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**Understanding the Patterns of Language Use  
of Chinese Children in a  
Montreal Community School**

**by**  
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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial  
fulfilment for the degree of Master in Second Language Education

**McGill University**  
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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the patterns of language use among a selected group of Chinese students in a Chinese Heritage Language school in urban Montreal, Quebec. Observation and interview are used as tools for the inquiry. Language socialization and social identity theories provide a framework for the data interpretation. Classroom interactions are examined in terms of the patterns of language use between teachers and students, students to teachers, and students to students. The emergent findings in the study suggest that teachers use mainly Chinese when addressing students and students use mainly Chinese when addressing their teachers. However, the patterns change when students are addressing each other. French and English are preferred in their peer to peer social interactions. As 'Chinese language' is a broad term, covering several different regionalects and dialects, it is taken into consideration that the students' home language may be very different from the standard language, Mandarin, which is taught at the school. In addition, the age of arrival to Canada, the desire for peer recognition and identification with the mainstream culture, and the forces of socialization as factors which affect the children's language use and their maintenance of their mother tongue are examined. Finally, the concept of **speech community**, a sociolinguistic concept, is applied to the discussion of how the patterns of those Chinese children's language use are shaped and may be interpreted.

## Résumé

Cette étude examine les modèles linguistiques employés par un groupe d'étudiants chinois dans une école de langue chinoise dans la région du centre urbain de Montréal au Québec. Les outils d'enquêtes utilisés sont l'observation et des entrevues. La socialisation par le langage et l'identité sociale fournissent un cadre d'interprétation à l'information recueillie. Les échanges entre étudiants et professeurs et étudiants entre eux sont étudiés aux fins d'une analyse des modèles linguistiques utilisés. Les résultats qui se dégagent de cette analyse suggèrent que les professeurs s'adressent aux étudiants principalement en chinois et que ces derniers aussi se servent de cette langue quand ils s'adressent aux professeurs. Toutefois, cette pratique change quand les étudiants se parlent entre eux. Ils préfèrent alors avoir recours au français ou à l'anglais pour communiquer avec leurs pairs. Comme «le chinois» regroupe plusieurs dialectes et parlers régionaux (regionalectes), on a pris en considération que le langage dont se sert l'étudiant dans son milieu familial pourrait être différent du langage standard, le mandarin, qui est la langue d'apprentissage à l'école. De plus, l'âge de leur arrivée au Canada, la volonté d'appartenance et d'intégration aux autres groupes d'enfants et à la culture prédominante ainsi que les forces de socialisation sont des facteurs qui influencent l'utilisation que ces enfants font de leur langue maternelle. En conclusion, la notion de **communauté linguistique**, incluse dans cette discussion, fournit une optique sociolinguistique et explique comment les modèles linguistiques adoptés par ces enfants sont formés et peuvent être interprétés.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

有的时候很难讲汉语，因为有好多中文词我都不知道。有时候我跟我爸爸和妈妈说话时也要用法语词...我喜欢看法语书，因为书里的故事和我们现在在这儿过的日子有关。比方说，有的东西很可笑，但是用中文说出来，就不好玩儿了。

*Some times it's hard to speak Chinese, because there are many words I don't know in Chinese. Even when talking to my Mom and Dad, I have to use some French sometimes...I like to read French books, it's more related to the kind of things I hear and do in school and with my friends. If there is something very funny, like, you can't say it in Chinese, then it's not funny anymore....*

(Geng Lin, 13 years, a student in the Zhonguo Chinese school, Montreal).

This quotation is an excerpt from my personal interview in Chinese with Geng Lin, one of the Chinese children attending the Zhonguo Chinese school in urban Montreal, Quebec, a Chinese 'Saturday school' in a unilingual French province. She is one of the many children I observed and interviewed, who seem to express themselves better in French or English than in their Chinese mother tongue. Their preference for using their second or third language suggests or confirms that children's language acquisition cannot be isolated from the complex cultural, social, and linguistic environments in which children grow up, live and use language.

### Background for my study

'Chinese language' is a very broad term. Different provinces of China have their different languages, often referred to as regionalects as illustrated in Table 1: Chinese regionalects. These regionalects are not mutually comprehensible. They are very different in terms of pronunciation,

vocabulary, usage and to some extent also with regard to grammar. Each regionalect can be subdivided into several dialects that are mutually understandable.

