* (L-2), learning Chinese is experienced as learning the essence of Chinese culture and the moral values within it.

I would like my pupils to acquire good attitudes and moral principles in life. (C-U, GCSE)

I not only teach Chinese language, but also their personality and moral character. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Learning Chinese culture includes learning self-discipline and good manners... Parents and grandparents belong to the elder generation and should be respected. There is a saying: Respect one’s teachers and honour the truth. (尊師重道) (C-X, Grade 3)

Learning [Chinese] is not about memorising characters/phrases... how to read this or write that... It is about learning the essence of Chinese culture. The essence... is to respect the elderly and look after the young... to put emphasis on education... to respect teachers and to value their teaching. (M-B, Grade 1)

There are important cultural values to learn. The first is the close relationship among family members.

I teach pupils to learn culture... Chinese culture is very different from Western culture... I feel Western families do not have the close, passionate family relationships among brothers and sisters like we have in families. Chinese have close ties with family members... I want my pupils to understand more on this. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Second, traditional Chinese values are still important.

Chinese uphold politeness, sense of propriety, honesty and the sense of shame, the five cardinal human relationships, filial piety and Confucius thinking. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Textbook contents can be rich resources to learn Chinese moral values.

The textbooks talk about Chinese festivals, New Year reunion dinner, family gatherings at Mid-autumn festival and the close relationships among family members. (C-Y, Grade 6)

This term pupils have learned six chapters. In general, the main themes are to encourage pupils to have their own thinking, to work hard and to have patience in doing things. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Learning cultural values can help youngsters understand how the Chinese moral standards are different from the West.

You can see the moral standards of this generation are very different from ours. For instance, how the younger generation look at things and at themselves: [now] if the majority of people do a certain thing, that thing would be considered as correct. (C-U, GCSE)

At the moment Chinese culture may be too far away from these children. But when they grow up, they may understand it. They may understand Confucius thinking, and the different culture and moral standards of the two places [Scotland, China]. (C-Z, Grade 4)

While teachers viewed Cantonese as a heritage language and treasured pupils' learning of cultural values, pupils and parents sometimes considered their learning as mere textbook knowledge.

What they want may not be what we [teachers] think... To me is the home language... the [Chinese] culture... Some pupils take this as another language to learn, like German or French. Pupils... think of knowing the characters, of how to read and write them. Some may aim at getting high marks in [public] exams. (C-P, Grade 5)

To me, teaching Chinese is not bounded by the textbooks... We have other goals for them, like ... Chinese culture... values... although they may not be able to achieve it. (C-Z, Grade 4)

[Teachers think of] higher level things like Chinese culture... Teachers may hold the view ... that we are Chinese. Other than [Chinese] characters, we should know things about China... and the culture. (C-P, Grade 5)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

L-2 has Chinese culture and moral values in its focal awareness. In contrast to L-1 which focuses on acquiring knowledge and skills, teachers in L-2 were aware that if learners can gain knowledge of cultural values, they can learn to be a moral Chinese person. This awareness can lead them to direct pupils to reflect on who they are and their Chinese identity, which is the focus of L-6.

## *Structural aspects*

### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing learning as the *acquisition of culture and moral values*, teachers focus their attention on learners' understanding of good attitudes and behaviour, and the differences between Chinese and Western culture and moral standards.

### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** In L-2 teachers apply themselves to teach in a meaningful way by relating cultural values with pupils' life.

I often link up Chinese characters with daily life... If I teach the word 粗心 (absent-minded), I will say so-and-so classmate is not absent-minded. So this pupil hears me... he may change his shortcomings. (M-A, Grade 3)

Teachers would think pupils need to make the best use of time to learn and be respectful to others.

I believe childhood and teenage years are the best time to learn. You have nothing to lose by knowing more in life. (C-X, Grade 3)

If pupils ask others for help... you need to be polite and respectful. You should not take people's help for granted, thinking others must help you. (C-Z, Grade 4)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Teachers see the need to avoid arousing negative feelings in pupils regarding Chinese values. Teachers' charisma can play a role in motivating pupils to learn.

Making children feel stress in learning is a failure... no matter how many words a child can learn... because they will hate your [Chinese] culture. Children born and growing up in Scotland would... say they are Chinese, but they hate the Chinese culture. (M-B, Grade 1)

If they like the teacher and if the teacher has charisma... learners are more interested in learning... When you teach, you have professional knowledge and... charisma in your character. (M-I, Grade 3)

**Concerns.** Teachers expect learning Chinese moral values can influence pupils' behaviour in good ways.

I want pupils to respect teachers in school and respect their elders at home. (C-X, Grade 3)

In Western families, children even call their mums and dads by their names. As Chinese, we adopt a more traditional thinking. (C-X, Grade 3)

There is a saying: “It is better to learn to be a good person (學做人) to get along with others than to know how to do things”. (M-K, Grade 6)

**Outcomes.** Teachers wish pupils to learn and pass on good attitudes and values.

I want my pupils to learn good attitudes. (C-T, A-level)

I pass on to my pupils [to learn] what my former teacher taught me, such as the Chinese idiom: 世事洞明皆學問, 人情練達即文章 [In English, it means: A thorough grasp of mundane affairs is genuine knowledge; fluent understanding of worldly wisdom is true learning]. My teacher taught me this when I was in primary 5 in HK... I hope my pupils could pass this on to their children. (C-T, A-level)

The first thing you need [to learn] is to be polite...to behave well...to know the importance of mutual respect. You need to treat others well. (M-K, Grade 6)

### **External horizon**

In L-2 Chinese learning is seen as learning Chinese culture and cultivating moral values in the Scottish society, a land of Western culture. Teachers would consider it important for learners to know the differences between Chinese and Westerners in their culture and moral values.

### **Variations of the two groups in Category L-2**

In L-2, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers would see learning Chinese as motivating children to learn Chinese culture, traditions and moral values so as to become a good person. In line with the spirit of T-6, Cantonese teachers tended to compare the familial and moral values between Chinese and Westerners in the Scottish society, while no Mandarin teachers explicitly mentioned this.

As regards moral behaviour, Mandarin teachers mentioned general things like politeness, getting along well with others, and respecting teachers and the elderly, whereas Cantonese teachers inclined to talk in a detailed way, for instance, respect also

for grandparents, honesty, filial piety, diligence, patience and the sense of shame. Not only would they anticipate children to acquire Chinese moral values and attitudes now, they would like them to pass on these good values to future generations. In this respect, they appeared to have a long-term view, and were more demanding than their Mandarin counterparts.

This variation might probably be explained by the fact that Mandarin teachers were mostly newcomers to Scotland with young children and thus had not yet experienced the cultural conflicts or inter-generational misunderstanding among parents, grandparents and the rebellious teenagers at home. This however was the common experience of their Cantonese counterparts.

### **7.2.3 Category 3: Learning how to learn**

#### ***Referential aspects***

#### **Core meaning**

In *learning how to learn* (L-3), learning is experienced as knowing the ways to learn Chinese rather than just getting the knowledge from teachers.

To learn is to learn skills...Chinese translation skills, presentation skills, writing skills. (C-T, A-level)

Learning is to learn how to learn, to learn methods of learning, but not just the contents. One learns to fish rather than to get the fish from the teacher. (M-B, Grade 1)

Learning is about how to use proper methods to gain knowledge you want to get hold of. Like a Chinese saying: It is better to teach people to fish than to give them fish. (M-D, Grade 4)

Learning is more than the subject matter... to learn learning skills, life skills, common sense, decency, and these kinds of things. (M-C, Grade 3)

Here is a method for pupils to learn how to learn.

Teachers explain... give pupils practices and then... give them tasks to do... tell them what they need to learn and how to learn. You can teach a bit but...not too long because they need to go through practice to grasp it themselves. (M-I, Grade 3)

Ways to learn include how to use dictionaries and the internet to learn Chinese.

Pupils had to write a composition about animals. I told them to search the internet for information about animals and they did the composition very well this time. (C-N, Grade 8)

To use the dictionary, if you know the rules, you can think of lots of things and ways to learn yourself. (M-C, Grade 3)

Teachers can explain how to analyse components of Chinese characters, helping pupils understand important principles for learning.

I prefer to tell pupils how to learn... to unpack the characters... like how many strokes and how to write it... The strokes are truly important. It doesn't matter they make mistakes. It is important to have that awareness... to know how to organise a character together and use the dictionary. (M-C, Grade 3)

Here are examples of how to help pupils learn compound characters.

We play games to expand a single character to compound ones... We use the character 中 (middle) to make compound characters like 中國 (China), 中央 (central), 中心 (centre). (C-W, Grade 7)

To make sentences, I tell them to think and write down compound characters, and then to expand or arrange them into a sentence... I divide pupils into groups to play this game, for instance, one pupil suggests a name like 男孩子 [a boy], one suggests an action 吃雪糕 [eat ice-cream], and one names a place 公園 [a park]. Together the pupils can make a sentence like:

男孩子在公園吃雪糕 [A boy eats ice-cream in the park]. Then pupils can learn to make sentences like this on their own. (C-W, Grade 7)

Teachers can use discussion to broaden older pupils' thinking, thus assisting them to gain multiple perspectives to see things in life.

Once we talked about the earthquake happened last year in China. A pupil asked me why we still had to donate money when the earthquake was over [for a year]? I said when you have lost your home, you need to sleep in the street... Pupils are mono-focal. They consider earthquake as a disaster but they cannot see what [impacts] it could have... and what life could be like [after that]. (C-T, A-level)

I said if you have lost your mum in the earthquake... you have no one to play with, and no TV to watch. ... Imagine there are... thousands of people out there who have lost their relatives. Could you imagine that? Then she said, "Oh yes, I get it. I donate money now." (C-T, A-level)

There are ways pupils can learn on their own.

Children can self-learn Chinese by watching HK TV programmes and films, listening to news and Chinese songs, and learning from on-line programmes. (C-N, Grade 8)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

In L-3, teachers were aware of the importance to assist learners to master how to learn Chinese. They recognised that by demonstrating certain methods and skills, pupils can gradually learn how to learn on their own. They can self-learn if they know the ways to learn. L-3 focuses on the methods learners can use to acquire knowledge. L-3 enhances learners' *acquisition of knowledge and skills* (L-1), and of *culture and moral values* (L-2). With proper methods, learners would become more capable to use Chinese for communication and in knowing themselves, which are the focus of L-5 and L-6.

### ***Structural aspects***

#### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing Chinese learning as *learning how to learn* (L-3), teachers focus their attention on whether pupils know *how to learn* rather than only acquire knowledge from teachers. Here teachers show pupils the ways to learn for themselves.

#### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** Pupils need to know what to learn and put into use what they have learned.

To learn Chinese, pupils are required not to be afraid of hard work...to read and to write. (C-O, Grade 1)

You are not pushed around by your teachers... ask them questions and seek help from them. (C-T, A-level)

Pupils... [need to] know what they are learning for... If you sit a test on vocabularies, you need to know words, the methods on how to master the words. (M-I, Grade 3)

You [need to] put your knowledge into use... to know how to learn by yourself... to handle the unexpected. (M-D, Grade 4)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Teachers would encourage pupils to learn and to think.

It is important to praise children. (C-V, Grade 1)

I stimulate pupils to think of other aspects of life, to think from different perspectives. (C-T, A-level)

**Concerns.** Teachers would be more concerned about how pupils acquire knowledge. They would guide pupils to be more self-reliant.

A lot of Chinese characters are made up of simpler characters or parts... For instance, the character 有 [to have] is made up of 大 and 月. If pupils first know about the two parts 大 and 月, then [in learning] they can use the way they write 大 and 月 to write the whole character 有. (C-O, Grade 1)

Earlier in their composition I saw pupils use some big, difficult words they found in the dictionary or suggested by their parents... but without knowing clearly what they mean. I tell them to use words they know. (C-P, Grade 5)

Motivation will be enhanced if pupils can apply what they have learned.

If you learn the characters, you can read books, like simple comic books. It can increase your interest in learning. Then pupils will have more interest to read when they grow up. (M-K, Grade 6)

**Outcomes.** The emphasis is on pupils' ability to develop good learning skills and to learn how to learn.

Like today pupils had not yet learned the poem... Through discussion... they used their previous knowledge... to understand its meaning... They know how to use four pictures... to show its meaning. (C-N, Grade 8)

Different people have their preferred ways of learning. The best thing is pupils can cultivate good habits in learning. The best learners are those who can develop good habits. (M-B, Grade 1)

## **External horizon**

In L-3 learning Chinese is seen within the boundary of preparing learners to continue to learn Chinese outside school. As Chinese is difficult to learn, teachers would anticipate pupils to acquire proper learning methods to learn by themselves.

Pupils learn best when they are given time to sift through possible solutions themselves. (M-D, Grade 4)

## **Variations of the two groups in Category L-3**

In L-3, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced Chinese learning as acquiring appropriate skills for self-learning. This concern corresponds closely to the teaching conception *guidance on learning* (T-3). While Mandarin teachers talked in general the ways to help pupils learn Chinese, Cantonese teachers expected pupils to take a serious attitude towards learning. Mandarin teachers mentioned shorter teaching time to allow pupils their own time to practise, and to read comic books to enhance interest, whereas Cantonese ones talked about exploring more resources for pupils to self-learn, to seek help from others and not to be afraid of hard work.

### **7.2.4 Category 4: Cooperative efforts**

#### ***Referential aspects***

#### **Core meaning**

In *cooperative efforts* (L-4), learning is experienced as cooperation among teachers, pupils and parents in a supportive environment like Chinese schools and pupils' home.

Three things coming together could bring good learning. First, pupils have interest in learning. Second, the school offers a good environment for pupils to learn. Third, pupils' family can give proper support and guidance to their children to learn Chinese. (C-W, Grade 7)

Both teachers and pupils need to be doing well to have good outcomes. It won't work out if only one side is doing well... Children perform better if parents could help them at home. Just relying on the three hours of Chinese teaching per week is not enough. (C-O, Grade 1)

To ensure teaching pupils well, I join hands with parents to help them. I do not mind to pay for the telephone cost. I contact parents. I phone them up to discuss how best to help their children with their homework and to learn. (C-X, Grade 3)

Teachers explained why cooperation among many parties is vital in learners' learning. First, the children are young.

Children are young... If parents do not encourage them or back them up in learning, pupils will feel they do not need to do anything. (C-R, Grade 3)

Second, children may not be mature enough to understand what is good for them.

Pupils do not know the pros and cons of learning Chinese because they are young... Parents need to let their children understand this and to help them learn. (C-V, Grade 1)

Third, Chinese and English are two totally different languages.

Chinese is so different from English...[Chinese is] very hard to comprehend... If they do not know... [enough] characters, they cannot read or self-learn and have to rely on others. They need lots of things in the environment to enable them to learn. (M-H, Grade 8)

Lastly, learning time is limited in Chinese schools.

It is not enough just to rely on the two hours of Chinese school learning, if pupils do not do revision at home and their parents do not follow up their learning. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Teachers would welcome parents' cooperation in pupils' learning.

I consider parents' assistance at home significant for pupils' good learning. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Good learning happens when parents could cooperate with the school: encourage their children more, motivate them and enhance their learning interest. (C-R, Grade 3)

To get pupils to have interest in learning... it requires parents and teachers to work together to think up ways to arouse their interest. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Some pupils are eager to learn.

As with my class...I am lucky that pupils have good learning attitudes and good performance in dictation... About 95% of the pupils hand in their homework and revise for their dictation each week. (C-W, Grade 7)

Pupils may rely on rote-learning to do their homework, but they put their hearts in it. They are attentive and well-behaved and have good attitudes in learning. (C-W, Grade 7)

Some teachers have got reasonable support from parents.

Parents of my class are concerned about their children's Chinese learning. They feel responsible for their learning. (C-W, Grade 7)

I can see half my class are interested in learning Chinese, making good progress, but those told to come [to class] by parents are passive and not serious in learning. (C-Z, Grade 4)

In the process of teaching, many parents give me ideas how to better support pupils. (M-A, Grade 3)

I sense that pupils' parents are supportive. (M-E, non-Chinese class)

A parent came and told me that her child at first did not know anything about the semantic radicals (部首) of Chinese language but now she knew them after I taught her. This parent induced in me a good sense of achievement and satisfaction. (M-J, Grade 3)

There had been opportunities for pupils to join summer camps in China to gain additional support in Mandarin learning.

In China lots of summer camps are held, and most of them are free. Pupils can go to the south or north [of China]. The place where our children went was in southern China, in Hangzhou. My elder son went there to learn Chinese culture and other things... These [camps] can help them learn Chinese. (M-H, Grade 8)

But the majority of Cantonese teachers have faced a harsh reality. First, pupils have little motivation in learning.

About 90% of our pupils do not have good Chinese learning attitudes... Pupils need to have interest to achieve good learning. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Some children do not do their homework. When I ask them why, they say they have no one at home to help them. (C-P, Grade 5)

Children return home without revising the texts they have learnt. They do not ask their parents the things they do not understand. They [just] wait until they come back to school to ask the teacher. (C-R, Grade 3)

And parents have been too busy to support their children's learning.

Most parents are in the catering industry, they work until very late at night, so their children come to school late [in the morning]... They bring their pupils to school and that is all... They are very busy at work, leaving their children's Chinese learning uncared for. (C-R, Grade 3)

Their parents do not follow up their learning... Some only [routinely] sign their school handbook but have no idea whether their children do their homework or not. (C-Q, Grade 4)

Some parents even think they have fulfilled their responsibilities [just] by bringing their children to the school. (C-R, Grade 3)

We cannot do much without the cooperation of parents. Learning outcomes would not be good without parents' support at home. (C-W, Grade 7)

Parents' indifferent attitudes could have negative effects on pupils' learning.

With those parents who do not care about children's learning, pupils [usually] make very slow progress even though teachers keep on encouraging them. (C-Q, Grade 4)

As parents pay no attention to their [children's] homework, it leaves pupils no motivation to learn. (C-R, Grade 3)

To compensate for the lack of parental support, some teachers would try other ways.

As parents say they do not have time to teach their children at home, I help pupils finish their workbook in class [instead]... We try our best to control [class] time and make the best use of it. (C-R, Grade 3)

Since no one helps with their homework at home, I do [the harder part of their] homework with pupils during lesson. I leave [just] text copying and reciting for them to do at home. (C-Q, Grade 4)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

*Cooperative efforts* (L-4) focuses on the cooperation among teachers, learners and parents in learning Chinese as a community language. Teachers were aware of the importance of cooperation among teachers, parents, home and school in pupils' learning. As they knew some parents were too busy to offer support, they would use various methods to help pupils learn Chinese at school. Collaborative efforts are indispensable to children's Chinese learning in the English-speaking Scotland. If there could be support from parents, pupils could acquire more Chinese knowledge, culture and moral values, which are the focus of L-1 and L-2.

## *Structural aspects*

### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing learning as *cooperative efforts* (L-4), teachers focus their attention on the collaborative roles parents, teachers and pupils are to play in successful Chinese learning. Both pupils' own incentive to learn and parental support at home are vital. Given limited class time, teachers make the best use of it to teach with versatile methods. In teachers' view, parents should play an active role in children's learning.

### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** Both teachers and pupils are perceived to have significant roles. First, teachers have to be well-prepared.

Teachers need to make great efforts in teaching because those who learn are just little children...  
Teachers need to put deep thoughts in teaching and lesson preparation... It is good to ask: how to attract pupils to learn? (C-R, Grade 3)

Second, pupils need to play their active part in learning.

It is important for pupils to bring their 'hearts' to learning, instead of just sitting there. (C-P, Grade 5)

Pupils need to cooperate with teachers ... need to do their homework. (C-V, Grade 1)

The motivation that comes straight from pupils' heart is very important. (M-I, Grade 3)

Without pupils' active participation, teaching would be a waste of time.

There is no use teaching if pupils do not want to learn. (C-S, Grade 3)

Pupils need to do their part... need to be punctual and to concentrate in learning. (C-V, Grade 1)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Teachers and pupils have to cooperate with one another, and have mutual understanding.

I am very proud of them when pupils could learn something. (C-R, Grade 3)

It would be perfect if both teachers and pupils could have mutual understanding about the intention of the other party and the things others have done. (C-X, Grade 3)

Pupils have to make an effort... really need to appreciate, understand... the teachers. (C-S, Grade 3)

**Concerns.** It is about pupils' interest, confidence, self-awareness and support in learning.

Interest is the pre-requisite to good learning. It would be hard if pupils... are forced to learn. (C-W, Grade 7)

[If] teachers praise [the pupils]... their confidence [in learning] will increase. They will speak in a louder voice. (C-P, Grade 5)

If parents could teach their children together [with us] when pupils are in Grades 1, 2, or 3, children could develop self-awareness in Chinese learning earlier. Otherwise, it would be difficult for them [to learn] when they are in Grades 4 and 5. (C-Q, Grade 4)

**Outcomes.** The focus is on the attitudes of pupils and parents towards Chinese learning.

You need to have a will to learn... to see the need to learn... the key... depends on the learners. Others cannot do the learning for you. (M-D, Grade 4)

Learning is that you know what you want and need, you then follow the teacher, follow the plan and learn with perseverance. Say, if teachers give you a task, you need to finish it. You would think also [afterwards] whether you have really achieved it well, or you just did it but without putting your heart in it. (M-I, Grade 3)

Parents should take their supportive role responsibly.