***Table 1: Chinese Regionalects***

Linguistic Division	Speakers
Northern (Putonghua, Mandarin)	715 million (71.5%)
Jiangsu-Zhejiang (Wu)	85 million (8.5%)
Cantonese (Yue)	50 million (5.0%)
Hunan (Xiang)	48 million (4.8%)
Hakka	37 million (3.7%)
Southern Min	28 million (2.8%)
Jiangxi (Gan)	24 million (2.4%)
Northern Min	13 million (1.3%)

Table 2: 'Chinese' in its Linguistic Contexts shows the three unrelated language families, the related languages or language families, the mutually unintelligible regionalects, and the mutually intelligible dialects. Based partially on my own experience from growing up in China and attending primary school in Shanxi province and secondary school in Beijing, and partially on the comprehensive review by DeFrancis in his book 'The Chinese Language' (1986), the term 'Chinese language' can best be defined as follows: The Sino-Tibetan group of related languages contains Chinese, Tibetan, Tai and others. The Chinese family of languages has several mutually unintelligible regionalects, most important (i.e., spoken by most native speakers) are Putonghua or Mandarin (Beijing), Wu (Shanghai), and Yue or Cantonese (Guangzhou and Hong Kong). Less important (i.e., spoken by less than 5% of the population) are Hunan (Xiang), Hakka, Southern

Min, Jiangxi (Gan) and Northern Min. Each of the regionalects has several mutually intelligible dialects, e.g. Mandarin has Beijing dialect and Tianjing dialect.

*Table 2: 'Chinese' in its Linguistic Contexts*

UNRELATED LANGUAGE FAMILIES	RELATED LANGUAGES OR LANGUAGE FAMILIES	MUTUALLY UNINTELLIGIBLE REGIONALECTS	MUTUALLY INTELLIGIBLE DIALECTS
SINO-TIBETAN	CHINESE	PUTONGHUA (MANDARIN)	BEIJING NANJING OTHERS
		WU	SHANGHAI SUZHOU OTHERS
		YUE	CANTON TAISHAN OTHERS
		XIANG	CHANGSHA SHUANGFENG OTHERS
		HAKKA	MEISHAN WUHUA OTHERS
		GAN	NANCHANG JAYU OTHERS
		SOUTHERN MIN	AMOY TAIWAN OTHERS
		NORTHERN MIN	FUZHOU SHOUNING OTHERS
	TIBETAN TAI OTHERS		
Altaic	Japanese Korean Mongolian Uighur Others		
Mon-Khmer	Khmer Vietnamese Others		

In oral language, there is much variation in language use within China. However, there has been a single method for writing Chinese, and a common literary and cultural history. A socio-linguistic tradition has emerged that refers to the eight main varieties of speech in China as 'dialects'. These dialects are in fact as different from each other (mainly in pronunciation and vocabulary) as Danish or Dutch is from German or English. The 'dialects' of the south-east are linguistically the furthest apart. The mutual unintelligibility of the varieties is the main ground for some linguists to refer to them as separate 'languages'. Each variety consists of a large number of dialects. Many of these may themselves be referred to as 'languages' – they are all ruled governed systems but not necessarily mutually intelligible. For example, a person from north China would not understand a person from Shanghai and he in turn would not understand a native speaker of Cantonese. However, a person from Hong Kong would be able to understand people from Guangzhou, at least if they speak clearly.

The following examples demonstrate how different it is to say 'She is from Shanghai' in three major regionalects, Mandarin, Wu, and Cantonese, although in writing there would be no difference at all: 她是上海人。

[tʰɑ/ʃɪ/ ʃʌŋʰɑɪ/ ʒən]

Ta shi shanghai ren (Mandarin, Beijing dialect)

/She /to be/Shanghai/person/

[ɪ/ zɪ/zʌŋæ/nɪn]

Yi zi sangei nin (Wu, dialect from Yang-zi river area)

/She/to be/Shanghai/person/

[xui/ hɔj/ ɕiŋhɔj/ ɪn]

Kui haoi xionghaoi yin (Cantonese, dialect from Guangzhou)

/She/to be/Shanghai/person/

In Mandarin 'ta' meaning 'she' is pronounced [tə], whereas Wu 'yi' is pronounced [ɿ] and Cantonese 'kui' is pronounced [kʷi]. The three words 'ta', 'yi' and 'kui' are all written with the same character, they all mean 'she', but they are, of course, three different words.