Pupils make bigger progress if parents could help them at home. This could make a huge difference in their learning ... If parents could remind their children... to go to bed earlier the night before, they would be in better spirits in [Chinese] lessons. (C-V, Grade 1)

### **External horizon**

In L-4 learning Chinese is seen within the boundary of a cooperative Chinese community with teachers, parents and schools to work together to support learners. But cooperation is difficult to obtain especially from Cantonese parents. To pupils, Chinese is just too hard and uninteresting to learn. They cannot yet see the benefit of learning Chinese to their future. To parents, their busy life often leaves them with no time and no patience to support their children.

## Variations of the two groups in Category L-4

In L-4, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced learning as cooperation between pupils, teachers, parents and the school. Cantonese teachers appeared to harbour more dissatisfaction/negative feelings than their Mandarin counterparts. There were variations in the degree of cooperation the two groups could get from parents. Cantonese teachers apparently got much less parental support. Mandarin ones were apparently more fortunate, as no complaints about parents were noted from them.

### 7.2.5 Category 5: Using language for communication

#### *Referential aspects*

#### **Core meaning**

In *using language for communication* (L-5), learning Chinese is experienced as using it for communicative purposes both verbally and in written form.

To be able to speak, to communicate with others is most important... the aim of language learning is for communication. (C-O, Grade 1)

It is important to be more practical [in learning Chinese]... To be able to speak but not [necessarily] with exact pronunciation... you don't need that [exactness]. (C-S, Grade 3)

Language is used to exchange ideas, knowledge and culture... It is the tool for communication and socialising with others. (M-B, Grade 1)

We remind parents to speak Chinese with their children at home... Pupils can use the Chinese they learn at school to communicate with their grandparents in China. (M-K, Grade 6)

A teacher shared her views on why Chinese should be used for communication in Scotland.

Learning Chinese in mainland China and in Scotland are two different contexts. The latter is mainly about acquiring the skills to use Chinese to express and communicate Chinese culture and knowledge with others. (M-B, Grade 1)

As these teachers pointed out, communication is for practical purposes.

Learn how to speak Chinese so as to communicate with parents. (C-X, Grade 3)

We are Chinese, and Chinese is our language. If you do not know some simple Chinese, how could you communicate well with your father and mother? (C-V, Grade 1)

[To learn Cantonese] is better to be practical. If pupils can read, write, listen and speak and be able to function in their environment [it is enough]. (C-S, Grade 3)

If you go to HK, you need to use Chinese [to read characters] to take a minibus to the city centre. (C-W, Grade 7)

### Mandarin teachers were more concerned about oral communication.

Listening is the most important skill. Next is to speak, to express oneself. (M-B, Grade 1)

In Scotland... learning Chinese is mainly about to express [oneself] and communicate with others. But with vocabularies, grammar rules and concepts... even when you have learnt them, you'll soon forget. (M-B, Grade 1)

You need to communicate with others in class to see how others learn and their [learning] methods, and then to think carefully if the methods are all right for you. (M-I, Grade 3)

### Cantonese teachers also paid attention to communication in written form.

The most important thing in learning Chinese is to communicate with others. I teach them to read, to analyse prose, to write words and write composition. (C-N, Grade 8)

If you go to HK, you can read Chinese... go to a restaurant you can read the menu. (C-Y, Grade 6)

### Being able to communicate in Chinese can avoid embarrassment.

It is laughable if [ethnic Chinese] pupils do not know their own [Chinese] language. (C-O, Grade 1)

If someone, seeing you with a Chinese face, asks you a question in Chinese, it would be a pity if you do not know how to answer them in Chinese. (C-W, Grade 7)

### Here is an example of a teacher helping her pupils use Chinese for communication.

With listening and speaking, I use a lot of questioning in class. I use group discussion to give pupils more chances to speak. Through listening to Chinese songs, pupils learn to write by filling in the lyric. Every three to four weeks, pupils are required to give a talk for 5 minutes on a topic I have taught. While others are doing their class work, I will get a pupil to sit beside me to talk about the topic he or she has prepared. (C-N, Grade 8)

The same teacher showed how pupils can integrate writing with speaking to their parents.

Before I get pupils to write a composition about their mum, I ask them to interview their mum to gather information before they write it... They need to jot down points and then write them up... In so doing they can also understand their mum more. (C-N, Grade 8)

To provide a Chinese learning environment, some teachers would avoid using English in classroom teaching.

I know pupils could understand Chinese easier if I use English to explain to them. But sometimes I am reluctant to do so because they are here to learn Chinese but not English. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Body gestures can be used to communicate meanings.

I use gestures to explain words to them. When I teach the word lean against (倚靠)... I sit on a chair and lean against its back... I lean my body against the whiteboard... By doing this, pupils could understand [the words]. (C-Z, Grade 4)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

In L-5 teachers were aware that they need to enhance learners' abilities to communicate with others in Chinese in spoken and written form. This category has *acquisition of knowledge and skills* (L-1) and *acquisition of culture and moral values* (L-2) as the basic component. With knowledge of Chinese, learners can understand more about their Chinese root. With the ability to get meanings from texts and to speak Chinese to teachers and others, they can know and associate themselves more as Chinese, which is the focus of L-6.

### ***Structural aspects***

#### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing learning as *using language for communication* (L-5), teachers focus their attention on what Chinese is for and what purposes it can serve. Learning Chinese as a community language in Scotland is basically for expressing oneself and exchanging ideas with others.

## **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** Teachers' responsibility is to arrange activities for learners to use what they have learned, while pupils are to cooperate/learn from classmates.

I get pupils to join in activities to communicate with each other. If one pupil does not know what to do in an activity, he can ask/talk to others, then they will know what and how to do it. (C-N, Grade 8)

Performing (in class) is very good because they know how to do things right in speaking. (M-E, non-native Chinese class)

**Teacher-pupil relation.** Vital is that both parties should feel relaxed and focus in their interactions.

I use activities to get them to speak as much as they can in class. (C-N, Grade 8)

I use lots of questioning in my teaching to catch pupils' attention and keep them focus... I add in interesting things. I like to use lively teaching methods. (M-K, Grade 6)

**Concerns.** The main concern is to provide pupils with chances to communicate in Chinese.

With these British-born Chinese children, I talk about things which may interest them, such as what is your favourite food and what do you do in the holiday? It doesn't matter if pupils do not know how to answer in Chinese. They can say in English [first]. I [then] translate what they have said in Chinese. Then they repeat it in Chinese. I hope they can learn something in this process. (C-S, Grade 3)

I have 13 pupils aged from 8 to 10 in my class... To help them learn well, I divide them into groups, to do discussion, or to come forward to write characters. (C-Z, Grade 4)

Today my aim is for them... first to listen and to speak to others, then to read and to write. (M-I, Grade 3)

**Outcomes.** The targets are pupils can understand and use more spoken and written Chinese.

If you know Chinese, you can use it to communicate with others. (C-Y, Grade 6)

To be able to put Chinese knowledge into use... to learn how to put words into use, and to use vocabularies in writing. (C-P, Grade 5)

Learning is [well] achieved if pupils are able to answer your questions [in Chinese]... to speak it and use it... Though [they] may not be able to write, pupils can learn to speak to others in Chinese. (C-O, Grade 1)

[After having learned Chinese,] children can communicate better with their relatives, grandpa and grandma in China. We have bought Chinese newspapers for them [to read] at home. (M-K, Grade 6)

## **External horizon**

In L-5, learning Chinese is seen within the boundary of using it to interact with texts and to communicate with family/friends verbally. Through learning Chinese, learners can benefit both at home and at work, now and in the future.

I hope they can speak Cantonese to communicate with others... When pupils know how to read, write and use Chinese, they can apply their knowledge whenever they need to use Chinese in the future. (C-N, Grade 8)

China will be very strong. It is more convenient for you to work in China if you master Chinese language. (C-Y, Grade 6)

## **Variations of the two groups in Category L-5**

In L-5, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers experienced Chinese learning as for communication. Cantonese teachers mentioned both written and verbal communication. They tended to stress also on literacy aspect. Mandarin teachers emphasised the oral aspect instead. As regards the verbal aspect, Cantonese teachers saw its use within the family and communities, whereas Mandarin teachers also mentioned its relevance to communicating with classmates, understanding learning methods in Chinese, correcting each other's mistakes in learning, and socialising with others.

## 7.2.6 Category 6: Knowing oneself

### *Referential aspects*

#### **Core meaning**

In *knowing oneself* (L-6), learning Chinese is experienced as a means through which pupils can know more about themselves. It can be ‘knowing oneself’ in general, or knowing more about one’s Chinese identity based on learning Chinese language and culture.

Learning Chinese is to enable children to know their ethnic language because they are Chinese. (C-O, Grade 1)

I tell my pupils you must learn Chinese because you are Chinese and your parents are Chinese. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Learning is knowing, the knowing of oneself, the knowing of one’s Chinese identity and culture. (M-K, Grade 6)

All learning comes to understanding oneself. With learning you know yourself better. (M-F, Grade 7)

One view is that to know one’s Chinese identity runs in the blood.

Even if you do not like the present Chinese Communist Party... you love China as your country and identify yourself as Chinese. I think it [Chinese identity] is with you in the blood... All these start from knowing the language. (M-K, Grade 6)

Another link is to know one’s identity through associating with Chinese culture.

If you know Chinese... you can learn Chinese culture... [and] know you are Chinese. (C-Y, Grade 6)

No matter whether it is through learning Chinese or one’s daily life, [one] gradually knows the traditions... why we eat dumplings in the New Year and why there are twelve animals in the Chinese zodiac. (M-K, Grade 6)

Teachers expressed their sadness in seeing children who have not known their ethnic language.

It is a pity that some BBCs [British-born Chinese] do not know basic Chinese... They all speak English. (M-K, Grade 6)

Knowing Chinese language could be a way to let pupils know they are not Westerners.

You are Chinese and your parents are Chinese... You learn Chinese culture. You know that Chinese people are different from Westerners. (C-Y, Grade 6)

Learning Chinese is to know a language and to maintain the Chinese culture... If you let children say, they would identify themselves as British... say here [UK] is my home. [As parents] I need to let them know they are Chinese... I think there is an identity [issue] in it. Mastering Chinese is the first thing in being Chinese. (M-K, Grade 6)

According to teachers, pupils should know Chinese and Westerners lead different ways of life.

Chinese are not as liberal [in moral matters] as the Westerners. There are countries which accept same sex marriage, accept things like a couple cohabit without being married... I want to let pupils think and know we are Chinese [and we see these differently]. (C-Y, Grade 6)

In Western countries, it is common for people to have children before getting married. Westerners are easy with homosexuality... but from the Chinese perspective, this is an unhealthy situation. (C-Y, Grade 6)

### **Distinct features and links with other categories**

L-6 focuses on learners' knowing themselves and has links with other conceptions. Some teachers considered a Chinese identity is given to an ethnic learner by birth. But the problem is, as teachers perceived, that ethnic youngsters may not be aware of this, let alone to agree or not. Through learning Chinese, children can know more about their cultural heritage.

Away from their native country, children would need *cooperative efforts* (L-4) from teachers and parents to provide them with the knowledge to understand their cultural heritage and to reflect on their ethnic identity. With the *acquisition of Chinese language and skills* (L-1) and *acquisition of culture and moral values* (L-2) in school, learners would be more capable to *know oneself* (L-6). They may then be aware more of their Chinese identity and differences from the Westerners. Teachers expressed the hope that, by learning Cantonese or Mandarin, children could know more about their Chinese root while growing up in Scotland.

## *Structural aspects*

### **Internal horizon**

When experiencing learning as *knowing oneself* (L-6), teachers focus their attention on pupils' understanding of Chinese language and culture, and on how these can empower them to reflect on their identity while living in Scotland.

### **Dimensions of variation**

**Responsibilities.** Teachers consider pupils have an active role to play since they need to relate who they are with what they have learned.

You need to know your [Chinese] root. (M-K, Grade 6)

There is a Chinese saying: Lead to the door by the teachers, self-cultivation by the individuals (師傅領進門, 修行在個人). (M-G, Grade 4)

One learns to know... what one can do and what one probably is unable or can't do. Only when one knows oneself that one has the capability to know others... we don't know ourselves very well. One may say... I am quite capable but things are harder than we think. (M-F, Grade 7)

Family and community are perceived to have a role in guiding their younger generation to understand themselves.

Children do not yet know what is good... Parents need to tell them. (C-O, Grade 1)

Although my son lives in Western culture, given that his mum, family and people in his social circle keep on transmitting Chinese culture to him, at the right time, he will think and then knows his real identity. (C-Y, Grade 6)

**Concerns.** Teachers were concerned about the possible problem pupils may encounter due to their inability to speak Chinese.

We have a Chinese face. People will laugh at you if you cannot speak a sentence of Chinese... As Chinese, these children should know the Chinese language. (C-X, Grade 3)

**Outcomes.** The focus is on learners' awareness of their ethnic identity.

Pupils gain information, knowledge about more things... They enlighten themselves. (C-S, Grade 3)

One learns [in order] to know oneself... My pupils are teenagers, and teenagers are rebellious... Sometimes they do not know themselves well. (M-F, Grade 7)

[To know] Chinese are different from Westerners. (C-V, Grade 1)

Learning is to learn Chinese culture and morals... to enable pupils at least to know they are 100% Chinese. (C-R, Grade 3)

Learners would know more about Chinese history and develop a sense of pride.

You know... China has more than 3000 years of history when compared with America's a few hundred years. To learn Chinese could enable youngsters to have a sense of pride in being Chinese... My mum and Dad are Chinese. I am Chinese. (M-K, Grade 6)

Eventually pupils may recognise their Chinese identity through mastering the language and culture.

Two years ago my son told me he is not Chinese, he is Scottish. I asked him how he could be Scottish if his parents are Chinese. He replied he was born in Scotland... In March this year I brought him back to HK for a holiday. He had time to watch Chinese martial art films. He watched the film [titled] Ip Man 葉問, a famous Kung-fu film starred by Donnie Yen. He knows about Yen, the excellent martial artist. My son adores him. As he knows Wing Chun 詠春 Kung-Fu is internationally famous, he now tells me he is Chinese. (C-Y, Grade 6)

I believe the time will come when children change their mind [to associate themselves with the Chinese identity]. (C-Y, Grade 6)

## **External horizon**

In L-6, learning Chinese is seen within the boundary of how ethnic Chinese learners think about themselves while living in Scotland. They might associate themselves with the British/Scottish identity. As they are perceived as Chinese because of their (physical) Chinese features, it is important for them to be aware of their Chinese identity. Learning Chinese language and culture can empower them in this aspect.

## **Variations of the two groups in Category L-6**

In L-6, both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers understood learning Chinese language and culture as opportunities for learners to know the Chinese traditions and to rethink their Chinese identity. Other than the prospect of knowing oneself as Chinese, a Mandarin teacher also spoke about knowing oneself as a person with unique abilities, likes and dislikes. While Mandarin teachers considered learning Chinese as a way to

help children know/associate with their Chinese identity, Cantonese teachers inclined to stress the undeniable Chinese identity inherited through bloodline.

### **7.3 Summary of Chapter 7**

In this chapter, the six learning conceptions identified in the data have been reported. The outcome space represents the sum of experiences which together make up the totality of experiencing the phenomenon of learning Chinese. Ethnic Chinese pupils who learn Chinese knowledge (L-1), and culture and moral values (L-2), master gradually the ways how to learn (L-3) with the help and cooperation of others (L-4). Through their abilities in verbal or written communication in Chinese (L-5), pupils eventually know themselves more, and in particular their Chinese identity (L-6) while growing up in Scotland.

A summary of the outcome space on the learning conceptions is presented in Table 7.1, followed by Table 7.2, which recapitulates the variations of conceptions between Cantonese and Mandarin teachers.

Table 7.1 Summary of outcome space on conception of learning of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

Category	L-1	L-2	L-3	L-4	L-5	L-6
<b>Name</b>	<b>Acquisition of knowledge and skills</b>	<b>Acquisition of culture and moral values</b>	<b>Learning how to learn</b>	<b>Cooperative efforts</b>	<b>Using language for communication</b>	<b>Knowing oneself</b>
<b>Core meaning</b> (learning in Chinese schools)	To gain knowledge and skills of Chinese language. To use and develop it in life	To learn Chinese is to learn the essence of Chinese culture and moral values within	To learn how to learn and to develop learning skills are vital in successful learning	Cooperation among teachers, pupils and parents to enable pupils' to learn in a supportive environment like in Chinese schools and pupils' homes	To use Chinese language for communication both verbally and in written form	Through learning the language and culture, learners could know about their Chinese identity and more about themselves
<b>Context</b> (learning in Chinese schools)	To learn in Chinese schools is an opportunity to learn the knowledge of Chinese and use it	To learn Chinese culture, moral values and use it in life	To learn learning methods from teachers so as to self-learn	Chinese schools provide an environment for youngsters to learn their heritage language. Parents should help to provide a language-rich environment for their children to learn Chinese at home	To enable learners to use Chinese to communicate at home, at school and in other contexts	Chinese school as a place for ethnic youngsters to think about themselves and their ethnic identity
<b>Internal horizon</b>	<b>Focusing on:</b>  •To gain knowledge and skills. Pupils develop knowledge of Chinese in life	<b>Focusing on:</b>  •To learn Chinese culture, cultural values and good behaviour in life	<b>Focusing on:</b>  • To master the different ways and skills to learn/self-learn Chinese rather than to gain knowledge from teachers	<b>Focusing on:</b>  •Cooperation among parents, teachers, learners and schools in fostering pupils' successful Chinese learning	<b>Focusing on:</b>  •To use Chinese to communicate with family, relatives and friends both verbally and in written form	<b>Focusing on:</b>  •To know more of themselves and their (Chinese) identity through learning Chinese while living in Scotland

(Table 7.1 to be continued on next page)

Category	L-1	L-2	L-3	L-4	L-5	L-6
<b>Name</b>	<b>Acquisition of knowledge and skills</b>	<b>Acquisition of culture and moral values</b>	<b>Learning how to learn</b>	<b>Cooperative efforts</b>	<b>Using language for communication</b>	<b>Knowing oneself</b>
<b>Dimensions of variation</b>						
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers prepare lessons for pupils to learn</li> <li>•Pupils learn, revise, use Chinese to do things and make progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers transmit Chinese cultural knowledge to pupils</li> <li>•Pupils are provide with opportunities to relate cultural values to their life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers explain and apply learning methods in teaching</li> <li>•Pupils learn the language and skills and use them in future learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers prepare and organise learning</li> <li>•Pupils cooperate with teachers and like to learn</li> <li>•Parents support their children's learning at home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers prepare lessons and guide pupils to learn</li> <li>•Pupils use Chinese to communicate and interact with others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers organise materials and guide pupils to learn</li> <li>•Pupils reflect on what they learned</li> <li>•Parents support their children in learning</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher-pupil relation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Praise pupils and encourage them to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Establish affective relationship with pupils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Encourage and establish good relationship with pupils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Establish a collaborating relationship with pupils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Establish a relaxing relationship with pupils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•As a person for pupils to ask questions and seek advice</li> </ul>
<b>Concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To ensure teaching materials, methods and activities suit pupils' needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Concern about pupils' moral values</li> <li>•To pass on to learners cultural heritage such as to respect for teachers, elderly and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers concern the ways pupils learn</li> <li>•To help pupils to be self-reliant in learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The roles pupils and parents play in pupils' learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Teachers concern about how to make learning meaningful by relating it to learners' life experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The opportunities to enable pupils to know themselves and their Chinese identity</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To learn the four skills</li> <li>•To self-learn</li> <li>•For qualification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To know and appreciate Chinese culture</li> <li>•To learn good attitudes and moral values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To learn Chinese language and culture, methods and skills</li> <li>•To learn the ways to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To learn Chinese language and culture, methods and skills</li> <li>•Parents' attitudes in supporting their children</li> <li>•Learners' attitudes to learn for themselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To use knowledge of Chinese to communicate with family and friends locally and abroad in speech and in writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•To know Chinese language and culture</li> <li>•To enable pupils to know themselves and their ethnic identity</li> <li>•To be a good moral person</li> </ul>
<b>External Horizon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Chinese language world of knowledge and skill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Chinese language world of culture and moral values as different from the West</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Chinese language world to be learned and understood through various ways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Chinese language world to be learned and understood with cooperation among teachers, learners, parents, home and school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Chinese language world in relation to the family, relatives, friends and the world's Chinese communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Chinese language world, the various Chinese-speaking and non-Chinese countries and communities, and the relationship/ links and roles of individuals with these communities in the world</li> </ul>

Table 7.2 Summary of variations of learning conceptions of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

<b>Conceptions of learning</b>	<b>Cantonese teachers</b>	<b>Mandarin teachers</b>
<b>L-1:</b> Acquisition of knowledge and skills	Gain knowledge and skills on Cantonese with focus on reading and writing and hope pupils to work hard  Praise and reward pupils for them to learn more and do well	Gain knowledge and skills on Mandarin and to maintain learning interest  Praise and reward pupils to make them relaxed and continue to learn
<b>L-2:</b> Acquisition of culture and moral values	Learn culture and moral values to be a good person and practise them in life  Other than to respect parents, teachers, elderly and get on well with others, also talk about honesty, filial piety, diligence, patience and the sense of shame  Stress Chinese familial relationship as different from Western society	Learn culture and moral values to be a good person  Learn moral behaviour like respect parents, teachers and elderly and get on well with others
<b>L-3:</b> Learning how to learn	Learn the ways to learn Cantonese  Know the skills for self-learning  Explore new ways to learn more, seek help from others, persistent in learning and work hard	Learn the ways to learn Mandarin  More time for self-learn and a shorter teaching time
<b>L-4:</b> Cooperative efforts	Learn Cantonese well is a cooperative effort among many sides – parents, pupils, teachers and the school  Often lack of parental support and cooperation  Worry about pupils' progress due to parents' indifference attitude	Learn Mandarin well is a cooperative effort among many sides – parents, pupils, teachers and the school  Quite positive at pupils' progress due to parents' support and cooperation
<b>L-5:</b> Using language for communication	Learn Cantonese as means of communication with others  Write to relatives and speak to family at home	Learn Mandarin as communication at home and in the outside world  Listening and speaking as ways to socialise with others
<b>L-6:</b> Knowing oneself	Learn Cantonese to know oneself as a Chinese person inherited through blood	Learn Mandarin to know oneself as a Chinese and as a person with likes and dislikes

## CHAPTER 8 FURTHER FINDINGS

### 8.1 Introduction

Arranged into four sections, Chapter 8 reports further findings that emerged in the process of data analysis and that are significant for our understanding of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' teaching and learning conceptions. It provides additional details in answering the three research questions of the study.

These findings include teachers' individual teaching and learning conceptions (Section 8.2), four profiles of teachers which illustrate how their personal experiences might have shaped their thoughts (Section 8.3), teachers' self-perceived factors they considered to have influenced their thinking (Section 8.4), and metaphors they used to describe Chinese teaching and learning (Section 8.5). The metaphors are also categorised and compared with their own teaching and learning conceptions to explore possible similarities or differences among them.

### 8.2 Individual Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' teaching and learning conceptions

Following the adopted scheme of classification (Section 4.6.1), each individual teacher has been categorised into one of the teaching and of the learning conceptions. These individual conceptions of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers are represented by two-way tables (Tables 8.1 and 8.2).

#### 8.2.1 Teaching and learning conceptions of Cantonese teachers

**Teaching conceptions.** As shown in Table 8.1, the principal teaching conception of Cantonese teachers is *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* as expressed by 4 teachers among 13. This is followed by *service of love to ethnic community* (by 3), *guidance on learning* and *maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values* (both by 2), then by *catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities*, and the *use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest* (both by 1). The data suggest that while teachers were eager to transmit Chinese knowledge, culture and skills

to pupils, they might not be equally keen in using versatile methods to enhance pupils' learning and cultivate their interests.

Table 8.1 Individual teaching and learning conceptions of Cantonese teachers

Conception of teaching	Conception of learning						Total
	Acquisition of knowledge and skills	Acquisition of culture and moral values	Learning how to learn	Cooperative efforts	Using language for communication	Knowing oneself	
Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills			C-T	C-W	C-O C-S		4
Service of love to ethnic community		C-U		C-V		C-Y	3
Guidance on learning				C-Q	C-N		2
Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities			C-P				1
Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest				C-X			1
Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values		C-Z		C-R			2
Total	0	2	2	5	3	1	13

Three things are obvious. First, 3 out of 4 teachers with *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* as their principal conception were overseas students from HK. This suggests the transmission-focused education culture in HK might have an impact on their thoughts. Second, the 2 teachers (C-R, C-Z) who had *maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values* as their principal conception were parent teachers who had children grown-up in Scotland. Third, with the 2 teachers (C-N, C-Q) who had *guidance on learning* as their principal teaching conception, one was a trained teacher in Macau, and the other had experiences coaching boy scouts in HK. These background variables apparently have some explanatory power (Appendix IV).

**Learning conceptions.** As seen in Table 8.1, Cantonese teachers' dominant learning conception is *cooperative efforts*, which was possessed by 5 among 13. There are 3 teachers with *using language for communication*, 2 with *acquisition of culture and moral values*, 2 with *learning how to learn*, and 1 with *knowing oneself*. It can be observed that, most teachers stressed the importance of *cooperative efforts* in learning and the value of Cantonese in (home) communication. The two teachers (C-U, C-Z) with *acquisition of culture and moral values* as their principal learning conception were also parent teachers who had children raised up in Scotland.

**Inconsistency between the teaching and learning conceptions among Cantonese teachers.** Table 8.1 reveals a mismatch between the teaching and learning conceptions of some Cantonese teachers. As the six teaching and six learning conceptions are each in a hierarchical order, they have gradation and progress in their concerns from a lower to a higher level in the development. While a teacher with a higher level of learning conception is expected to have a higher level of teaching conception, this is not the case among many teachers.

For instance, C-Y possessed a high level learning conception *knowing oneself*, but a relatively low level teaching conception *service of love to ethnic community*. This suggests that although she might hold a high level, progressive view regarding pupils' learning, she could be conservative and did not perceive teaching in the same spirit to support pupils to reach the learning goal. Teacher C-Z had a low level learning conception *acquisition of culture and moral values*, but a high level teaching conception *maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values* seems to indicate that despite he might hold high expectation in delivering his teaching, he might have a relatively low demand on pupils' learning outcomes.

In short, Table 8.1 suggests Cantonese teachers were in general more *transmission-oriented* in teaching. They stressed *knowledge, skills and culture* in teaching and *cooperative efforts* in learning. They tended to consider Chinese teaching as a service of love to pupils. While parent teachers emphasised the cultural aspect of Chinese, young teachers who were overseas students stressed the acquisition of Chinese knowledge and skills. The lack of consistency between their teaching and learning conceptions appears to indicate an incongruity in some teachers' thoughts.

## 8.2.2 Teaching and learning conceptions of Mandarin teachers

**Teaching conceptions.** Table 8.2 indicates 5 out of 11 Mandarin teachers had *guidance on learning* as their principal teaching conception, 4 with the *use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest*, and 2 with *catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities*. These figures suggest Mandarin teachers were more guidance-oriented in their thoughts about teaching. They stressed the use of versatile methods and on catering for individual pupils' characteristics, needs and abilities in teaching.

**Learning conceptions.** Table 8.2 shows that 6 out of 11 teachers had their learning conception of *cooperative efforts*. Like their Cantonese counterpart, Mandarin teachers stressed collaboration of teachers and parents in pupils' learning. With the remaining ones, 2 teachers emphasised *learning how to learn*, 2 stressed *knowing oneself*, and 1 in *acquisition of culture and moral values*.

Table 8.2 Individual teaching and learning conceptions of Mandarin teachers

Conception of teaching	Conception of learning						Total
	Acquisition of knowledge and skills	Acquisition of culture and moral values	Learning how to learn	Cooperative efforts	Using language for communication	Knowing oneself	
Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills							0
Service of love to ethnic community							0
Guidance on learning			M-D	M-E M-G M-I		M-K	5
Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities				M-J		M-F	2
Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest		M-B	M-C	M-A M-H			4
Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values							0
Total	0	1	2	6	0	2	11

Most teachers had stressed the importance of *cooperative efforts* in learning. This indicates they recognised the significance of the *social* aspect in learning Chinese as a community language in Scotland. The importance of *knowing oneself* and *learning how to learn* has also been stressed, indicating some teachers were concerned about how to strengthen pupils' ability in learning. Data also show more Mandarin than Cantonese teachers appeared to hold more progressive views of pupils' learning.

**Consistency between the teaching and learning conceptions among Mandarin teachers.** Tables 8.1 and 8.2 appear to reveal a higher consistency between teaching and learning conceptions among Mandarin than Cantonese teachers. Teachers with a higher level teaching conception also tended to hold a learning conception towards the higher end. This may indicate Mandarin teachers were reasonably consistent in their thoughts regarding Chinese teaching and learning. In general, they were observed to be more thoughtful in reflecting about their teaching and their demand on pupils' learning.

For instance, the six teachers who held an average level of learning conception - *cooperative efforts* (L-4) - possessed at the same time average to high level of teaching conceptions ranging from T-3 (guidance on learning) to T-5 (use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest). Teacher M-F who had a high level learning goal *knowing oneself* held simultaneously an above average level teaching conception of *catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities*. In sum, this match suggests that she not only held a more liberal view in learning, but also had in mind a corresponding orientation in teaching.

### **8.2.3 Similarities and differences in individual teaching and learning conceptions of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers**

**Teaching conceptions.** Combining Tables 8.1 and 8.2 gives Table 8.3, which reveals Cantonese and Mandarin teachers had different concerns in Chinese teaching and learning. Regarding teaching, Cantonese teachers focused mostly on *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* (4 Cantonese, 0 Mandarin), and *service of love to ethnic community* (3 Cantonese, 0 Mandarin). Mandarin teachers emphasised more on *guidance on teaching* (5 Mandarin, 2 Cantonese) and the *use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest* (4 Mandarin, 1 Cantonese).

Table 8.3 Individual teaching and learning conceptions of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

Conception of teaching	Conception of learning						Total
	Acquisition of knowledge and skills	Acquisition of culture and moral values	Learning how to learn	Cooperative efforts	Using language for communication	Knowing oneself	
Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills			C-T	C-W	C-O C-S		4
Service of love to ethnic community		C-U		C-V		C-Y	3
Guidance on learning			M-D	C-Q M-E M-G M-I	C-N	M-K	7
Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities			C-P	M-J		M-F	3
Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest		M-B	M-C	C-X M-A M-H			5
Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values		C-Z		C-R			2
Total	0	3	4	11	3	3	24

No Mandarin teachers were observed to be holding *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* and *service of love to ethnic community* as their dominant teaching conception. This may be interpreted in terms of their heightened horizon in perceiving their role. The first and second levels in teaching conceptions could be in the background rather than the forefront of Mandarin teachers' mind for those who had strong background in teaching. Since most of them were academics or former teachers, their focal awareness tended to be more on their teacher role and the ways they teach, such as *guidance on learning* and the *use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest*, rather than on basic things.

**On learning conceptions.** Table 8.3 shows that most Cantonese and Mandarin teachers shared similar views in *cooperative efforts* (6 Mandarin, 5 Cantonese) and *learning how to learn* (2 Mandarin, 2 Cantonese). The two groups also shared moderately similar views in *acquisition of culture and moral values* (1 Mandarin, 2 Cantonese) and *knowing oneself* (2 Mandarin, 1 Cantonese).

Their main difference lies in *using language for communication* (3 Cantonese, 0 Mandarin). Cantonese teachers' emphasis on using Chinese for domestic communication might relate to their social background, as Cantonese parents and grandparents might not be fluent in English and needed to communicate with their younger generations in Cantonese. Another factor could be the issue of Chinese identity among younger generations, which was experienced more deeply by members of Cantonese community settled in Scotland for longer time than the new Mandarin immigrants.

No Cantonese and no Mandarin teachers possessed *acquisition of knowledge and skills* as their principal (individual) learning conception. This could mean that all teachers in both groups understood learning as more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and they tended to conceive it as something higher, such as *cooperative efforts* among teachers, parents and pupils in effective learning, or pupils *learning how to learn* Cantonese or Mandarin.

### **8.3 Four teacher profiles**

The four profiles illustrate how teachers' personal background and life experiences might have shaped their thinking. Two Mandarin (M-D, M-E) and two Cantonese teachers (C-S, C-V) have been chosen. M-D taught Mandarin to both ethnic Cantonese children who learned it as a *foreign* and Mandarin children as a *community* language while M-E taught non-Chinese of different nationalities. Both teachers were reflective and responsive to their surrounding linguistic environment. C-V and C-S represent two generations of Cantonese teachers. Whilst C-V was an experienced teacher who witnessed the many changes in Cantonese schools, C-S was a novice teacher and a successful example of a Scottish-Chinese who mastered the Cantonese language in Scotland.

### 8.3.1 Profile 1: Teacher M-D

Teaching experience: 4 years
Personal particulars: A former university lecturer in China, now a Mandarin teacher of two Mandarin schools
Teaching conception: Guidance on learning (T-3)
Learning conception: Learning how to learn (L-3)

According to M-D:

Teaching and learning is a communicative and interacting process... an on-going interaction and communication between teachers and pupils... [Pupils'] learning can motivate teachers and lead to better teaching.

It is interactive because:

You tell pupils what you know, pupils come to learn and get the knowledge ...they give you feedback. Through their feedback you adjust your teaching... revise, supplement and keep on improving your teaching.

She knew Mandarin is a difficult language.

Teaching Chinese [Mandarin] is really challenging... Chinese is quite hard and... boring for kids.

Children were told to come to learn.

When parents force children to learn, it is easy to arouse their negative feelings... When they have rebellious thoughts, they will not like to learn.

She believed in motivation.

You need to make learning more interesting.

We should motivate children in the short term - keeping kids awake - while keeping them interested in the long term - keeping their interest alive.

This is especially true to Cantonese children who learned Mandarin in her class.

The Cantonese speakers do not understand me when I speak to them in Mandarin... They came from HK. Their mother-tongue [sic, home language] is Cantonese.

Cantonese children had difficulties learning the four Mandarin skills.

Mandarin is a big problem to them in the 4 skills... I need to explain basic things in listening, speaking, reading and writing, rather than to go into deeper things. I talk very little of syntax and grammar... It is increasingly difficult for them to learn at higher levels.

English is vital to help pupils understand.

I need to use English to explain Mandarin to them... Mandarin is taught... through... English.

I translate the [Chinese] knowledge into the language they know [English] to convey the information.

Her view of good teaching is:

A teacher... needs to plan, present, motivate, to offer a model... to monitor, react, give feedback... to be willing to share knowledge with pupils.

In... preparation..., you have to think in detail how to suit their learning style, to enable pupils to learn actively... I think of games and group activities to get them into collaboration... pupils learn best when they have ownership of their problems.

And a quality teacher needs to be:

...a good learner... to be able to teach, a teacher has to learn... learning precedes teaching.

Teachers need to be very knowledgeable... to relate lots of knowledge... philosophy... history [in teaching].

Instead of stressing *quantity* or *seriousness* in learning, she thinks and acts otherwise.

As with the teaching styles of the two schools [A and B]... I personally like this [A] more. My daughter learns Chinese there [in A]. The atmosphere is more carefree and relaxed.

She believed “encouragement is better than pushing pupils to learn.”

School [B] has more the teaching style of schools in China. It is very strict in organisation and management. They consider that parents need to remind, to push their children to learn Chinese.

She aims at pupils' long-term Chinese learning.

I think we can't push pupils too hard ... Pupils may have negative feelings and they may not like to learn anymore.

## Summary

M-D considered teaching and learning as an interactive process which enables teachers and pupils to make improvement. Motivation, interesting materials and a relaxing environment are prerequisite to active and successful learning. As a former lecturer, her professional knowledge was revealed in her use of ‘technical terms’ like ‘learning styles’, ‘teaching styles’, ‘ownership of their problems’ and ‘feedback’. Her position privileged her with explicit awareness of what she did and attempted to do. She could stand back from her teaching and analyse the teaching/learning situations.

### 8.3.2 Profile 2: Teacher M-E

Teaching experience: 1 year
Personal particulars: A former English teacher of a tertiary institution in China for one year
Teaching conception: Guidance on learning (T-3)
Learning conception: Cooperative efforts (L-4)

M-E taught a class of non-Chinese children who learned Mandarin as a foreign language. She considered motivation as vital in learning.

Pupils need to have self-initiative in learning... need to have interest... motivation.

My pupils have their own initiative to learn [Mandarin]... It is not that they have to take exams. They are interested in learning Chinese.

Parents' support in children's learning is crucial.

Their parents are supportive. Because pupils are very young, sometimes they [parents] sit [in class] to learn with their children. I think it's good.

She used lots of activities in learning.

I will speak to them first. Then I will give them lots of time to practise, to do pair work and group work. I often arrange them in groups of two or three to perform and to do conversation.  
(M-E, non-native Chinese class)

She made up a story to help learners comprehend characters.

Teachers need to organise teaching content in a meaningful way... For instance, we can make up interesting short stories, like the character 明 (*bright*). We can explain 明 is made up of two parts, 日 means *the sun* and 月 the *moon*. And that 日 and 月 together make up this character 明. As both 日 and 月 give out light, put together as 明, it means *bright*.

She quoted an Arabian girl who loved to learn Chinese culture.

There is a little Arabian girl [in my class]. Her mum once had a chance to perform Peking Opera. Because her mum did it, so the girl developed interest and she wanted to learn Chinese here.

This Arabian girl has been here for the second year. This 6-year-old... makes the best progress in class. Her self-initiative is particularly strong. So I think if one has interest in something, one will learn faster than anyone else... bigger progress.

Another example was a 6-year-old British girl who was also highly motivated to learn more about Chinese culture.

There is a 6-year-old British girl. She comes to learn because she feels everything about China is especially meaningful [to her]. She thinks Chinese people are the best-looking in the world. Chinese food is the tastiest and Chinese is the most beautiful language.

Popular culture like movies and music related to China can be effective means to attract and motivate children to learn Chinese.

When I asked her mum [of this girl] why she is so young but has this knowledge [of Chinese], and where her thinking came from, her mum said she once watched the Walt Disney's film "Mulan."<sup>1</sup> She loved the film and began to love China. So to pupils, motivation is very important.

Since her pupils had real interest in learning, they came to school even in bad weather.

When the weather is not good in winter, fewer of them come in for class. That some still insist to come in to learn Mandarin is very good.

### Summary

M-E appreciated the use of popular Chinese culture to motivate non-Chinese pupils to learn Mandarin. She knew her pupils were not ethnic Chinese. To her, interest is the key to self-initiated learning. Mandarin can be effectively learned with interesting teaching and learning materials under teachers' guidance. These non-Chinese children apparently enjoyed Chinese learning more than many ethnic Cantonese children.

### 8.3.3 Profile 3: Teacher C-V

Teaching experience: 18 years
Personal particulars: A dedicated long-serving parent teacher
Teaching conception: Service of love to ethnic community (T-2)
Learning conception: Cooperative efforts (L-4)

According to C-V, teaching is a service of love to children.

What is most important is you love the children [you teach]. Teachers need to teach well, play well and get on well with children.

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<sup>1</sup> An animation movie by Walt Disney about the Chinese heroine Muk-lan, who took the place of her old father to go and fight in the battlefield.

Qualities of good teachers include:

Teachers need to reward the good, but discourage or punish the wrong (獎罰分明)... impartial, fair-minded (公正) and have authority... to be firm when pupils are naughty.

She started to teach Chinese:

When my kids studied Chinese, I was asked to be an assistant in school. It was sort of being forced into teaching because of the lack of teachers.

I thought if I worked as a teacher in school, then they [her children] would have no excuse not learning Chinese.

Later on she extended her concern to others.

Just like my own children, pupils do not know the pros and cons of learning Chinese... They are young.

She was aware that pupils have diverse abilities and needs.

Pupils are of many [ability] levels... Absorbing power [for knowledge] of each pupil is different.

We have children who are hyperactive or in depression... They need trained specialists... But resources are inadequate... We do all we can to see to their needs.

Her school also did everything possible to help pupils.

In our church we have a bilingual teacher. She teaches us how to teach a lesson and how to make a teaching plan. She gives us... training.

We always said we should not let one kid down. No matter who comes here to learn, we try our best to teach them.

She would provide supportive environment for children to learn actively.

We play language games... make them enjoy learning, not resist to come to learn. I praise and encourage them... Every week I give them small presents... Pupils take gifts happily with them when they leave school.

It is vital for children to put Cantonese into use.