Learning 'Chinese' in a general sense means to learn Mandarin or, as it is called in China, Putonghua which simply means 'the common language'. Mandarin was chosen as a standard language for the whole of China and widely promulgated under the name Putonghua after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (mainland China) in 1949. In Taiwan, it is called 'gouyu' or 'national speech'; in the West, it is generally referred to as 'Mandarin'. It embodies the pronunciation of the Beijing dialect, the grammar of the Mandarin dialects and the vocabulary of colloquial Chinese literature. In 1956, it became the medium of instruction in all schools. Mandarin is the official language used by the government in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Singapore. Mandarin is also one of the six authorised languages of the United Nations (the other five being English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic). Although spoken Chinese language is quite varied from one region to another, the written form is not. Nevertheless, learning Chinese is quite different from learning Romance, Germanic or Slavonic languages such as French, Danish and Russian. As Chinese writing is based on pictogrammes, the written language does not provide the learner with more than very little phonetic information. Many Chinese speakers and teachers believe that all characters must be learned by heart. It requires extensive memorization and drudgery to build literacy. The 'teach words' approach to learning Chinese has a long history and influences present teaching practices in schools in China and in Chinese heritage language schools in countries like Canada.

For many children from the Zhonguo school, learning Mandarin can be similar to learning another foreign language. Thus, I observed that it is not always enjoyable for children to



go to Chinese school on Saturdays, especially when this school for some children is synonymous with many tests and huge amounts of homework. In addition, they have to sacrifice every Saturday to go to the school while their public school peers can enjoy a full weekend and even play soccer or baseball, go swimming, and so on. However, not all children feel the same way towards attending this Saturday school. Four of my interviewees did find it enjoyable to go to the Zhonguo school, because - from their perspective - it would be boring for them to stay alone at home. In the school they can at least meet some friends. As Ma Yao-Yao, 13 years, states: *"I like coming here on Saturdays, 'cause I can see my friends here and we go to the drawing lessons together. That's fun"*. This comment indicates or highlights that children perceive school as a social experience.

There are, however, conflicts between the Chinese homes and the mainstream cultures in many respects, from table manners to religion. Often these conflicts have a negative effect on the maintenance of the children's mother tongue. A cultural mismatch between home and the public school, especially when the children's cultural background is rejected by the school as irrelevant or unsuitable, may prevent some immigrant children from achieving academic success. Immigration, bilingualism and biculturalism are thrust upon these children whether they want it or not.

Nevertheless, many Chinese children are sent to Heritage Language schools like Zhonguo by their parents who want them to retain contact with their cultural roots. They expect that their children know at least basic Chinese, i.e., to be able to speak with native people, understand Chinese movies or TV news, and to read Chinese newspapers. Other parents perceive the educational system in Canada as not being as 'serious' as the Chinese system because of less homework and what they perceive as less structured or what some parents call 'a vague way' of

teaching. They often compare their relatives' children to their own, worry about whether their children will learn enough to make a success of themselves in the future. In China, most schools are product-oriented in their pedagogy. Students are required to memorise many facts instead of being taught creative thinking and skills suitable for problem solving. It is my experience that competition for getting into a better primary school, into a key secondary school and, in particular, into a university is so severe that most children rarely have any time to play. Chinese parents in Montreal hope that by sending their children to a Chinese school they will at least 'learn something'. What that 'something' is, remains to be defined by the parents.

From the children's perspective, however, socialisation is a fundamental feature of schooling, regardless of their language. During this socialisation process, language shift and language loss often becomes inevitable. The loss of a first language (L1) while encountering a second language (L2) is a common phenomenon among immigrant children. It has been studied by many researchers (Cummins 1981, 1986; Fillmore 1991, 1996; Saville-Troike 1984; etc.). Chinese children in Montreal face a similar problem of language maintenance and language loss. In fact, many children at the Chinese school have experienced language shifts from Chinese to French or English, to some extent as a consequence of the language laws of Quebec Bill 101 (see page 33). At the Zhonguo school, many then view Chinese as a second language. Language shift occurs to those who arrived in Canada at an early age (before 6 years) when their Chinese is not fully developed. Some of them can only apply their Chinese on a level of simple and basic conversation at home. Others give up using it altogether. Parents have a partial responsibility in whether or not their children maintain Chinese. Some do not use Chinese with their children because they are eager to have them integrate into mainstream society. Some no longer see a reason to pass on their native language to their children. When the HL is perceived as immaterial

to success in society and some other language appears to have greater value, a language shift is inevitable (Peirce, 1994).