Pupils need to use what they have learned.

Children have difficulties applying their knowledge in a context... Many only know how to use it in a straightforward way... Children have problems blending new knowledge with what has been learned.

She learned from others to make learning interesting.

Once a friend came to visit me, she often taught her children to sing. Her singing inspired me. Now I teach pupils to sing rhymes in lesson like 'The big melon'... Rhymes are easy to follow and remember.

Her school had been supportive to teachers.

Our school is a member of the UKFCS<sup>2</sup>. Every year a three-day conference is held to train UK Chinese teachers. If we take part, our school will pay part of the conference fees [for us].

She attended conferences to better her teaching skills.

In the conference we will figure out the problems [we have]... how, why and what makes certain teaching so difficult. We will discuss good teaching methods and the ways to put them into practice... We can share our difficulties with teachers from other schools.

Her school had tried hard to appeal to parents' participation<sup>3</sup>.

The school welcomes parents' participation. In [Christmas] celebration we communicate with them... Teachers use lots of time to hold meetings and prepare stuff.

However, parents were often too busy to take part.

Parents often cannot come on Saturday.

She mentioned some challenges, for instance, a lack of fund and the rising high rent.

School fees are not enough to cover all our expenses. We need money to rent a school for lessons, pay teachers traffic allowance, buy textbooks... for pupils.

We have chosen this premise... We had moved a few times because of the rise in rent.

There were queries from parents.

Some parents questioned our decision in moving the venue.... The [new] location... is not so good.... Our former premise... was big... [and] in a good location.

It could result in pupils' leaving due to problem in transportation.

There was misunderstanding between the rented school and Chinese school.

Other organisations also rent [the school]... Problems arise when too many people use it [the school]... Once the school premise found things broken, they blamed our children.

To avoid disputes... we tell children to leave the classroom and go to the playground during break. We have teachers on-duty... to check facilities in class.

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<sup>2</sup> The UK Federation of Chinese Schools.

<sup>3</sup> The school had an action group to keep an eye on the progress and arrangement of activities. All teachers were involved, and they worked hard to make contact with parents.

I know another [big] school does not allow children to leave the classroom during their breaks. With many pupils walking here and there, there are more chances to damage things... So during break, their pupils have a place to sit and eat snack [in class] but have no place to play.

If problems persisted, her school might not be able to survive.

We try our best to do what we can.... In the end maybe we have to give up.

## Summary

For 18 years C-V did what she could to encourage her pupils to learn Cantonese. Her school were always self-reliant. The problem was, despite teachers' determination to serve, the school had difficulties to survive in unfavourable economic situations. Like other schools in similar situation, her Cantonese school urgently needed *cooperative efforts* from parents and the society. Though dedicated, C-V and her school could only go with the flow of a globalised world into an uncertain future.

### 8.3.4 Profile 4: Teacher C-S

Teaching experience: 1 year
Personal particulars: Born and educated in Scotland, she was a former Chinese school pupil. Now a university student herself, helping in a Cantonese school.
Teaching conception: Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills (T-1)
Learning conception: Using language for communication (L-5)

According to C-S, parents have a vital role to play in their children's learning.

Ultimately it has a lot to do with the amount of Chinese the youngsters are exposed to in their home.

C-S had a good start learning Cantonese at home.

When I went to Chinese school, I already knew some Chinese, because I spoke Chinese 90 % of the time at home. I watched Chinese TV programmes, ate Chinese food and had Chinese friends.

In Chinese school she learned to read and write, and learned those things she did not know.

When I go to Chinese school... I learn how to write, correct my grammar... As I already have some knowledge of Chinese language... I learn more formal things like how to write a letter in school.

The Chinese school was the key place for her to integrate the four Cantonese skills.

At home I speak [Cantonese] Chinese fine, but at home you're really not going to write a lot... Every Saturday [I] go to Chinese school... you pick up your pencil and you write and read... speak and listen.

I think it has become a routine [in daily life], speaking, writing and being with other BBCs<sup>4</sup> [in Chinese school]. I think it is important to have [opportunities] like that.

Games and competitions had stimulated her motivation to learn Cantonese.

We got things like questions and answers [quiz] competition.

To most of us [we] just preferred to play games. We had quite a lot of games ... word games, making sentences, race against time to match up Chinese characters.

When I was in Grade 2, we had a verse speaking competition... We were exposed to lots of [things in Chinese] culture... I could recite some poems.

Her former teachers applied child psychology to make learning fun.

I think my [former] teachers just make [the learning] more interesting because they know most of the kids coming to study in Chinese school are not because they want to [learn] on Saturdays.

Her teacher even brought the class once to a Chinese restaurant for a dim-sum lunch as a learning activity.

I even had a teacher who took us [the class] out to eat dim-sum... If we kids are able to say the name of a certain dim-sum, you can have it.

C-S attributed her success in Chinese learning to her former teachers.

I was lucky [because] quite a lot of [my former] teachers put their hearts in [teaching]. They thought of good, creative ways to teach pupils to learn [things] about Chinese. I think it's important. I had learned a lot more.

She also recounted her happy experience in learning Cantonese and some Mandarin through singing songs and watching TV programmes.

From my personal experience as a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation [Chinese immigrant], I think my vocabularies and knowledge of the [Cantonese] language had been intensified by my interest in the HK entertainment news. I had learned many new words and phrases from listening to music, and watching the HK TV programmes.

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<sup>4</sup> BBC means British-born Chinese.

My very limited Mandarin has been self-taught through watching Chinese and Taiwanese TV dramas and listening to popular songs, like Jay Chou, and Faye Wong.

So this is how C-S now would view teacher-pupil relationship.

I think it's better to be a big sister [to pupils] than being a strict teacher.

It is not a formal school. You can't really say, oh, they did not do the homework, you punish them. You can't do that... The aim... is pupils can learn more Chinese.

She admitted pupils' willingness to learn is more vital than teachers' teaching.

There's no point in teaching if no one wants to learn.

C-S had attributed the difficulties her 3<sup>rd</sup> generation ethnic Chinese pupils had in learning Cantonese to a lack of exposure in their daily life.

In the class... a pupil who is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, her understanding of Chinese is poor when compared to other 2<sup>nd</sup> generation kids. This reflects the amount of Chinese [they] speak in their home. This 3<sup>rd</sup> generation kid speaks only English with her family [while] the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation kids speak a mixture of Chinese and English at home.

She was aware that ethnic Chinese pupils' Cantonese learning could not be perfect.

You don't need to be 100% [exact] because BBCs learning Chinese are not going to be exact like amazing, like [native] Chinese.

To enhance motivation, she considered firstly current news reports as useful materials.

If [learning] materials are more current and interesting... may be more attractive to pupils... If possible... make pupils more aware of Chinese dramas, news, what is happening in HK right now.

Second, it is essential to experience Chinese culture.

In Mid-autumn Festival you eat moon cakes, watch and appreciate [the beauty of] the moon, listen to the story of Chang E (嫦娥). It is important for us to experience the culture.

Third, things of Chinese culture can raise interest and motivate learning.

Through the use of current Chinese songs, dramas, popular culture, etc... The ideal would be the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations are given opportunities to build up their interest in Cantonese.

To her, dramas and fictions are good useful materials to stimulate interest. Stories can be used to set off discussion.

I learned a lot about Chinese history through period dramas myself, for example, Kang Xi Emperor of the Qing dynasty. Teachers may lead discussion on the Qing dynasty, the emperors, their costumes, and any particular habits, hobbies people had at that time.

For example, [teachers could] set an episode of a historical Chinese drama, such as 鹿鼎記 [The Deer and the Cauldron] as homework and discuss it in the class.

Fourth, teaching practical Chinese will enable pupils to use it in daily life.

Teaching practical Chinese is more important... rather than... to do Chinese poems and the ways strokes are [written] in Chinese texts. It really doesn't matter how you put it [character] together.

You don't need them to be good at classic poems... If they can read, write, listen, speak and are able to function in environment likes HK.

She thought popular music and songs can aid speaking and listening.

To introduce modern Chinese music to pupils, like what is currently popular in HK and China. Pupils can listen to the songs in class with the print-out of the lyrics with 'pinyin', and teachers can discuss with the class the meaning of songs... Hopefully [this] can encourage pupils... interest in Chinese culture, and help with pronunciation.

However, as a promising Chinese teacher, she was not totally confident to teach Chinese, although she had got an A-level Cantonese qualification.

My Chinese would easily cope with lower level. But I don't know the situation of other [classes].

I would like to be a [Chinese] teacher, but I need first to make sure my Chinese is good enough to teach. I could not teach something I do not know or lack confidence in it... I really want to make sure... I am really knowledgeable.

## Summary

C-S's sharing has helped compensate for the lack of *learners' voice* in this research. Her vivid account of the ways she learned Cantonese and how her former teachers conducted teaching has given us good ideas on how Cantonese can be effectively taught and learned. Her experience reminds us of the role Chinese *pop culture* can play in facilitating pupils' learning motivation.

As a Scottish-born person who had experienced the process of learning Cantonese, C-S's insights include the significance of using Cantonese at home and modern media in learning, the online links with Chinese speakers in HK, China or Taiwan, the distinction between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation learners and the challenges they face in Cantonese learning. Her ideas are useful to rethinking teaching and learning in Cantonese schools.

#### **8.4 Self-perceived factors teachers considered to have affected their teaching and learning conceptions**

It is hard to know what exactly have contributed to variations in teachers' teaching and learning conceptions since lots of things had played their part at different times and under various circumstances. To address this, teachers were invited to share the factors they considered to have affected their views. They were free to name factors without any prompt from the researcher. These self-perceived factors are listed in Table 8.4.

Two points need to be stressed. First, all the factors came from teachers' spontaneous sharing. Due to limitation of time, it was likely that there were things they did not have the chance to talk about. For instance, teachers did not mention the *influence of good teachers* did not mean they had no influence from former good teachers. It just means some factors were more dominant in their awareness when asked to articulate during the interview.

Second, self-perceived factors could be just some of the factors, or not even a 'real' factor at all which had affected teachers' thinking. Or, their influence might not be as strong as the teachers thought, or possibly not as strong as other existing factors which they might not be conscious of. However, they were teachers' own voices. If they believed certain factors were the causes, these could have performed a role to bring about changes in their deeds.

All self-perceived factors were recorded, analysed and grouped under *four* main categories which emerged as a reasonable scheme of classification. They are: *personal experience as a learner in education institutions, formal teacher training and teaching experience, other life experiences, and experience related to teaching in Chinese school*. Under each category are reported factors which share direct connection with each other.

Table 8.4 Self-perceived factors Cantonese and Mandarin teachers considered to have affected their views on teaching and learning

Self-reported factors	Cantonese teachers (n = 13)													Mandarin teachers (n = 11)										
	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
<b>Personal experience as a learner in education institutions</b>																								
Schooling and education						✓	✓						✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
Learning experience in schools	✓				✓	✓	✓									✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Influence of good teachers	✓													✓							✓		✓	✓
<b>Formal teacher training and teaching experience</b>																								
Formal teacher training (in home country)	✓													✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			
Formal teaching experience (in home country)	✓			✓										✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			
Joining short teaching courses				✓					✓										✓	✓	✓			
Teaching experience (Scottish institutions)																✓			✓	✓	✓			
<b>Other life experiences</b>																								
Cross-cultural life experience	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
As a parent seeing children learn	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	
As a pupil in a Chinese school						✓																		
Other coaching/teaching experiences (i.e., piano, scouts, private tuition)		✓		✓	✓			✓											✓				✓	✓
<b>Experience related to teaching in Chinese school</b>																								
Teaching experience in Chinese school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interaction and communication with pupils	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observing pupils learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Love towards children		✓		✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Satisfaction in seeing pupils learn				✓													✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Communication with parents							✓							✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Feedbacks from parents							✓							✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Reading articles or books on teaching				✓												✓					✓	✓		
Personal interest or thinking in language teaching			✓		✓	✓										✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The four categories are organised with a rough timeline in mind. They begin with teachers' early schooling and education, then teacher training, if any, and are followed by other related experiences in life, which are supposed to be anything outside formal education/training, and lastly, the more recent experiences when the teachers taught in Chinese schools. Organisation of self-perceived factors with such a time frame offers an option that makes it easier for the researcher to relate these factors to life history of teachers who thought their views in Chinese teaching and learning were influenced by them.

**8.4.1 Personal experience as a learner in education institution.** The *three* factors under this category are *schooling and education*, *learning experience in schools* and *influence of good teachers*. The fact that more Mandarin than Cantonese (Table 8.4) mentioned all three factors suggest Mandarin teachers had enjoyed a longer period of education in education institutions, and were more able to appreciate the beneficial aspects of their teachers and the education/training they received. These personal experiences might in return influence their thinking on how to teach Chinese.

One Mandarin teacher mentioned the different attitudes China and Western countries have towards school education. She pointed out “The *serious* attitude in China towards education is very different from a *relaxed* one in Scotland. Education is *competitive* starting from kindergarten. Both teachers and parents are strict with children's education, and learning is regarded as *a holy thing* the whole society needs to work hard on.”

**8.4.2 Formal teacher training and teaching experience.** The *four* factors associated with this category are *formal teacher training (in home country)*, *formal teaching experience (in home country)*, *teaching experience (in Scottish institutions)*, and *joining short training courses*. As shown in Table 8.4, while only 2 Cantonese (out of 13) had formal school teaching experience and only one had received formal teacher training, over half of Mandarin teachers (6 out of 11) had both formal teaching experience and teacher training in China.

The fact that another 4 Mandarin teachers had experiences teaching in Scottish institutions indicates that they were academics or professional teachers not only in

China. In addition, that more Mandarin than Cantonese teachers (3 Mandarin, 1 Cantonese) had joined short teaching courses in the past suggests that Mandarin teachers were likely to know more about the teaching practices in Scottish schools, and were more knowledgeable and skilful in teaching and learning.

**8.4.3 Other life experiences.** The *four* factors under this category are *cross-cultural life experience, as a parent seeing children learn, as a pupil in a Chinese school* and *other coaching/teaching experiences*. More Mandarin than Cantonese (8 Mandarin, 5 Cantonese) mentioned *cross-cultural life experiences* had influenced their thoughts. It indicates Mandarin teachers in general had wider cross-cultural life experiences.

One Mandarin teacher talked about her time studying in Germany. Another one recounted her education first in China and then studying French in Quebec, Canada. Her experience enabled her to compare the ways things were taught and learned in two very different cultures. This had stimulated her to think of new approaches in teaching Mandarin and to choose appropriate methods from the two cultures to enhance pupils' learning.

One young Cantonese teacher said the love and care she experienced *as a pupil in a Chinese school* had influenced her thinking on how Cantonese could be taught to Scottish-Chinese Cantonese children. More Cantonese than Mandarin teachers mentioned "*as a parent seeing children learn*" (9 Cantonese, 6 Mandarin) and "*other coaching/teaching experiences*" (4 Cantonese, 3 Mandarin) as factors affecting their thoughts. The former can be easily understood because more Cantonese than Mandarin teachers were parents themselves. However, despite offering private tuition or coaching scouts being substantial experiences in teaching, they might not be useful in teaching children Cantonese in a classroom of very different learning culture.

**8.4.4 Experience related to teaching in Chinese school.** The *nine* factors grouped under this category include factors directly or indirectly related to various aspects of teaching. They are, namely, a direct factor like *teaching experience in Chinese school*; factors linked with teacher-pupil interaction: *interaction and communication with pupils, observing pupils learning, love towards children*, and *self-satisfaction in seeing pupils learn*; factors associated with teacher-parent contacts: *communication with*

*parents and feedbacks from parents*; and factors related to actions teachers took to better their knowledge and skills, that is, *reading articles or books on teaching*, *personal interest or thinking in language teaching*.

Under the category of *experience related to teaching in Chinese schools*, all teachers mentioned their *teaching experience in Chinese school*, their *interaction and communication with pupils*, and *observing pupils' learning* as having directly or indirectly influenced their thoughts. As with *teaching experience in Chinese school*, teachers interviewed had reported positive experiences like sharing what other teachers said about teaching Cantonese or Mandarin, and listening to experienced teachers' effective teaching methods. They mentioned negative experiences including the lack of time, resources and technology to help with teaching and learning. As with the remaining two factors, teachers stated that they could see what methods worked for pupils and what not, and they were happy to interact with pupils and adjust their practices to meet pupils' needs.

*Love towards children* (9 Mandarin, 7 Cantonese) is a factor many teachers were concerned about. Some said they could feel for pupils and they appreciated them taking the time and trouble learning Chinese at weekends. They believed teachers should try their best to provide a happy and relaxed learning environment for pupils. As with *satisfaction from seeing pupils learn*, more Mandarin than Cantonese teachers (5 Mandarin, 1 Cantonese) mentioned having job satisfaction seeing children learn Chinese. Regarding *communication with parents* and *feedbacks from parents*, Mandarin teachers got more good support and feedback (6 Mandarin, 1 Cantonese) while Cantonese teachers received much less of these from parents.

Both Mandarin and Cantonese were responsible teachers who were keen to improve their knowledge and skills in teaching. More Mandarin than Cantonese teachers mentioned the factors *reading articles or books on teaching* (3 Mandarin, 1 Cantonese) and *personal interest or thinking in language teaching* (9 Mandarin, 3 Cantonese) as affecting their thoughts. This suggests Mandarin teachers were perhaps more used to learning through reading books. They might also be able to gain easy access to articles and journals in daily life.

## Summary

The list of self-perceived factors indicates teachers' thoughts were likely influenced by their background, education, teacher training, interaction with pupils and parents, and experiences living and working in different cultures. The dominant category perceived to have influenced their thoughts is *experience related to teaching in Chinese school*. The factors within this category indicate teachers were generally pupil-oriented, happy to communicate with pupils and help them learn Chinese.

Data indicate Mandarin teachers had a longer period of education and more varied cultural experiences in life. Most were trained teachers in China and some had taught in Scottish institutions. They appeared knowledgeable in teaching and understood the differences in teaching and learning in countries like Scotland and China. As with their key variations, Mandarin teachers tended to focus more on classroom teaching, i.e., they were more language-teaching-related, while Cantonese teachers inclined to cite more life experience related factors, for instance, *as a parent seeing children learn* or *coaching scouts*.

The fact that no Cantonese or Mandarin teachers mentioned any factors associated with mainstream education in Scotland may suggest their Cantonese and Mandarin teaching has been ignored by the mainstream. The drawback is that these teachers' experience would be limited to their Chinese schools. There could be little chance for them to widen their perspective by the ways foreign language teaching/learning is carried out in mainstream classrooms where their ethnic Chinese pupils attend daily.

### **8.5 Metaphorical thinking of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers on the teaching and learning of Chinese**

Apart from using phenomenography as the primary approach to probe into teachers' conceptions, at the end of the interview each teacher was asked the question: "Could you name a metaphor/saying/idiom you consider best describes Chinese teaching and learning in Chinese school?" Teachers were allowed to give more than one answer. Altogether 38 metaphors were elicited, 18 from Cantonese and 20 from Mandarin teachers. They are classified and reported below (Tables 8.5 and 8.6).

### 8.5.1 Teaching perspectives of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers as revealed in metaphors

Many elicited metaphors were similar, with slight variations in the use of expressions. Some were traditional sayings/idioms like “teacher-cum-friend” (亦師亦友), “teaching how to fish” (授人以魚不如授人以漁), “togetherness” (打成一片) and “lips and teeth together” (唇齒相依). According to their meaning and main focus, they have been organised into *eight* categories, namely, *nurturing plants*, *raising children*, *guiding*, *mutual understanding*, *partnership*, *teacher-cum-friend*, *transmitting knowledge*, and *servicing*. Table 8.5 gives a complete list of all metaphors.

What we can gather from the analysis is that the role of teachers ranged from being *a guide*, *a nurturer*, *a mother*, *a companion*, *a partner* and *a friend*. As for the interactive process in teaching and learning, some metaphors reflect the teachers acting as the sources of knowledge, skills and care, while others highlight more of the partnership aspect in which teachers work closely with children, support them and fulfil their needs.

Tables 8.6 and 8.7 show the ranking of the metaphors suggested by the two groups. Among Cantonese teachers, the *two* metaphors, raising children (38.9%) and nurturing plants (16.7%) top the list, followed by partnership (11.1%), teacher-cum-friend (11.1%), and transmitting knowledge (11.1%), each sharing the same proportion, with mutual understanding (5.6%) and servicing (5.6%) occupying the last two places. As for Mandarin teachers, the leading *three* metaphors are partnership (30.0%), guiding (25.0%) and nurturing plants (15.0%), followed by raising children (10.0%), teacher-cum-friend (10.0%), mutual understanding (5.0%), and servicing (5.0%) in that order.