Language is a product of socialisation and a tool for further language and cultural learning (Avison & Kunkel, 1991). A common social and play language (lingua franca) is developed among children in order to communicate with each other. In her study of her eight-year-old daughter's acquisition of Icelandic, Susi Long describes how a child acquires social knowledge and language skills as a result of being accepted by a peer group. Chinese immigrant children in Quebec are members of many speech communities, e.g., Zhonguo Chinese school, English or French schools, and the languages of home and school. In school contexts, some children told me that they use French or English as a language to express their emotions and desires; these languages are very different from the Mandarin which they learn in the Zhonguo school where Mandarin is used for formal purpose and not for playing.

For many immigrant children including Chinese children, speaking French or English is not just a way of communicating, but also a way of being recognised by other mainstream children. Their use of the new language shows their desire to be identified with the surrounding society. Fairclough (1992) argues that: *"In any discourse, knowledge, social relations, and social identities are simultaneously being constituted or reconstituted."* (p. 8).

The problems of identity, language maintenance and language shift faced by the Zhonguo school students motivated me to conduct this study. Because I speak Chinese and my daughter, Baijie, attends the school, I had an insider advantage as a researcher. As a parent I also had the opportunity to talk with other parents every Saturday in informal contexts.

## **Rationale and Purpose**

Understanding the ways in which learners use the native and target languages at home and with peers and teachers at school can provide important clues to understanding their language learning processes and their cultural positioning and identity as well as their socialisation and self-perceptions. The fact that many young children lose their mother tongue when immigrating to a new country has drawn much attention from both educators and the general public and raises a host of interesting questions: How is a HL lost? Why is there a language shift? How does L2 acquisition affect L1 maintenance? What is the consequence of adopting a new culture (mainstream culture)? Why is it important to maintain L1? In the case of the children who attend the Zhonguo School, I noticed that in the classroom, they frequently interact peer-to-peer in French or English and not in their mother tongues, be they Mandarin or Cantonese. After school, I observed that social communication is even more likely to be in L2. On a few occasions, I overheard some children code switching between Mandarin and French. This phenomenon of code switching had been noticed also by teachers and parents of children at the Zhonguo school. I discovered that it is the most topic of conversations among parents and teachers. Thus, I decided to look at the patterns of language use among a selected group of the children in Zhonguo school in order to find out why, when, and to what degree they use Chinese, French and English.

My purpose with this study is to explore the relationship between social contexts and L1 maintenance and language shift, and to identify some of the more important factors for immigrant children's academic achievement that policy makers, educators, and parents need to consider. In this case, the patterns of language use among Chinese children in a Montreal community school.

## Research Questions

The research questions that drive my inquiry are the following:

1. What language do Chinese teachers use when addressing the children?
2. What language do the children use when talking to their Chinese teachers?
3. What language do the children use when conversing with their peers?
4. Why, from their perspectives, do the children prefer one language over the other in different contexts?

## Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the background, rationale and purpose of my inquiry into the patterns of language use of a group of children attending a Chinese community school in urban Montreal in the province of Quebec. 'Chinese language' covers eight different mutually unintelligible regionalects. Most of the Zhonguo students speak other regionalects than Mandarin at home. For them to come to the Zhonguo school to learn Mandarin is learning a second language. Many of them came to Canada at an early age or even were born here; they acquired French or English when they started their '*second socialisation*' at school. French or English become their '*lingua franca*', which they may prefer to use in their social interactions. Learning Chinese language at the Zhonguo school during Saturdays may for some children result in conflict with what they do or perceive that they are expected to do at public school and the Zhonguo school. The children's cultural identities are constantly under reconstruction. I use identity theory and language socialisation theory as framework for this study. In the next chapter I will outline these theories and discuss different recent studies concerning this issue.

## Chapter 2

### Language Socialisation Related Studies

我在学校说中国话时, 觉得很特别, 可是如果我说法语的话, 那我就和别人样.  
*When I speak Chinese at [public] school I feel different, but when I speak French, I am like everybody else.*

(Geng Lin, 13, personal interview.)

My study is concerned with a selected group of Chinese children's language and socialisation in a Saturday heritage language school. In this chapter I present the theoretical framework and the relevant research in the domains of language socialisation and culture identity.

The interrelationship among language, culture and identity is a key issue in recent theory and research in second language learning. The patterns of children's language socialisation and language use have attracted increasing attention from researchers (Crago, 1992, 1993; Heath, 1983; Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin, 1990; Maguire, 1997) for the last two decades.