A comparison of the two rankings is revealing. Given the high rankings of raising children (38.9%) and nurturing plants (16.7%), we can say that Cantonese teachers appeared to see themselves as the provider of knowledge and care, with the pupils being the receivers in the interaction. On the other hand, Mandarin teachers inclined to see teacher-pupil relationship as more equal partnership, as the two metaphors, partnership (30.0%) and guiding (25.0%) have topped their list. While they stressed the work on their part, they also emphasised the active part to be played by pupils.

Table 8.5 Metaphors used by Cantonese and Mandarin teachers to describe teaching and learning of Chinese

Categories of metaphors	Metaphors used by Cantonese teachers	Metaphors used by Mandarin teachers
<b>Nurturing plants</b>	Planting a seed (C-P) Cultivating flowers (C-R) Support for young trees (C-Q)	Gardener and flowers (M-D) Gardener and plants (M-F) Gardener and flowers (M-I)
<b>Raising children</b>	Mother teaches children (C-O) Mother teaches children (C-S) Raising a child (C-T) Mother teaches children (C-V) Mother teaches children (C-W) Teaching own children (C-X) Elder teaches the young (C-Z)	Mother teaches children (M-E) Mother teaches children (M-K)
<b>Guiding</b>		Shepherd and sheep (M-A) Teaching how to fish (M-B) Actor and audience (M-C) Guide to the knowledge door (M-G) Lighted candle (M-J)
<b>Mutual understanding</b>	Mutual understanding (C-U)	Singer and audience (M-G)
<b>Partnership</b>	Lips and teeth together (C-U) Togetherness (C-X)	Like twins (M-C) Togetherness (M-E) Togetherness (M-H) Table tennis partners (M-K) Conductor and musicians (M-F) Manager and movie stars (M-I)
<b>Teacher-cum-friend</b>	Teacher-cum-friend (C-N) Teacher-cum-friend (C-Q)	Teacher-cum-friend (M-B) Teacher-cum-friend (M-E)
<b>Transmitting knowledge</b>	Seeking knowledge (C-X) Acquiring knowledge (C-N)	
<b>Serving</b>	Serving with love and hope (C-Y)	Cook and guests (M-A)

Table 8.6 Ranking of metaphors used by Cantonese teachers

Categories of metaphors	Metaphors used by Cantonese teachers	Percentage (No.) [Total no. = 18]
<b>Raising children</b>	Mother teaches children (C-O) Mother teaches children (C-S) Raising a child (C-T) Mother teaches children (C-V) Mother teaches children (C-W) Teaching own children (C-X) Elder teaches the young (C-Z)	38.9% (7)
<b>Nurturing plants</b>	Planting a seed (C-P) Cultivating flowers (C-R) Support for young trees (C-Q)	16.7% (3)
<b>Partnership</b>	Lips and teeth together (C-U) Togetherness (C-X)	11.1% (2)
<b>Teacher-cum-friend</b>	Teacher-cum-friend (C-N) Teacher-cum-friend (C-Q)	11.1% (2)
<b>Transmitting knowledge</b>	Seeking knowledge (C-X) Acquiring knowledge (C-N)	11.1% (2)
<b>Mutual understanding</b>	Mutual understanding (C-U)	5.6% (1)
<b>Serving</b>	Serving with love and hope (C-Y)	5.6% (1)

Table 8.7 Ranking of metaphors used by Mandarin teachers

Categories of metaphors	Metaphors used by Mandarin teachers	Percentage (No.) [Total no. = 20]
<b>Partnership</b>	Like twins (M-C) Togetherness (M-E) Togetherness (M-H) Table tennis partners (M-K) Conductor and musicians (M-F) Manager and movie stars (M-I)	30.0% (6)
<b>Guiding</b>	Shepherd and sheep (M-A) Teaching how to fish (M-B) Actor and audience (M-C) Guide to the knowledge door (M-G) Lighted candle (M-J)	25.0% (5)
<b>Nurturing plants</b>	Gardener and flowers (M-D) Gardener and plants (M-F) Gardener and flowers (M-I)	15.0% (3)
<b>Raising children</b>	Mother teaches children (M-E) Mother teaches children (M-K)	10.0% (2)
<b>Teacher-cum-friend</b>	Teacher-cum-friend (M-B) Teacher-cum-friend (M-E)	10.0% (2)
<b>Mutual understanding</b>	Singer and audience (M-G)	5.0% (1)
<b>Serving</b>	Cook and guests (M-A)	5.0% (1)

### 8.5.2 Similarities and differences of the teaching perspective of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

Table 8.8 has been generated from Table 8.5 for a better overview of all metaphors named by the two groups, together with numbers and percentages for easy comparison.

Table 8.8 Comparison of the metaphors used by Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

Categories of metaphors	Metaphors used by Cantonese teachers	Percentage (No.)	Metaphors used by Mandarin teachers	Percentage (No.)
<b>Nurturing plants</b>	Planting a seed (C-P) Cultivating flowers (C-R) Support for young trees (C-Q)	<b>16.7% (3)</b>	Gardener and flowers (M-D) Gardener and plants (M-F) Gardener and flowers (M-I)	<b>15.0% (3)</b>
<b>Raising children</b>	Mother teaches children (C-O) Mother teaches children (C-S) Raising a child (C-T) Mother teaches children (C-V) Mother teaches children (C-W) Teaching own children (C-X) Elder teaches the young (C-Z)	<b>38.9% (7)</b>	Mother teaches children (M-E) Mother teaches children (M-K)	<b>10.0% (2)</b>
<b>Guiding</b>		<b>0.0% (0)</b>	Shepherd and sheep (M-A) Teaching how to fish (M-B) Actor and audience (M-C) Guide to the knowledge door (M-G) Lighted candle (M-J)	<b>25.0% (5)</b>
<b>Mutual understanding</b>	Mutual understanding (C-U)	<b>5.6% (1)</b>	Singer and audience (M-G)	<b>5.0% (1)</b>
<b>Partnership</b>	Lips and teeth together (C-U) Togetherness (C-X)	<b>11.1% (2)</b>	Like twins (M-C) Togetherness (M-E) Togetherness (M-H) Table tennis partners (M-K) Conductor and musicians (M-F) Manager and movie stars (M-I)	<b>30.0% (6)</b>
<b>Teacher-cum-friend</b>	Teacher-cum-friend (C-N) Teacher-cum-friend (C-Q)	<b>11.1% (2)</b>	Teacher-cum-friend (M-B) Teacher-cum-friend (M-E)	<b>10.0% (2)</b>
<b>Transmitting knowledge</b>	Seeking knowledge (C-X) Acquiring knowledge (C-N)	<b>11.1% (2)</b>		<b>0.0% (0)</b>
<b>Serving</b>	Serving with love and hope (C-Y)	<b>5.6% (1)</b>	Cook and guests (M-A)	<b>5.0% (1)</b>

As shown in Table 8.8, both groups of teachers provided metaphors in six categories, namely, nurturing plants, raising children, mutual understanding, partnership, teacher-cum-friend, and serving, though the numbers or percentages differed between the two groups. It is noteworthy that no Cantonese teachers named metaphors focussed on *guiding*, and no Mandarin teachers mentioned metaphors centred on *transmitting knowledge*.

In line with findings reported in previous chapters, this comparison of use of metaphors suggests that Cantonese and Mandarin teachers had different concerns regarding teaching and learning in Chinese schools. Even in an area with a similar degree of concern like teaching as *servicing* (Cantonese teachers 5.6%, Mandarin 5%), we can see from the teachers' description of the metaphors a variation on *what* to serve and *how* the recipients respond to the things served to them. As our protocols indicate, the *servicing* metaphor of teacher M-A<sup>5</sup> conveys a delightful picture of serving dishes to guests that suit their tastes, while the metaphor of Cantonese teacher C-Y<sup>6</sup> strikes up a sadder tune as it portrays a pupil neither enjoying nor making much progress in learning Cantonese.

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<sup>5</sup> **The cook and guests metaphors** (M-A): Before you cook for others, you need to know people's different tastes. The lesson you teach is like the table full of delicious dishes you are going to prepare. What you love to eat may not be the choice of others. You need to change, to think about pupils' needs. ... Like good food, if you eat it every day, you will not find it tasty.

<sup>6</sup> **The serving with love and hope metaphor** (C-Y): Once a friend shared with me an experience. She said she had a withered pot plant with no signs of life. She abandoned it and put it in the corner of her garden. After some time, the plant gave out new shoots. My friend was touched by this. She said she regarded the plant as having no life and no use. She forgot that life is in the hand of God. Since God never gives up hope, so why should we give up? It is like we sometimes see pupils make no progress in Chinese learning. We think of giving them up. But if we think again, no matter how unmotivated or lack of progress pupils appear to be, they are loved and cared for by God. So, as long as pupils come to learn, even though they only learn one out of ten characters we teach, they still learn something. They still learn some Chinese at school.

### 8.5.3 Use of metaphors versus individual teaching and learning conceptions of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

Two-way tables (Tables 8.9 and 8.10) have been constructed to classify teachers' use of metaphors versus their individual conceptions of teaching and of learning, with the teacher (in codes) who named a specific metaphor placed under his/her individual teaching or learning conception. For simplicity, teachers of both groups have been shown in the same tables but under different columns for easy comparison.

As seen in Table 8.9, the two variables, namely, the metaphors used by teachers and their individual conceptions of teaching are in general not closely related. For example, between the metaphor teaching as *raising children* and the teaching conception of *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills* (T-1), there are four Cantonese teachers, C-O, C-S, C-T and C-W, falling into this association, implying that they viewed teaching as raising children and as transmission of knowledge, culture and skills at the same time. Yet there were three other Cantonese teachers each possessing a different conception of teaching.

On the other hand, for this metaphor of teaching as raising children, the two Mandarin teachers, M-E and M-K, both shared the conception of teaching as guidance on learning. That is to say, even when the same metaphor was cited, teachers from the two groups could display an association pattern different from one another. On a closer look, one can see that the same can be said for other metaphor categories. The same is true for Table 8.10 concerning associations with individual conceptions of learning.

In other words, if we look at the table focussing only on the group of Cantonese teachers, we can see an association pattern different from that when we focus on the group of Mandarin teachers. Such an association pattern is either too simple to be worth attention (e.g., C-Y in Table 8.9 possessing T-2 and naming "serving" at the same time) or too messed up to be of value.

Past research has suggested a close relationship between metaphors teachers used and their teaching practices. In the context of teaching and learning in Chinese schools, this is not true for teachers' conceptions in our study. It is difficult to speculate whether the teaching practices of these teachers would really substantiate such a claim of relationship to the metaphors they named.

Table 8.9 Use of metaphors versus conceptions of teaching among Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

Teaching conception Metaphors	Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills	Service of love to ethnic community	Guidance on learning	Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities	Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest	Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values
Nurturing plants			M-D M-I	C-Q M-F C-P		C-R
Raising children	C-O C-S C-T C-W	C-V	M-E M-K		C-X	C-Z
Guiding			M-G	M-J	M-A M-B M-C	
Mutual understanding		C-U	M-G			
Partnership		C-U	M-E M-K M-I	M-F	M-C M-H	C-X
Teacher-cum-friend			M-E C-N C-Q		M-B	
Transmitting knowledge			C-N		C-X	
Serving		C-Y			M-A	

Table 8.10 Use of metaphors versus conceptions of learning among Cantonese and Mandarin teachers

Learning conception Metaphors	Acquisition of knowledge and skills	Acquisition of culture and moral values	Learning how to learn	Cooperative efforts	Using language for communication	Knowing oneself
Nurturing plants			M-D C-P	M-I C-Q C-R		M-F
Raising children		C-Z	C-T	M-E C-V C-W C-X	C-O C-S	M-K
Guiding		M-B	M-C	M-A M-G M-J		
Mutual understanding		C-U		M-G		
Partnership		C-U	M-C	M-E C-X M-H M-I		M-F M-K
Teacher-cum-friend		M-B		M-E C-Q	C-N	
Transmitting knowledge				C-X	C-N	
Serving				M-A		C-Y

The lack of “correlation” between the two sets of variables (i.e., metaphors versus teaching conceptions, and metaphors versus learning conceptions) regardless of whether the two groups of teachers were pooled together or separately analysed raises the question as *to what extent* metaphors could help make meaning transparent when used. It thus appears that the data collected from teachers’ use of metaphors could not shed much light on the present study of conceptions of teaching and of learning.

As revealed from the two tables, any particular metaphor named could have components associated with several of the conceptions either of teaching or of learning. Therefore, a teacher possessing different conceptions of teaching or of learning might have suggested the same metaphor for different reasons underlying their thought process. On the other hand, a teacher of a specific conception of teaching or learning could easily name different metaphors for teaching and learning simply because

teaching and learning is a complex multi-faceted activity including but not limited to the main focus of the specific conception possessed.

As a matter of fact, many metaphors quoted are familiar idioms which teachers had picked up in life or were passed on to them reflecting the values or culture of the society. As such, these metaphors are deep-rooted in their thought and language use. No wonder that such metaphors could have come out without the same reflective attitude consistent with their conceptions of teaching and learning, thus bearing no clear association as displayed.

In short, Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' use of metaphors has provided some useful information on their thoughts about Chinese teaching and learning. However, the use of metaphors could only help convey meaning to a limited extent, as the interpretation of metaphors can be ambiguous. Data suggest that there has not been any obvious simple relation between the metaphors teachers used and their individual teaching and learning conceptions. So, although their use of metaphors has enriched our understanding of teachers' thinking, the metaphorical meaning deduced from it has not appeared to bear fruitful relationship to the main contents of the present study which is focussed on the teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning in the specific context of Chinese complementary education in Scotland.

## CHAPTER 9

### DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 9.1 Introduction

*Our experience projects itself into the world. The totality of our experience is our awareness, and that is constituted repeatedly in our neverending experiencing.*

Marton and Booth (1997, p.208)

Findings of the present study suggest that the participating Chinese school teachers are not traditional ‘Chinese learners’ as discussed in Chapter 2. Teachers, as reflected in their conceptions, tend not to interpret pupils’ learning from a Chinese cultural framework. They do not emphasise examinations, rote-learning and authoritarian teaching style. They know their pupils enjoy engaging in activities and learning tasks.

This thesis is about teachers’ conceptions. Findings indicate teachers embrace a wide range of perspectives and practices in teaching and learning. They use flexible methods, make clear explanations, stimulate pupils’ interest and help them to learn independently, which is in line with Jin and Cortazzi’s (1998a) findings. They understand that their pupils have multiple identities, for instance, Chinese or Scottish-Chinese. They just hope pupils could, through learning Cantonese or Mandarin, maintain their Chinese identity and moral values in this globalised world.

Chapter 9 has nine sections. Main findings are summarised in Section 9.2 to answer the three research questions. An overall discussion is in Section 9.3. Section 9.4 discusses contributions of findings to the existing body of research. Section 9.5 draws pedagogical implications for Chinese teachers, complementary and mainstream schools. Section 9.6 reflects on the use of the phenomenographic approach and its limitations. Section 9.7 reviews the reflexivity of the researcher, generalisability and limitations of the findings. Recommendations for future research are in Section 9.8. The chapter ends with some personal thoughts (Section 9.9).

## 9.2 Key answers to the research questions

RQ1: What overall conceptions of teaching and of learning are held by Chinese teachers teaching Cantonese and/or Mandarin in complementary Chinese schools in Scotland?

The six identified *teaching* conceptions are: transmission of knowledge, culture and skills (T-1), service of love to ethnic community (T-2), guidance on learning (T-3), catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities (T-4), use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest (T-5), and maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values (T-6).

The six identified *learning* conceptions are: acquisition of knowledge and skills (L-1), acquisition of culture and moral values (L-2), learning how to learn (L-3), cooperative efforts (L-4), using language for communication (L-5), and knowing oneself (L-6).

Both the six teaching and the six learning conceptions can be perceived as hierarchically related, representing an expanding awareness of different aspects of Chinese teaching and learning. This implies *maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values* (T-6) embraces the others as the target of teaching Chinese and *knowing oneself* includes others as the goal of learning Chinese in complementary schools.

Findings indicate teachers have a broad awareness of the situational requirements in learning. The conception ‘cooperative efforts’ (T-4) identified in this study is new and distinct from previous research. Compared with Säljö’s (1979) and Marton et al.’s (1993) cognitive-focused hierarchy, the learning conceptions of this research are more encompassing. They do not confine to the cognitive aspect alone.

RQ2: What are the dimensions of variation within the group of teachers with regard to their conceptions of teaching and learning?

The differences between Cantonese and Mandarin teachers suggest their conceptions have been influenced by their personal, educational, life experiences and the Cantonese or Mandarin schools they are in. In the *teaching* conception ‘transmission of knowledge, culture and skills’ (T-1), both groups perceive teaching as transmission

of knowledge, culture and skill. Whereas Cantonese teachers stress more on literacy - reading, writing and the 'quantity' learned, Mandarin teachers attend also to oracy - speaking and listening. Cantonese teachers intend for pupils to learn *more* and practise *more*, while Mandarin teachers talk about 'quality' and long-term learning. As regards 'service of love to ethnic community' (T-2), Cantonese teachers incline to sustain pupils' learning incentive and interest through this love-and-care relationship.

Both groups of teachers guide, assist and supervise pupils on the ways to learn Chinese (T-3), while Cantonese teachers are more eager that pupils can have a 'serious' attitude and a 'will' to learn. With 'catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities' (T-4), both groups take into account pupils' needs and abilities in learning. However, some Cantonese teachers tend to see individual pupils as belonging to a weaker or smarter group.

Regarding the 'use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest' (T-5), both groups use creative and versatile methods to help pupils learn and cultivate interest, with Cantonese teachers putting more attention on reading, writing and learning characters, while Mandarin teachers also attending to listening and speaking. As regards 'maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values' (T-6), both groups intend to maintain pupils' Chinese values and identity through Chinese language teaching. But some Cantonese teachers tend to differentiate Chinese culture and values from those of the West.

As with the *learning* conception 'acquisition of knowledge and skills' (L-1), both groups perceive Chinese learning as gaining knowledge and skills. While Mandarin teachers praise and reward pupils to keep them relaxed and continue to learn, Cantonese teachers tend to reward pupils to encourage them to learn *more*. As regards 'acquisition of culture and moral values' (L-2), both groups see Chinese culture and values as capable of cultivating polite and respectful persons who relate well with others inside and outside family. In addition, Cantonese teachers stress qualities like good manner, honesty, sense of shame and self-discipline, with some emphasising Chinese familial relationship as different from the West.

Regarding 'learning how to learn' (L-3), both groups emphasise skills and methods required to learn the language effectively, with Cantonese teachers exploring new ways to learn *more*, and stressing the importance of seeking help, working hard and

being persistent in learning. With ‘cooperative efforts’ (L-4), both groups consider effective Chinese learning as collaboration among parents, pupils, teachers and the schools. Mandarin teachers apparently perceive more support and cooperation from parents as compared to their Cantonese counterparts.

In ‘using language for communication’ (L-5), both groups consider Chinese learning as a means for interpersonal communication. While Mandarin teachers associate it with a wider audience, Cantonese teachers see it as a means to speak with the family at home and/or write to relatives abroad. As regards ‘knowing oneself’ (L-6), while Mandarin teachers perceive Mandarin learning as a way to assure pupils’ Chinese identity as well as to enhance self-understanding, some Cantonese teachers incline to consider Cantonese learning as a way to know oneself as Chinese, an identity inherited through blood.

RQ3: What factors are perceived by these teachers as having possibly influenced the formation of their conceptions of teaching and learning?

Teachers’ self-perceived factors can be sorted into 20 categories grouped under 4 main aspects. The first aspect ‘*personal experience as a learner in education institution*’ includes self-perceived factors like teachers’ schooling and education, learning experience in schools, and influence of good teachers. The second aspect ‘*formal teacher training and teaching experience*’ consists of formal teacher training and teaching experience in home country, short teaching courses, and working experiences in Scottish institutions. The third one ‘*other life experiences*’ points to factors like teachers’ cross-cultural life experience, parenting children’s learning, and learning experience as a pupil in Chinese school.

The fourth aspect ‘*experience related to teaching in Chinese school*’ is perceived by both Cantonese and Mandarin teachers as the most crucial, comprising factors like teachers’ experience in schools, interaction and communication with pupils, observing pupils’ learning, love towards children, satisfaction in seeing pupils learn, communication and feedback from parents, and personal interest in reading or language teaching. The top three factors in this aspect: *experience teaching in Chinese schools*, *interaction and communication with pupils* and *observing pupils learning* suggest the

thinking of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers are pupil-oriented. They are keen to communicate with pupils to support their learning.

Some variations between the two groups are observed through these factors. Mandarin teachers generally enjoy a longer, more varied education and have a richer cultural life experience. They have more experiences teaching in Scottish institutions, they are more knowledgeable in teaching and learners' learning, have more access to books and reference materials and have more support and positive feedback from parents. The fact that no Cantonese and Mandarin teachers mentioned any factor relating to the wider society suggests there was little or no cooperation between Chinese school teachers and mainstream education, and that their work might have been unknown to society at large.

### **9.3 Discussion of the findings**

Based on the findings of Chapters 5 to 8, Section 9.3.1 examines Chinese teaching and learning in Chinese schools in Scotland. Sections 9.3.2 and 9.3.3 discuss the conceptions of teaching and learning held by Mandarin and Cantonese teachers, the extent to which the findings support literature and research as discussed in Chapter 2, and how they could enrich the existing literature. Variations between the two groups are examined in Section 9.3.4.

Taking the role and perspective of a parent, former teacher and member of the Chinese community in Section 9.3.5, the author will extend the discussion to important emerging issues revealed in the findings, namely, learners' motivation and their Chinese identity, which may be overlooked in previous research, but are nonetheless crucial to teaching, learning, teacher-pupil relationship, parent-teacher cooperation and the future of Chinese schools.

### 9.3.1 Teaching and learning in Scottish Chinese schools

*There is never one way of teaching something... Whatever teaching method one may use... it must address certain features of the learners' experience.*

Marton and Booth (1997, p. 179)

Data from the present study echo McPake (2006) that despite excellent initiatives and commitment of the providers, complementary schools are poorly funded and resourced. Findings indicate Scottish Chinese schools share commonalities with Chinese schools elsewhere in the world (Chan, 2014; Li & Juffermans, 2014; Li Wei & Zhu, 2014; Sun & Braeye, 2012), which aim at perpetuating Chinese language and culture in the younger generation. However, as Orton (2010) points out, in the teaching and learning of Chinese in schools, Australia is comparatively well ahead of the UK for the time being. Chinese schools in Scotland are lagging behind Australia and the US in terms of government support, social recognition, training and links with the mainstream.

In line with Creese et al. (2006), Chinese schools in Scotland play a key role in developing children's cultural and social capital through literacy activities. Teachers help pupils acquire knowledge, keep in touch with their cultural heritage and grow up in their bicultural identities. Their service ensures for Scottish society a "steady supply of bilingual/bi-literate and bicultural young people who can use their Chinese skills for higher education and work" (Tinsley & Board, 2014:103).

Li Wei (2006) has raised questions regarding classroom management, such as pupils answering back, making noises or sarcastic remarks to gain attention or to undermine teachers' authority. Findings from contextual classroom observations indicate pupils are generally well-behaved. Cases of them using their English ability to resist teaching or gain control of the classroom were not observed, though teenage boys appeared to find Chinese learning less enjoyable. In the present research the social relationship in schools is more on caring for the young rather than demanding the younger generation to respect their teachers and the old (Yu, 1996).

Pupils were seen working responsibly to build up their Chinese knowledge and skills (Section 5.3). They developed confidence through acquiring Chinese knowledge, communicating ideas, and working independently and in groups. In this respect, Chinese schools enable pupils to become successful learners, confident individuals,

effective contributors and responsible citizens as the Scottish Curriculum of Excellence aims to achieve.

Tinsley and Board (2014:96) consider parental support as crucial which should go “beyond simply mild approval” because “this can easily melt away if pupils start to find the subject demanding and lose interest”. However, findings of the present study of teachers’ perceptions (some of whom are parents themselves) indicate that although parents are keen to retain Chinese language and identity in their children, many do not help them learn at home. Thus, cooperation between parents, pupils and teachers is urgently needed to support intergenerational transmission, which Fishman (2001) claims is of prime importance in helping minority languages that are in the decline to maintain themselves.

The saying ‘parents pay, parents govern and parents teach’ (Li Wei & Wu, 2009) in Chinese schools may hold true in Mandarin schools but just partially so in Cantonese schools. While Cantonese schools were established and run by dedicated parents decades ago, some 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Chinese parents today are not so good at Chinese. As most are busy and may not have good Chinese proficiency, their chance to govern a school is in doubt. This raises the question regarding who can take care of Cantonese schools when experienced headteachers retire from the job.

**On Cantonese and Mandarin schools.** Francis et al. (2008) point out that the enrolment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation children is vital to the future development of Cantonese schools. They question if their absence is due to expected basic spoken proficiency and the views of ‘proper Chineseness’ expressed by teachers. Findings indicate that the teachers perceive the problem may lie less in inclusion or exclusion but more in the lack of expertise and resources to teach Cantonese as a foreign language in schools.

Norton (1995) argues that language can be seen as a social practice taking place within relationships of power. While Mandarin learning is on the rise, Cantonese appears to be in decline (Li Wei, 2011; Li Wei & Zhu, 2014; Mau et.al, 2009). The power relationship between the two is changing among Chinese overseas due to China’s rising economic power (Li Wei & Zhu, 2010). Findings confirm what Li Wei (2014) notes as a social hierarchy between Mandarin and Cantonese. In schools there are issues regarding which language (Cantonese/Mandarin) to learn, what aspects of Chinese culture (traditional/popular) to convey, and whether learners’ needs are met.

**On code-switching in class.** Both the contextual observations and the actual interviews with the teachers in the present study agree with Li Wei (2006, 2011, 2014) that teachers and pupils behave in a highly multilingual manner and there is a gap between teachers' and pupils' linguistic proficiency and preference. Data indicate the use of medium in teaching is teachers' decision rather than the school's One Language Only (OLON) policy. Contrary to the argument that the use of English would reinforce the status of English, teachers who choose to use Cantonese or Mandarin in class just want to provide pupils a language environment to listen to and use more Chinese (Section 5.4, Episodes 3 and 5).

As discussed, Hornberger and Link (2012) argue that translanguaging is a desirable practice in classrooms. Tinsley and Board (2014:92) point out "English was necessary to explain features of the Chinese language to pupils, and in some cases to translate words". As a creative act multilingual users can adopt in different contexts for communication purposes (Li Wei, 2013), there is a case for suggesting that code-switching should be more positively received than is found in OLON (above). It follows that teachers might recognise that there may be times when it is both natural and practical to use the language of the host country to support Chinese teaching and learning, be it Dutch, English or French (Section 2.1.2).

Findings herein do identify some successful teachers who had a number of segments of their lessons in which English is not used in order to give their pupils opportunities for processing a flow of Chinese sound and for making inferences as to meaning, since these are linguistic skills that pupils absolutely need to develop for real-life communication with Chinese people in different contexts.

### **9.3.2 On conceptions of teaching**

Findings of this study describe teachers' experience and the *intentional* nature with which they approach Chinese teaching and pupils' learning. In line with Boulton-Lewis et al. (2001), teachers believe teaching is basically the transmission of content/skills, development of understanding and transformation of learners. Their teaching conceptions differ from those of Scottish school teachers (Section 2.3) due

possibly to dissimilar purposes, teaching contexts, nature of subjects and values in teaching and learning.

In contrast to secondary teachers who view themselves as ‘subject teachers’, Chinese teachers view themselves as ‘partners’, ‘friends’ and ‘parents’ to pupils. Similar to Hess and Azuma’s (1991) findings that Japanese children are viewed as good if they are obedient, gentle and self-controlled, Chinese teachers wish their pupils to be responsible, polite, respectful and willing to learn. They hope pupils could grasp the chance to learn Chinese and grow up to be good, moral people.

### **Comparison with other Chinese conceptions of teaching**

Contrary to the more academic-focused Western teaching conceptions, Chinese school teachers’ teaching conceptions are more culturally-oriented. As Table 9.1 shows, the teaching conceptions of Pratt (1992a), Gao (1998) and the present study all consider delivery of knowledge as fundamental, and the knowledge acquired by learners can be used to reach for higher-level aims, be it seeking a better society (Pratt, 1992a), developing better conduct (Gao, 1998), planning better teaching and learning (Chen, 2007), or maintaining Chinese identity and cultural values as identified in this study.

Table 9.1 Comparison of teaching conceptions of this study with research on Chinese teachers

<b>The present study</b> (on Chinese school teachers)	<b>Pratt (1992a)</b> (on adult educators)	<b>Gao (1998)</b> (on physics teachers)	<b>Chen (2007)</b> (on middle school teachers)
(1) Transmission of knowledge, culture and skills	(1) Delivering content	(1) Knowledge delivery	(1) Caring for students
(2) Service of love to ethnic community	(2) Modelling ways of being	(2) Exam preparation	(2) Guiding students’ all-round development
(3) Guidance on learning	(3) Cultivating the intellect	(3) Ability development	(3) Connecting school knowledge/work to other areas
(4) Catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities	(4) Facilitating personal agency	(4) Attitude promotion	(4) planning and preparing structured lessons
(5) Use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest	(5) Seeking a better society	(5) Conduct guidance.	
(6) Maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values			

In line with Pratt (1992a), Gao (1998) and Chen (2007), the teaching conceptions identified in this research contain cultural/moral elements such as cultivation, care, guidance and change of attitudes. In contrast to Pratt (1992a), teaching in Chinese school is not seen as to develop pupils’ intellect towards greater autonomy or

in search of a better society, but for a cultural/familial end like preserving moral values. They also differ from Gao (1998) regarding examination preparation. Though both set of conceptions share a *cultivating* focus blending teaching with nurturing good morals in learners, Chinese teachers are concerned more about learners' Chinese identity, given that they are descendents of Chinese overseas.

### **The educational, cultural and moral aspects of teaching conceptions**

Teachers' teaching conceptions indicate strong cultural characteristics originating from a Chinese culture of learning, i.e., the importance of education and hard work. Teachers are effortful in lesson preparation and tireless in encouraging pupils to learn. They try to act as good models. Their motherly love towards pupils is sometimes strengthened by their Christian belief.

Findings indicate some teachers are reflective in teaching. They write teaching plans, evaluate lessons, put themselves in pupils' shoes and make learning enjoyable (寓教於樂 yù jiāo yú lè) to motivate them to learn. Some tend to view knowledge as quantitative, something transmissible to pupils to be stored up and used in life. They transmit knowledge in a systematic way (循序漸進) based on textbooks to lay a foundation for future learning. Language accuracy is stressed through differentiating radicals, characters and writing strokes. However, they stress understanding (理解), helping pupils make good sense of what they learn.

The moral aspect is stressed in teaching. Through textbooks teachers not only teach the *book* (教書 jiāoshu) but *the person* (教做人 jiāozuo ren). In Section 6.2.1, teacher M-K points out a Chinese type of *seriousness* based on her concern about pupils – “idleness in teaching is teachers' fault” (教不嚴, 師之惰).

In brief, below are the key characteristics of Chinese teachers' teaching conceptions:

1. Knowledge is transferable to pupils through teaching.
2. Teaching is to enable pupils to memorise and to understand.
3. Love and concern for pupils is a force in teaching.
4. Teaching requires good efforts and a loving heart.

5. Teaching is a means to maintain cultural values and Chinese identity.
6. Teaching and learning are interdependent, requiring teachers and pupils to take an active role.

### 9.3.3 On conceptions of learning

Findings of this study agree with Pillay, Purdie and Boulton-Lewis (2000) that people's learning conceptions are often influenced by their personal experiences, cultural background, intentions, values and situational demands. Teachers consider Chinese learning as a long-term activity which requires teacher-learner cooperation and learners' persistent efforts to reach the goals (Cortazzi, Jin & Wang, 2009).

In line with Francis et al. (2008, 2009), data indicate teachers consider Chinese culture as essential, replicable and beneficial rather than embrace a cosmopolitan view. While Western research focuses more on learning process, relations between knowledge and learners, and changes in learners, Chinese conceptions of learning often have social and/or moral aspects relating to *attitudes* and *duty* towards the society learners live in (Pratt, 1992a; Gao, 1998; Chen, 2007).

Similar to Boulton-Lewis et al. (2001), Chinese teachers stressed acquisition and application of content/skills, development of understanding, and transformation of learners in learning. Findings support the claim that teachers in general embrace a *student-centred* understanding of teaching and learning, which is likely to lead to positive learning outcomes of pupils since it supports a deep approach in the learning process (Kember & Gow, 1994).

In line with Pratt (1992b), findings of this study indicate the *acquisition of knowledge and skills* as fundamental, but differ from the adult educators in Pratt's (1992b) study who perceive learning as *personal fulfilment of responsibility* to the society, which brings forth changes in understanding both inside and outside oneself. In contrast, teachers in this study mostly view learning as learning how to learn, to communicate with others, and to know oneself. They consider *cooperative efforts* vital for pupils to achieve effective Chinese learning.

## **The educational, social, cultural and moral aspects of learning conceptions**

Chinese teachers tend to believe knowledge of Chinese can be kept for future use and can lead to new understanding. They value good learning habits and attitudes, stress learning capability (學習能力) rather than examination ability. For them learning requires pupils to listen to teachers and put in good efforts. Cooperation and help from others are vital; otherwise, progress will be slow.

Many classroom activities observed (Section 5.3) are cooperative in nature wherein pupils' are praised and rewarded as a group. The emphasis on moral and cultural aspects of learning appears not to contradict with teachers' move towards being facilitators of learning. In line with previous research (Lee, 1996; Li, 2001, 2002, 2003), teachers consider knowledge of Chinese language and culture as a way of self-understanding, which can cultivate one's Chinese identity and moral development (學做人). In this respect, learning Chinese is a means to a moral end.

In sum, the main features of Chinese teachers' learning conceptions are:

1. Learning Chinese is both cognitive and affective since it associates with the 'self'.
2. Memorisation and understanding are not separate, as the former aids the latter in the learning process.
3. Learning demands efforts, hard work and good attitudes.
4. Learning is a cognitive means which leads to a moral end.
5. Learning has a social aspect requiring cooperative efforts from many sides.

### **9.3.4 Variations between and within Cantonese and Mandarin teachers**

*People do things differently. Mostly they have learned to do them differently - some better, some worse – or they have learned differently... to do them.*

Marton and Booth (1997, p.208)

**On ethnicity, nationality, cultural values and Chinese identity.** Contrary to the assumption that Chinese mainlanders may associate closer to Confucius cultural values when compared with their HK counterparts who have lived under British rule for a century, findings reveal Cantonese teachers (older generation in particular) uphold a

strong social and family relationship. They appear to embrace more traditional values such as good familial relationship and the sense of shame than Mandarin teachers (Sections 7.2 and 8.2.1). A possible explanation for this may be that, as discussed in Section 2.2.5, the Cultural Revolution in China set out to destroy traditional Chinese values and it may take years for these to re-appear.

Noteworthy is the relationship between Chinese identity, nationality and cultural values. When addressing pupils' Chinese identity, Cantonese teachers actually talk about moral qualities such as diligence, politeness, honesty and filial piety, which are virtues that can foster good relationship with people inside and outside home. To them, Chinese identity is more about ethnicity rather than *national identity*. It is *cultural* and can be *regional*, like being good HK Chinese. Findings indicate no obvious association with mainland Chinese identity (of People's Republic of China) among Cantonese teachers.

**Reading and writing versus speaking and listening.** While Cantonese teachers tend to emphasise *reading*, *writing* and *quantity* learned, Mandarin teachers also stress *speaking* and *listening* (Section 6.2.1). In addition to learning Mandarin as a heritage language, Mandarin teachers may hold a pragmatic view in seeing it as a world language to communicate within a wider global community. The New Curriculum reforms in China in the 2000s may have improved quality, widened teachers' perspective and developed a cooperative spirit between teachers and pupils which stresses pupils' active participation in class (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006).

Follow-up questions with Cantonese teachers by the researcher have clarified the following. First, books and reference materials on teaching Cantonese are lacking and teachers find it hard to teach the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Scottish-Chinese. They see vocabulary teaching as an effective way to guarantee that pupils do learn some Cantonese, and therefore stress reading and writing to reinforce pupils' learning (Section 2.1.6). They know it may increase the difficulty of learning Cantonese without a systematic explanation of characters and sentence patterns. Second, while Mandarin is flourishing and learning materials abound both in print and on-line and of easy access, Cantonese schools face insecurity and can only do their best to help pupils learn *more* when there is still a chance.

**Guidance versus parenting.** In contrast to imposed official metaphors (Cortazzi, Jin & Wang, 2009), the metaphors teachers used in this study to describe Chinese teaching and learning reflect their personal individual experiences. They reveal teachers' values and understanding of their teaching world. The use of *parent*, *friend* and *guide* metaphors is in line with Cortazzi, Jin and Wang (2009). In brief, Mandarin teachers possess a wider and richer image of a teacher compared to their Cantonese counterparts (Section 8.5).

Findings indicate Mandarin teachers are more *guidance-oriented* in teaching while Cantonese teachers are more *transmission and care-oriented*. 30% of Mandarin teachers considered Chinese teaching as *partnership*, 25% as *guiding*, and 10% as *raising children*. In contrast, 11.1% of Cantonese teachers viewed Chinese teaching as *partnership*, 38.9% as *raising children*, but 0% as *guiding*. The *parent* metaphor used here appears parallel to the thinking of teachers in countries with Confucius traditions like China, HK and Japan (Section 2.2.4).

Past research notes that Western teachers' use of *guiding/nurturing* metaphors is common, but not so with the *raising children*. As the *parent* metaphor is not common among British teachers in the UK (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999), Cantonese teachers may need to reflect on their roles. As their Scottish-Chinese pupils are likely to view their Chinese teachers from a Scottish cultural perspective, relationships resembling parent-child in teaching may not be in tune with Scottish-Chinese pupils' expectation and schooling experience.

In this respect, some teachers' conceptions as reflected in their metaphors might be incompatible with the educational/socio-cultural contexts pupils are currently in. However, it is interesting to note that it is exactly the type of affectionate motherly love that helps overcome many Chinese teachers' disappointment at their pupils' lack of interest in learning.

**Older versus younger generation of teachers.** The teaching and learning conceptions of teachers C-V and C-S indicate generational variations within Cantonese teachers. C-V, an enthusiastic parent teacher in her 50s from HK, perceived teaching Cantonese as *service of love to ethnic community (T-2)* and learning as *cooperative efforts (L-4)*. She considered *cooperative efforts (L-4)* not only crucial to pupils' learning but also to the survival of her school. She talked about attitudes and values like politeness and Chinese

texts for moral cultivation. She improved her skills by attending conferences and short courses during her 18 years of teaching.

In contrast to C-V, teacher C-S was a former Chinese school pupil born and educated in Scotland. She perceived teaching as *transmission of knowledge, culture and skills (T-1)* and learning as *using language for communication (L-5)*. Apart from textbooks, her sources of Chinese knowledge included HK pop songs and popular martial arts novels. She watched HK television programmes and used Cantonese with Chinese friends. She also learned some Mandarin through listening to Mandopop<sup>7</sup>. She talked about Chinese culture like eating dim-sum and moon-cakes but not about folklores with moral messages. These reflected the role of popular and youth culture in her motivation to learn Cantonese.

In brief, the dissimilar teaching and learning conceptions of C-V and C-S reflect their different conceptualisation originating from their unique experiences and life-world. It illustrates different discernments linked to different understanding of the same phenomenon. Hence, different generations of Chinese school teachers can possess very diverse intentions, expectations and experiences in Chinese teaching and learning.

**On being facilitators of learning.** As said, Mandarin teachers tend to be *agents of guiding* rather than as parents or friends. Teacher M-E, a postgraduate student and a former English teacher of a tertiary institution in China, viewed Mandarin teaching as *guidance on learning (T-3)* and learning as *cooperative efforts (L-4)*. She believed motivation and parental support are vital in attracting non-Chinese to learn Mandarin. She used interesting materials in teaching, without confining her non-Chinese pupils to learn traditional Chinese culture (Section 8.3.2).

Teacher M-D took the role of a guide and facilitator. An academic in her late 30s, she perceived Mandarin teaching as *guidance on learning (T-3)* and learning as *learning how to learn (L-3)*. She considered motivation and a relaxing environment as indispensable in learning. She believed English has a key role in non-Mandarin speaking pupils' Chinese learning as a foreign language. She sent her daughter to learn in a relaxed Mandarin school to maintain her learning interest (Section 8.3.1).

Co-learning has been affirmed in Episode 4 (Section 5.4). Teacher M-G learned new things from her pupils and encouraged them to express their thoughts. M-A learned

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<sup>7</sup> Mandopop is Mandarin popular music.

martial arts novels from her pupils and she invited a Cantonese-speaking girl to explain to the class the differences between some traditional and simplified characters. These practices help bridge the teacher-pupil gap and enable both parties to share learning outcomes.

Tinsley and Board (2014) point out the expertise of Chinese teachers at weekend schools has been an under-used resource which could be utilised to support mainstream Chinese teaching. In this regard, the wider society could work more closely with Chinese schools to provide opportunities for Scottish pupils to learn Chinese in a motivating way. In short, there are lots of highly committed teachers like M-D, M-E, M-A and M-G in Mandarin schools. Given the chance, they could be good Mandarin teachers in mainstream schools. This issue should warrant more attention.

### **9.3.5 New issues arisen from the findings: Scottish-Chinese learners' motivation and Chinese identity**

*An identity is not an abstract idea or a label, such as a title, an ethnic category... It is a lived experience of belonging (or not belonging).*

Wenger (2000, p.239)

Apart from answering the three research questions, findings of the present study bring forth important issues concerning Scottish-Chinese learners, their 'learning motivation' and 'Chinese identity'. Since *maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values* (T-6) and *knowing oneself* (Chinese *self* in particular) (L-6) are perceived by teachers in the present study as the ultimate goals, these two conceptions could have significant impact on teaching approaches and the choice of teaching contents.

Teaching conceptions like *guidance on learning* (T-3), *catering for individual characteristics, needs and abilities* (T-4), and *use of versatile methods to enhance learning and cultivate interest* (T-5) actually deal with enhancing 'learner motivation' to learn Cantonese or Mandarin. In addition, the conceptions *acquisition of culture and moral values* (L-2), *knowing oneself* (L-6) and *maintenance of Chinese identity and cultural values* (T-6) express explicitly teachers' concerns with the 'Chinese identity' of pupils of Chinese ancestry.

Though no data were collected directly from parents, there is evidence from the obtained data of teachers' perceptions that the issues of pupil motivation and Chinese identity are significant, and are salient for parents as evidenced in past research. Furthermore, most participating teachers were parents themselves whose children learned Cantonese or Mandarin in Chinese schools.

**On Chinese identity.** Teachers and parents may have good reasons to insist that their younger generation should learn Chinese in order to preserve their Chinese identity. As described by C-O, C-W and C-X in Chapter 7, ethnic Chinese with a Chinese face are expected to know/speak Chinese or they would be laughed at. McDonald (2011) notes that there seems to be a rigid identification of ethnicity and language in the case of 'Chinese' both within and beyond the Chinese circle. Chinese overseas are always expected to speak Chinese, or "they are despised not only by their fellow Chinese but also by non-Chinese" (p.211). This explains why teachers often go to great lengths to maintain pupils' command of Cantonese/Mandarin.

McDonald (2011) observes that some descendents of Chinese overseas may not want to be Chinese, but 'Chineseness' can be an 'imposed' identity as they are inevitably identified as one. He argues "as human beings we often 'make up' identities for ourselves from the socio-cultural mix around us" (p.216). He points out that the identity forming process in childhood is largely unconscious and beyond one's control, but when one moves into adulthood, certain identity is deliberately chosen.

As revealed in some of the teachers' accounts, some commonly-held essential features such as *literacy* in Chinese being the symbol of Chinese cultural heritage (Hancock, 2006a; Li Wei, 2007; Li & Wu, 2010; Scollon & Scollon, 1995) and *fluency* in speaking being tied up with Chinese identity may not reflect the understandings of young Scottish-Chinese. Those who do not speak Chinese and/or know little about cultural values do not necessarily mean they do not identify themselves as Chinese. They may have their own understanding of 'Chineseness', which differs from certain commonly-recognised features of Chinese identity (Francis et al., 2014). As "a strong identity involves deep connections with others through shared histories and experiences, reciprocity, affection, and mutual commitments" (Wenger, 2000:239), parents and teachers need to respect children's own views and multiple identities while helping them in constructing with a their Chinese identity that suits them.

**On learner motivation.** Despite many Scottish-Chinese pupils' being hardworking high-achievers in Scottish schools (Hancock, 2014), findings from the teacher interviews indicate learning Cantonese or Mandarin is often their parents' rather than pupils' own choice. They are often perceived as being far from having "*hao-xue-xin*" (好學心 heart and mind wanting to learn). To them, Chinese is not a school subject they must learn. It is difficult to master and far from a fun pastime. Learning it in Chinese schools takes up over 30 weekends a year when otherwise they can enjoy other activities (Section 5.4, Episode 6). In Ushioda and Dörnyei's (2009) terms, this looks like a reflection of the 'ought-to self' being forced to take precedence over 'the ideal self' as the location for the Chinese learning. In this regard, they need good reasons and more extrinsic motivation in learning Chinese.

Dörnyei and Csizér (2002) argue that human motivation to learn is complex and involves varied conditions. Some motivational sources are situation-specific rooted in learners' immediate learning environments, while others originate from past experiences in the learners' social world. Some Scotland-born 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation children of Chinese descent may experience little or none of such motivational sources in learning Chinese.

In Section 8.3.2, teacher M-E talked about some of her non-Chinese pupils who learned Mandarin well because of their interest in Chinese language and culture. She mentioned an Arabian girl who was attracted to learn Chinese after watching the Walt Disney movie "Muk-Lan". The girl's love of Chinese, the people and culture, was initiated by a movie. This might be a case of integrative motivation, but we should bear in mind Ushioda and Dörnyei's (2009) argument that the notion of L2 integrative motivation which has been popular for a few decades has rather been subsumed in what they call the 'languages motivation self-system'. The young Arabian girl might possibly be experiencing an affiliation that, as she matured, might plausibly grow into a notion of learning Chinese within what Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) describe as her 'ideal self' rather than her 'ought-to self'.

### **Possible teaching contents and approaches in response to learner motivation.**

Despite inevitably aim at perpetuating Chinese language and culture in the younger generations, Chinese schools should take more account of pupils' diverse learning needs. Chik and Briedbach (2011) claim pop culture can strengthen learners'

imagination, empowering them to experience a sense of belonging to an “imagined community” as elaborated by Norton and Toohey (2011). Pop culture materials like TV shows, films and video games can align time and space so that learners can connect to a larger community. In short, popular culture and on-line materials can effectively attract young people to learn Chinese.

Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear and Leu (2008) point out communications in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not just through texts but sound, images, and digital media. Lam (2000, 2006) notes how immigrant youths in the USA employ computer technology to use language to construct imagined lives, create new learning experiences, and develop competences and transnational identities through the use of internet to create cyber communities with peer groups.

To conclude, it is unrealistic to expect volunteer Chinese teachers who lack professional training to be perfect in their conceptions to attend to all the needs of their pupils. In a place where opportunity to learn Chinese is scant, it becomes important that pupils should be helped to appreciate that their volunteer teachers come to them out of goodwill. Jin and Cortazzi (2011) point out teachers and students need to know each other’s values, conceptions and experiences of teaching and learning. Mutual understanding and appreciation is necessary to maximise teaching and learning effectiveness.

As Chinese teachers’ conceptions would develop in the light of their professional knowledge, opportunities to acquire new skills in teacher training are crucial for effective teaching. Proper training and collaboration with mainstream schools could enable them to become familiar with the Scottish culture of teaching and learning, have more informed ideas on what to expect in language classrooms, on how pupils interpret classroom instruction, and how teacher-pupil interaction could be accomplished as part of the social construction in learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). In this respect, *cooperative efforts* (L-4) from various stakeholders and the mainstream are crucial in supporting pupils’ Chinese learning and teachers’ continuous professional development.

## **9.4 Contributions of the present study**

### **On the use of a phenomenographic approach to explore teaching and learning conceptions**

The present study maps the qualitatively different ways Chinese teachers conceptualise teaching and learning. With well-defined interview procedures and analysis, a set of descriptive categories are identified which reveal a part-whole inclusive relationship. Findings support the hierarchical claim of outcome space. The six teaching and six learning conceptions progress from a lower to an advanced level. These conceptions can be important constructs in analysing teachers' thinking and their approaches to teaching. They constitute a framework in understanding, comparing and contrasting Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' teaching and learning conceptions in future research.

While previous research on conceptions focused mainly on university and school teachers in formal settings, this study enriches the literature by investigating a group of volunteer Chinese teachers teaching in informal non-mainstream institutions in Scotland. Contrary to the largely cognitive-oriented teaching and learning conceptions documented in the past, this study has identified an *affective* and *cultural* aspect in teaching, and a *social* and *cultural* aspect in learning. Meanings these conceptions encompass are different from those found in previous research.

### **On research on metaphors relating to teaching and learning**

Tables 8.9 and 8.10 show a brief comparison between the metaphors teachers used and the teaching and learning conceptions they held. Findings indicate that although metaphors can make teachers' thinking transparent and provide a basis for reflection and comparison, they may not be able to capture accurately teachers' experiences and understanding of teaching and pupils' learning in Chinese schools. As metaphors have roots situated in culture and time in the past, they may not be sophisticated enough to account for the experiences of present-day teachers who live, work, think and interact with pupils in a rapidly changing globalised world.

However, the metaphors Chinese teachers used did enrich this research and made vivid the findings by revealing dimensions of teachers' conceptions that the phenomenographic interviews did not reveal.

### **On the research literature of Chinese schools and complementary Chinese education**

In contrast to past research focusing on Chinese schools, pupils' learning and parents' perceptions, the present research explores Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' teaching and learning conceptions. Findings provide useful data to an under-explored field of teachers' conceptions, and help convey to the public the 'experiences' and 'voices' of the core people who make teaching and learning Chinese as community/foreign language possible in Scotland. The study fills a gap in research on complementary Chinese education by providing a comprehensive picture to the academic community about teachers' conceptualisation of teaching and learning in Chinese schools.

Findings have identified Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' diverse understandings, and the challenges they face in teaching Cantonese/Mandarin as a community/foreign language. By depicting their conceptions and the factors likely to have influenced their thoughts, this research contributes to a more-informed approach to handling Chinese teaching and learning in schools, with possible implications for improvements that might be made to school policies, teaching medium, teacher training and parental engagement.

Heightened awareness of the above could support better understanding and cooperation between the two groups which in return can foster better cooperation and development of their schools. Findings also provide relevant data to associations such as UKFCS and UKAPCE, to help them better understand teachers' thinking, needs and formulate appropriate training programmes.

## **On cooperation between complementary and mainstream sectors**

The present study highlights the complexity in teaching and learning Chinese as a community/foreign language in complementary schools. Findings provide rich information about Cantonese and Mandarin teachers on how they and their schools have contributed to teaching Chinese as a community/foreign language to Scottish-Chinese and non-Chinese pupils.

Tinsley and Board (2014: 86) point out that in mainstream schools native-speakers could “assist with linguistic modelling”, for instance, to use “a Cantonese speaking pupil to help model pronunciation for the rest of the class”. They note the “over-reliance currently on temporary teachers from China” and the need to develop “a permanent UK-based teaching force” (p.122).

Given that many Mandarin teachers in Chinese schools are highly-educated, competent academics who possess rich cross-cultural life experiences in teaching Mandarin to Scottish-Chinese and non-Chinese pupils, they could be a steady source of Mandarin teachers and excellent linguistic models for mainstream schools. Given the chance, Chinese school teachers could be equally good if not better mainstream Chinese teachers when compared with Chinese Language Assistants (CLAs) from China, the temporary staff who just stay to work for a contract of 9 months.

### **9.5 Pedagogical implications of the study**

Findings reveal the challenges faced by Chinese teachers and their schools are largely beyond their control, including pupil intakes, learner motivation and abilities, resources available, and support from parents and the mainstream. However, in contrast to Confucius classrooms which promote an *approved* version of Chinese culture, the language and culture complementary schools are delivering is more carefree.

#### **Societal and provision factors**

In their conceptions of factors that might have influenced their thinking, Chinese school teachers did not mention any factors that exist in Scottish society. I believe there are societal factors existing in Scotland of which *three* shall be mentioned, *one positive* and the other *two negative*. These are:

- First is the highly *positive* factor that there exist in Scottish society a significant number of ethnic Chinese adults who are willing to dedicate substantial amounts of time to lesson preparation, teaching and follow-up in Chinese schools in order to help Scottish-Chinese/non-Chinese children to make progress in Mandarin or Cantonese.
- Second, public attitudes in Scotland towards minority languages, especially those that are not heritage minority languages such as Gaelic or Scots, generally show apathy or lack of awareness.
- Third, as the Cantonese community of Scotland moves into its third generation and beyond, the intergenerational transmission of Cantonese by parents in the home and by others in local communities declines. This raises a major question for Scotland's Cantonese community: What are the Cantonese schools in Scotland for? Are they for further supporting specifically Cantonese language and culture? Or, are they for further supporting a more general concept of 'Chineseness' (in which case, come in out of the cold and join the all-China Mandarin club)?

In addition, three *provision* factors merit consideration. These are:

- First, a lack of financial and other support at national level for the maintenance and revitalisation of ethnic (non-heritage) minority languages. By contrast, the Scottish Government understandably allocates very large sums of money each year in support of Scottish Gaelic, e.g., for Gaelic-medium education, radio, television, and culture. This means that Scottish children of Chinese and other heritage descent have far less support for their heritage language.
- Second, the links between complementary and mainstream schools in Scotland are weak, and complementary schools are marginalised to a greater extent than in England.
- The third provision factor is the most decisive. It is the limited time available for Chinese schools - usually two hours Saturdays. What the teachers have achieved in this limited amount of time seems impressive and is a tribute to their dedication, but it can really only work if it is backed up by substantial use of the language in the home and elsewhere. Carmen Muñoz, a leading researcher in the acquisition and learning of additional languages by young learners, claims that: "... an early

starting age produces long-term benefits when associated with greater time and massive exposure, as in immersion programmes, but not when associated with limited time and exposure, as in typical foreign language learning classrooms” (2008, p.582). Prospects for early immersion programmes in Mandarin or Cantonese in Scotland do not really exist at present, so the ‘massive exposure’ needs to come from parents and other community sources. In the case of some Cantonese children this is not happening, which can put unrealistic expectations on what Chinese schools can deliver in their limited contact time, and thereby unreasonably increase pressure on the teachers. This is evidenced in my findings on the conceptions of some Cantonese teachers.

### **Implications for Cantonese and Mandarin schools**

No matter how humble and insufficient in resources, Cantonese and Mandarin schools could move on and prosper with the dedication of teachers and their communities. There are genuine needs for Cantonese and Mandarin schools to cultivate a team spirit that emphasises sharing ideas and initiating changes to match with learners’ needs. Schools might reflect on their respective teaching and learning culture with regard to aims, values, beliefs and goals which are situational, negotiable rather than taken-for-granted. Schools and teachers might aim more to align teaching with Scottish-Chinese learners’ life experiences and learning interest to inspire pupils to love to learn Chinese.

*Three* implications arising from the teacher interviews and the classroom observations are as follows:

1. Substantial steps would need to be taken if Cantonese is to prosper in Scotland as an active community language. To facilitate this, a nation-wide association could be set up to facilitate exchanges of experiences of Cantonese teaching and learning in the UK. This association would include teachers, headteachers and pupils. In addition to archiving up-to-date teaching and learning resources, it could liaise with Cantonese institutions worldwide such as schools and universities in Hong Kong, Australia, the US and Canada to ensure Cantonese voices to be heard and practised. The association could help foster a motivating ‘imagined’ world community which makes Cantonese language ‘real’ to ethnic Chinese learners in the UK.

2. Cantonese and Mandarin schools might consider setting up a national organisation to network with each other, to look at emerging issues in teaching and learning, to seek closer cooperation in the exchange of resources and expertise, and to build up links with other associations which promote Chinese learning in the UK. This organisation could also initiate joint cultural events, reach out to the mainstream sector, and provide training activities for teachers, headteachers and parents.
3. As with the issue of funding to run Cantonese schools, given that state subsidy is meagre and unstable, Cantonese schools would need to actively seek sponsors and liaise with other associations for promoting Chinese in Scotland. Apart from yearly fund-raising activities, a kind of ‘contract’ could be set up between schools and parents, specifying a fixed amount of hours per year for parents to teach or help voluntarily in school. The work could include preparing teaching aids and materials, teaching in class, helping with extra-curricular activities, Christmas celebration, end-term ceremony, fund-raising programmes or other school activities. This act could harness parents’ expertise, help with teacher recruitment and reduce school expenditure. In addition, parents’ active engagement in school could be a strong motivational force to their children’s Cantonese and Mandarin learning inside and outside schools.

Some further recommendations are:

- To provide induction programmes to new teachers and regular school-based teacher development to all teachers to familiarise them with Scottish culture of learning, and to promote the use of bilingual instructional strategies in teaching Cantonese and Mandarin.
- To provide opportunities for teachers to exchange ideas on teaching, to reflect on their thinking and to bring in line their teaching and learning conceptions.
- To embrace multifarious methods to teach and learn Cantonese/Mandarin, for instance, character-writing to be typed using mobile apps, homework to be done on smartphones, and learning tasks can be practising of songs or watching movies followed by class discussions.

- To keep close contact with parents to understand their thoughts and difficulties, to harness their expertise and suggest to them literacy activities such as homework help, shared book reading and movie-watching to assist their intergenerational transmission of Chinese at home.
- To encourage learners to make use of the internet to connect with Chinese communities worldwide so as to enhance their investment in Chinese learning.

### **Implications for the mainstream educational sector**

- As the expertise of volunteers who teach in UK Chinese schools has been under-used in serving a broader clientele (Tinsley & Board, 2014), local authorities might consider inviting Chinese school teachers to help teach in Scottish schools, and harnessing the Chinese skills of those Scottish-Chinese pupils who have learned Mandarin in complementary schools to support Scottish pupils who learn Mandarin as a modern language in mainstream schools.
- In view of decades of contributions Chinese teachers and their schools have made to Chinese education in Scotland, local councils might consider providing Chinese schools with school premises at lower rent or for free so that Scottish-Chinese and non-Chinese pupils could have a good environment in which to learn Cantonese and Mandarin. High schools might consider sharing resources like copiers and ICT facilities with Chinese schools to enhance pupils' learning.
- Tinsley and Board (2014) point out it is essential to have “a permanent UK-based teaching force” (p.4). As “teacher education in Chinese is available at a number of universities in Scotland and this is set to increase over the next few years” (p.35), universities in Scotland can therefore consider providing Chinese school teachers with training programmes at certificate, diploma and/or degree level to meet the needs of the society. This could enable teachers learn new teaching approaches and bring back to their schools new ideas, knowledge and meta-language which they could draw on in teaching.

## 9.6 Reflection on the use of phenomenographic approach and its limitations

**Reflection.** The phenomenographic approach has been selected for this study because it is specialised in identifying *conceptions* and has well-established procedures and method of analysis in handling data. It allows prompting deep into teachers' thinking to elicit meaningful data and to identify variations in uninspected areas. Findings have demonstrated its effectiveness as a means to serve the intended aims.

Despite starting with no presupposed hypothesis on teachers' thinking, emergent conceptual categories nevertheless present a trustworthy account of the collective teaching and learning conceptions of the target group of teachers. As variations can help with understanding and stimulate thinking, findings can provide insights to inform different stakeholders to reflect on their roles.

In the spirit of self-questioning, I should ask myself: How 'valid' are the hierarchies of six conceptions that I established within each *outcome space*? To establish the six conceptions is clearly the most important thing to do, and I feel confident that this has been achieved objectively through meticulous repeated reading of data and with the help of my co-judge. To establish hierarchies of the conceptions is an established component of phenomenographic research. In my case, the hierarchies were established after repeated examination and long reflection aiming at objectivity. I do believe that there is an element of researcher subjectivity in the process, since to claim that one conception is of a higher order than another may ultimately be a value judgement.

**Limitations.** Apart from the limitations discussed in Section 3.4, another possible one could be the sample size, although it is deemed to be big enough according to previous phenomenographic studies (Bowden, 1996). A bigger sample means a wider coverage leading to more comprehensive results. Another limitation could be the use of a single interview despite it being the accepted norm that one in-depth interview is standard for data collection (Section 4.3). Due to this limitation I chose to adopt a '*phenomenography plus*' approach by undertaking the classroom contextual study, the small number of individual teacher profiles and the metaphor study, all of which yielded additional insights into the teachers' teaching and learning conceptions.

Attributes like age, gender, teaching experiences and education background of teachers were collected, but the use of them has been limited. *How* and *why* these

attributes might have affected teachers' teaching and learning conceptions can be addressed in more detail. Lastly, changes in teachers' conceptions are likely to occur during their cognitive, affective or behavioural adjustment at various stages of teaching in Chinese school. These may lead to awareness of new aspects and thus develop into new conceptions, and thus longitudinal research to gauge possible changes over time could prove to be very useful. However, my present research could only capture teachers' perceptions at one specific time.

Despite these limitations, the present study has certainly touched upon an unexplored area and tapped on the resources of a group of under-appreciated Chinese teachers, enabling their teaching and learning conceptions to be understood, hard work to be recognised and their voices heard.

### **9.7 Reflexivity of the researcher and the generalisability and limitations of research findings**

**Reflexivity.** Although an *insider* may have advantages in investigating local issues of a community, the lack of distance may result in her overlooking some seemingly ordinary but vital things in the research process. However, the trustworthiness of findings will not be undermined if the researcher has beared of how her position may restrain or privilege the research. As stated in Section 1.4, precautions have been taken to minimise bias. My ability to speak several languages and personal experiences in language teaching and learning have privileged me in understanding/interpreting teachers' experiences. My account of reflexivity in the use of language(s), handling of relationship with teachers, and data collection and analysis has been detailed in Chapter 4 (Section 4.7).

**Issue of generalisability.** Efforts have been made to include teachers of a wide range of age, experience and background to maximise variations in their conceptions (Section 4.2). Since situations can be different, findings of the present research are not supposed to be prescriptive. As this thesis situated itself in a specific time and space with a specific group of teachers, no claim is made to the generalisability of findings to other contexts. Findings do not lead to the conclusion that Cantonese and Mandarin teachers elsewhere possess the same teaching and learning conceptions as identified.

Despite the fact that teachers in this study understand teaching and learning in their own ways, they nevertheless possess as a group some commonalities and differences as documented. Findings do provide good insights into how they conceptualise Chinese teaching and learning and contribute to the understanding of Cantonese and Mandarin teachers' thinking in relation to their situation in Scotland. They constitute a valuable starting point for investigating teachers' thoughts on Chinese teaching and learning in similar situations.

In this respect, findings may be transferable to similar settings and useful as a basis for making theoretical and practical reference to future research of similar nature. However, instead of taking 'transferability' as the responsibility of the researcher, I prefer to leave 'transferability' to the readers who can read the report, form their own judgements, and take from it ideas and issues that might chime in with their own circumstances.

## **9.8 Recommendations for future research**

This thesis supports the view that Chinese teachers' teaching and learning conceptions are products of their awareness originating from their life experiences and understanding of the specific socio-cultural, linguistic and educational contexts they are in. As changes of conceptions are on-going, these teachers contrast sharply with the simplistic interpretation of 'Chinese learners' or 'Chinese teachers' as old-fashioned, authoritative and keen to practise rote-learning.

Based on the findings in Chapters 5 to 8 and the discussion in Chapter 9, some issues are recommended for future research:

- While teachers of the present study were from bigger schools in Glasgow and Edinburgh, future studies can cover a larger sample of schools of various sizes and districts in Scotland to provide a more comprehensive picture of teachers' thinking on the topic.
- Apart from using a one-shot in-depth interview, future research can be longitudinal with multiple interviews and other forms of data-collection at regular intervals over a longer period to capture the changes in teachers' thoughts and their experiences over time.

- Findings were drawn heavily on Chinese teachers' own accounts, without much data collected from pupils and the schools. The voices of Chinese school pupils, school heads, parents, sponsors, local authorities can be valuable dimensions in future research so as to achieve a more comprehensive picture of teaching and learning in Chinese schools.
- It would be desirable to embed in future some Chinese school research elements in broader large-scale research studies that would examine one or more important topics in language education, of which I can mention two: a) public and professional (e.g. educational profession) attitudes to minority languages; b) the actual overall multilingual language practices and attitudes of young people in Scotland in a range of formal to informal contexts in the era of 'superdiversity'.

## 9.9 A personal concluding note

As explained in Chapter 1, this PhD journey started with my attempt to understand the experiences of teachers and their understanding of Cantonese and Mandarin teaching and learning in complementary schools. To retain an *objective* mind and *impartiality* in examining the phenomena under investigation, I stopped for a few years during the PhD programme my teaching and personal involvement with the Chinese school I taught.

In the course of data collection, contrary to my initial view that Chinese teachers are traditional and teacher-centred, I saw the constraints they faced and felt the genuine care, love and concern most volunteer teachers offered to their Scottish-Chinese and non-Chinese pupils. I was delighted to see the role community languages like Cantonese and Mandarin could play in supporting the educational achievement of these pupils and their contributions made to Scottish society. The "Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach" (Scottish Government, 2012) affirms that community languages like Chinese, Arabic and Polish can play a significant role in supporting the language education of multilingual Scotland.

After I had finished my data collection from several Chinese schools in Glasgow and Edinburgh and begun working on the write-up, I was persuaded back to my original Chinese school by the new headteacher to help with school administration and teacher

development as the former headteacher retired. During my years of absence the school had changed a lot. Mandarin classes had been set up in addition to original Cantonese classes to boost pupil uptake, and the qualification examinations had changed from the original GCSE/A-Level for which pupils had to sit in a college in Glasgow to taking SQA Intermediate/Higher examinations in a local high school.

Despite high rent paid to use local school classrooms at weekends, our Chinese teachers had no access to facilities like photocopiers or ICT equipment. Over the years we never met any school teachers except the janitors at weekends. The fact that our Chinese school entered pupils for SQA examinations through the local high school meant that these Scottish-Chinese pupils' brilliant 'A' grade Cantonese/Mandarin examination results were all counted under the academic records of the high school. The hard work and contributions of these Chinese teachers to Chinese teaching and learning in Scotland were however not acknowledged nor accredited, leaving these teachers and their school unrecognised and without a name.

The worst was yet to come. The school had a meagre funding from the local council. Despite up to near two-thirds of this funding going straight back to the council's treasury as rent of classrooms, the funding was eventually stopped due to financial considerations. In June 2014 the researcher witnessed the closure of her Chinese school founded in 1985 after serving the community quietly for 29 years. At the end-term prize-giving ceremony, there were many tears in the eyes.

The Scottish government and local councils ought to be aware that by withdrawing their meagre, symbolic support to complementary schools, they are sending a negative message to people of Scotland about the significance of language learning, speeding up the closure of small complementary schools, and leaving dedicated teachers without a place to contribute to the society. In so doing, the authorities are practising something against their own words, against pupils' learning of their heritage tongues and/or an additional language, and, more importantly, against the language needs and well-being of a multilingual Scotland and its citizens in a globalised world.

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## Appendix I

### Letter of Invitation to a Research Study

**Study title: Chinese language teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning in Scotland [Working title at the time]**

Dear teachers,

My name is Vivian Cheung, a doctoral candidate of the School of Education at the University of Stirling. I am conducting a PhD research on exploring Chinese teachers' conception of teaching and learning. I would like to invite you to participate in the study.

This study seeks to understand the thinking of Chinese teachers on two important educational concepts – teaching and learning. If you could take part in this study, all you need to do is to let me observe your lesson for 30 minutes and attend an individual interview.

The interview can be conducted during break time, before or after the lesson or at a time and place convenient to you. With your consent, the interview will be audio-taped for transcription and research purposes. During the interview, you will be asked to share your thoughts on the understanding of teaching, learning, and their relationship in the context of teaching the Chinese language.

You are guaranteed that all recordings and information will remain strictly confidential. Identities of individuals and schools will be kept anonymous in all research reports, published or unpublished. All names and identification details will be changed in the write-up of paper and dissertation. Once the research is completed, the recordings and transcription will be destroyed. And you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

I will be most happy to answer any questions you may have about the study. You could contact me easily by phone at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] through e-mail.

Thank you for your kind attention.

With best regards,

Vivian Cheung

[Date]

## Appendix II

### Research Consent Form

From: Vivian Wai Wan Cheung

You are invited to participate in a PhD research study which aims to understand Chinese teachers' conceptions on the teaching and learning of the Chinese Language. I would be grateful if you could let me observe one of your Chinese lessons and interview you afterwards. With your consent, I will take notes and audio-tape the interview which will then be transcribed for research purposes.

Measures will be taken to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of this research.

- (1) All names of the teachers and identifying details relating to the school will be changed in the writing of the thesis.
- (2) All transcripts and recordings will remain strictly confidential to me. When the research is completed, all the transcripts and recordings will be destroyed.
- (3) You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

#### Written Consent

I agree to take part in the research study conducted by Ms Vivian W. W. Cheung.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix III

### Interview Questions of the Study

1. In the context of Chinese complementary school, what do you understand by *teaching*?

2. In the context of Chinese complementary school, what do you understand by *learning*?

(The first and second questions were followed up by *neutral* questions which aim to seek clarification and elicit further information, namely, what do you mean by that? Can you explain that further? Or, can you give an example of what you just said? ...)

3. What factors do you perceived/considered to have influenced your thoughts on Chinese teaching and learning in Chinese complementary school?

4. Could you name a metaphor/saying/idiom you consider best describes Chinese teaching and learning in Chinese school?

(Teachers were allowed to give more than one answer.)

## Appendix IV

### Personal Particulars of Cantonese Teachers Participating in the Study

Teacher code *	Place of origin	Sex	Years of stay in Scotland	Qualification	Occupation	Grade taught	Years taught in Chinese school	Characteristics/teaching experience
C-N	Macau	F	4	Graduate	Housewife	7	1	Taught Chinese language in a Macau primary school.
C-O	HK	F	4	Undergraduate	Student	1	3	Piano teacher in HK
C-P	HK	F	20	College	Housewife	5	5	
C-Q	HK	F	20	College	Housewife	4	11	Taught in a HK secondary school. Also coached boy Scouts
C-R	HK	F	30	Secondary	Housewife	3	10	
C-S	Scotland	F	20	Undergraduate	Student	3	1	
C-T	HK	M	10	Postgraduate	Student	A-Level	8	
C-U	HK	F	5	Secondary	Housewife	GCSE	5	Piano teacher in HK
C-V	HK	F	30	Secondary	Housewife	1	18	
C-W	HK	F	11	Secondary	Housewife	7	4	
C-X	HK	F	4	Secondary	Housewife	3	2	
C-Y	HK	F	13	Secondary	Housewife	6	7	
C-Z	HK	M	10	Secondary	Cook	4	1	

\* C stands for Cantonese.

## Appendix V

### Personal Particulars of Mandarin Teachers Participating in the Study

Teacher code *	Place of origin	Sex	Years of stay in Scotland	Qualification	Occupation	Grade taught	Years of teaching in Chinese school	Characteristics / teaching experience
M-A	China	F	16	Graduate	Housewife	3	3	Taught Chinese language in a secondary school in China for 2 years
M-B	China	F	7	Postgraduate	Interpreter	1	5	Worked as a lecturer teaching English as a foreign language in China for ten years
M-C	China	F	6	Postgraduate	Student	3	3	Worked as a part-time tutor at a Scottish university for two years
M-D	China	F	8	Postgraduate	Housewife	4	4	Taught in a university in China for three years
M-E	China	F	2	Postgraduate	Student	Non-Chinese Class	1	Taught English in a tertiary institution in China for one year
M-F	Taiwan	F	12	Graduate	Teacher	7	2	Taught Chinese language in Taiwan for many years. Currently teaching Chinese for specific purposes in a Scottish university
M-G	China	F	8	Graduate	Housewife	4	5	Taught Chinese language in Canada for years. Worked both as a Chinese and French teacher in China
M-H	China	F	10	Graduate	Interpreter	8	10	Taught Chinese language in a secondary school in China for 10 years
M-I	China	F	2	Postgraduate	Student	3	1	
M-J	China	F	7	Postgraduate	Student	3	2	
M-K	China	F	12	Graduate	Accountant	6	1	

\* M stands for Mandarin.

## Appendix VI

### An Excerpt from an Interview Transcript

This is part of the protocol taken from teacher C-N's interview. The researcher observed C-N's teaching of a Tang Dynasty poem "A Morning in Spring" (春曉) (see Section 5.3). A former Chinese language teacher in Macau, she viewed teaching as *guidance on learning* (T-3) and learning as *using language for communication* (L-5). "R" below stands for the researcher, and "C-N," the teacher.

<b>Her understanding on teaching</b>		
	<b>Interview excerpts in Chinese</b>	<b>English translation</b>
R:	早上這堂課,妳覺得最感到滿意或愉快的地方是什麼?	What do you consider as the most fulfilling or enjoyable part in the lesson this morning?
C-N:	我想,是給學生去估那首詩.他們能用圖去表達,可以把過去的知識運用出來,去明白那首詩.那首詩未學過,今天才教,但學生能用圖去表達.	I think it is the guessing of the meaning of the poem. Pupils could use pictures to express, to apply their previous knowledge to understand what the poem is about. The poem they have not yet learned but they know they can use pictures to represent the four sentences.
R:	妳的意思是?	Can you tell me what you mean?
C-N:	我滿意是因為能夠引發他們的學習動機,他們是透過自己的思考去明白那首詩的意思,同組的大家商量,帶出思考.	It is satisfying because it raised their learning motivation. Pupils understand the meaning of the poem through thinking on their own and also discussing with their team members.
R:	就中文學校的學習,能分享妳如何理解“教”是什麼嗎?	In the context of Chinese school, could you share what do you understand by teaching?
C-N:	“教”是老師對學生的教學和指導.	Teacher teaches and directs pupils.
R:	妳的意思是? 能解釋一下嗎?	What do you mean by that? Can you explain?
C-N:	“教”是老師引導學生學習中文語言和	To teach is, teachers supervise pupils' learning of Chinese language and culture.

	文化,不是老師想教什麼,教是去滿足學生的不同需要和能力.	It is not only about what teachers want to teach, but to meet pupils' different needs and abilities.
R:	好,我想多聽妳的想法.	I would like to hear more about your thoughts.
C-N:	在這裏教中文主要是認識中國字和中國文化,例如...今日教的唐詩,中國的飲茶文化,新年和習俗.	Teaching Chinese here is mainly to do with teaching Chinese characters and sometimes Chinese culture like ... the Tang Dynasty poem we learned today, like tea drinking in China, Chinese New Year and its customs.
R:	可否形容一下,舉些例子?	Can you describe that, give some examples?
C-N:	我教他們字義,語法和文法,例如形容詞,名詞,動詞,副詞,介紹給他們一個知的概念,不要他們死記硬背.	I teach them word meanings, syntax, and grammar, like adjectives, nouns, verbs adverbs, to introduce concepts to them. I do not need them to rote-learn.
R:	可否多講一點,這些如何在“教”...在教學中表現出來?	Can you tell more? How does it fit into teaching?
C-N:	... 我們做選詞遊戲,需要結合讀和寫,但不用機械式練習和抄寫.這裏是海外華人學華語,不是本地人講母語.他們要知道中文和英文的語法是不同的,我希望可以幫他們寫作文章.	... We play word search games which require reading and writing but not mechanical practices or copying. Here pupils are overseas Chinese learning Chinese as a foreign language, not local people speaking their native tongue. They need to know the syntax of Chinese and English are not the same. I hope this could help them in writing essays.
R:	還有關於“教”的可以分享嗎?	Anything else you want to share about your understanding of teaching?
C-N:	不是完全老師在講,老師要安排活動讓學生學習...學生是主角,好像今天,我在最後給他們補充.	... It is not the teachers who do all the talking. Teachers must arrange activities for pupils to learn ... pupils take the main role...like today, I supplement at the end.

<b>Her understanding on learning</b>		
	<b>Interview excerpts in Chinese</b>	<b>English translation</b>
R:	可否告訴我妳是如何理解“學”的呢?	Can you tell me what do you understand by learning?
C-N:	“學”是學生在課堂吸收知識.	To learn is to take in knowledge in class.
R:	可否解釋一下?	Can you explain this?
C-N:	“學”不是老師直接給學生知識,而是學生透過活動去掌握,去吸取知識.我想出很多方法幫助學生去吸收知識,用很多活動去幫助學生在課堂上儘量說話.	Learning is not teachers transmit knowledge directly to pupils, but pupils through activities to grasp, to take in the knowledge. I think up lots of methods to help pupils to gain knowledge. I use lots of activities to get them to speak as much as they can in class.
R:	在這方面分享一下好嗎?	Can you tell me more about this?
C-N:	在教和學的活動中,學生是主角,是主導體,老師是輔導體,好像今天,學生基於那首詩來畫圖畫,他們可以理解那首詩和畫圖畫,學生未學那首詩...我希望學生能多些倚靠自己,而不是完全倚靠老師.	In learning and teaching the key character is pupils. Pupils take the main role. Teachers take the supporting role. Like today, pupils drew pictures based on the poem. They could comprehend the poem and draw it. They had not yet learned the poem ... I want them to rely more on themselves, instead of depending all on the teacher.
R:	能否再分享一下,你所理解的“學”的其他方面?	Can you share any other aspects of your understanding of learning?
C-N:	學習中文最重要的是和別人溝通,我教他們閱讀,分析文章,去寫字,作文.我用活動讓他們在課堂多交談.	The most important thing in learning Chinese is to communicate with others. I teach them to read, to analyse prose, to write words and write composition. I use activities to get them to speak as much as they can in class.
R:	可否描述一下?	Can you describe more on this?
C-N:	我運用活動引導他們參與,互相溝通.如果一個學生不明白怎樣參與活動,他可以問別人,然後他們就會知道做	I get pupils to join in activities to communicate with each other. If one pupil does not know what to do in an activity, he can ask/talk to others, then they will know what and how to do it. I

	什麼和怎樣做.我希望他們能多用廣東話和其別人溝通.當學生知道如何閱讀,書寫和運用中文,將來無論在哪裡,他們都可以使用中文知識.	hope they can speak Cantonese to communicate with others... When pupils know how to read, write and use Chinese, they can apply their knowledge whenever they need to use Chinese in the future.
R:	可否舉些例子?	Any examples?
C-N:	好像聆聽,講話,我在課堂用很多提問.我用小組討論去讓學生有更多機會講話.通過聽中文歌,通過寫出歌詞,學生可以學習'寫'.每3至4個星期,學生需要就我教的主題預備5分鐘的短講,當學生在做堂課的時候,我會請一位同學坐在我的身旁向我講出他預備好的題目.	With listening and speaking, I use a lot of questioning in class. I use group discussion to give pupils more chances to speak. Through listening to Chinese songs, pupils learn to write by filling in the lyric. Every three to four weeks, pupils are required to give a talk for 5 minutes on a topic I have taught. While others are doing their class work, I will get a pupil to sit beside me to talk about the topic he or she has prepared.
R:	還有否其他方面的補充?例如你理解的讀和寫呢?	Anything else in other aspects, say, on your understanding of reading and writing?
C-N:	在我請學生寫一篇關於他們母親的文章之前.我叫他們首先訪問一下他們的母親,他們要記下要點,再把要點寫好,通過這樣做,可以多了解他們的母親.	Before I get pupils to write a composition about their mum, I ask them to interview their mum to gather information before they write it... They need to jot down points and then write them up... In so doing they can also understand their mum more.
R:	可否再補充一下?	Yes, can you tell me more about this?
C-N:	...好像學生要寫一篇關於動物的文章.我請他們先上網尋找有關動物的資料,這次他們寫得很好.	... Like pupils had to write a composition about animals. I told them to search the internet for information about animals and they did the composition very well this time.
R:	還有其他的分享嗎?	Any other sharing?
C-N:	孩子可以透過收看中文電視節目和電影來學習中文,去聽新聞和中文歌曲來學習中文,和通過網上節目來學習.	Children can self-learn Chinese by watching HK TV programmes and films, listening to news and Chinese songs, and learning Chinese from on-line programmes.

## Appendix VII

### Classroom Observation Sheet

Class level: Grade 8

Teacher: C-N

<p><b>1. Teaching objectives:</b></p> <p>透過小組討論和 presentation 去讓學生學習唐詩- 春曉 - 的內容, 帶出春天的自然景色, 鳥聲, 雨聲, 風聲</p>	<p><b>2. Teaching contents:</b></p> <p>五言絕句</p> <p>唐詩一首: 春曉 (孟浩然)</p>
<p><b>3. Teacher teaching:</b></p> <p><b>Teaching materials</b> Felt pens (3 colours), 4 big poster paper</p> <p><b>Questioning</b></p> <p><b>Teaching activities</b> 學生約18人, 分成4組, 小組討論, 組內分工, 繪圖/present to the class</p>	<p><b>4. Blackboard Display:</b> 春曉 孟浩然</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <p>春曉 - 春天的早晨</p> <p>曉 - 天亮</p> <p>處處 - 到處</p> <p>眠 - 睡 </p> <p>不覺 - 不知不覺</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%; text-align: right;">  <p>花</p>  <p>啼鳥- 鳥叫</p> </div> </div>
<p><b>5. Teacher-pupil interaction:</b></p> <p>老師按時到各小組觀察學生工作情況, 提供協助, 解釋詞語, 作出鼓勵等.</p>	
<p><b>6. Pupils-pupil interaction/ pupils' work in class</b></p> <p>學生在小組討論, 分工, 交流意見, 在poster paper 繪出他們心目中該唐詩的內容大意. 學生之間有合作精神</p>	
<p><b>7. Others</b></p> <p>老師親切</p> <p>課堂氣氛良好, 常有笑聲</p>	<p><b>8. Homework:</b></p> <p>Copy the poem once Ex. p.86-87</p>