#### Language Socialisation and Acculturation

An important process of children's socialisation is through language - its nature, use and implications - for it is through language and symbols that they acquire culturally relevant knowledge of values, behaviours and beliefs. Schieffelin & Ochs (1986) define language

socialisation as *"socialisation through language and socialisation to use language"* (p.2). The complex process of becoming a competent member of a society is realised to a large extent through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across socially defined situations (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Language socialisation is a process of how *"children and other novices in society acquire tacit knowledge of principles of social order and systems of beliefs through exposure to and participation in language-mediated interaction"* (Ochs, 1986, p.2). Language in use is a major tool for conveying sociocultural knowledge and a powerful medium of socialisation. Children acquire a world view as they acquire a language. It is through learning language that children learn their culture, which in turn teaches them how to use their language appropriately in their society (Genesee, 1995).

Au (1993) has defined culture as the beliefs, values and ways of acting that mark membership of a specific group. Au also points out that this view of culture entails a number of characteristics: culture is learned through the interactions of members of a group; it is shared, as a way of thinking, acting and behaving by group members; it is an adaptation, in the sense that it adapts to specific political and economic conditions; and it is continually changing.

School and classrooms can be understood as cultures in which *"individuals come together for the purpose of schooling to construct situated definitions of teacher, student, knowledge, values, and so on"* (Cairney & Ruge, 1997 p. 18). Thus, *"the culture of the classroom can be seen as a dynamic system of values, beliefs, and standards, developed through understandings which the teacher and students have come to share"* (Au, 1993, p. 9).

Recognising classrooms as cultures entails acknowledging that learning involves the communicative processes through which knowledge and values are constructed. In order to

understand how communication is constructed in classrooms, researchers should take into consideration a range of influences both inside and outside the group, for example, family, community, peer group, and educational system (Cairney & Ruge, 1997). Classroom interaction cannot be analysed in isolation without attention to contexts in which children learn and live.

Teachers' beliefs, knowledge, experiences and cultural backgrounds influence how they use language in their classrooms. What they bring to their classrooms has an impact on how they teach and what they teach (Johnson, 1995). Students' language use is both shaped by and shapes the patterns of teachers' language use as they are constantly informing teachers what they have understood and learned and vice versa. Thus, the patterns of language use in classrooms are a form of socialisation for it includes when, how, what and to whom to speak appropriately in various contexts, issues that Joshua Fishman raised years ago. Children develop their social competence to recognise/interpret what social activity/event is taking place and to act in an appropriate way. They need to have the social and cultural competence to define the context specific events through their language and non-verbal actions. Language is not a simple response to social activity, but a social activity itself such as in teasing, negotiating, insulting and so on. Language development is both a form of socialisation and a form of cultural practice. For many immigrant children the acquisition of a second language implies also the acquisition of a second culture. Long sees socialisation, the process of learning norms, behaviours and values in a culture other than one's own as a process of acculturation (Long, 1997). Minority children face a formidable task of determining who they are from a cultural and social perspective. For many of them, schools and institutions become a secondary form of socialisation where the operational system of the first language might conflict with the acquisition of the second language (Crago, 1992; Crago et al., 1993; Toohey, 1996).



Crago and Crago et al. (1992, 1993 and 1994 ) report several studies about Inuit children's language socialisation. These studies focused on patterns of language socialisation and communicative interactions in Inuit families. Crago and her colleagues investigated how children in various groups develop their cultural memberships as they learn and use language with the people in their lives. The emergent findings indicated that there is a significant link between the process of language socialisation at home and second language teaching at school. The incongruity of the discourse features of Inuit language with the discourse in classrooms taught by non-Inuit second language teachers raised several issues pertinent to the learnability and the teachability of the second languages for native populations in northern communities in Quebec.

School is a secondary form of socialisation. For a child of school age, it is vitally important to gain entry into a group of peers (Long, 1997). Through interactions with others, children develop social knowledge and become a part of a peer culture identifiable by commonly understood activities, routines, behaviours, values and concerns. Children are most likely to acculturate successfully if they enjoy opportunities to be actively involved with native-culture peers. For example, Susi Long (1997) studied her daughter's acquisition of Icelandic through peer interactions. She concluded that educational programmes should be *"designed to focus on the development of social relationships and to provide opportunities for students to explore subject matter through socially based means"* (p. 31). However, the peers' culture becomes more complex for many immigrant children as they are required to learn and maintain the norms, behaviours and routines of their native culture as well as those they encounter in the new cultural settings (Bosher, 1997). The process of acculturation can be critical to their self-esteem, psychological well-being, successful adjustment to a new society, and academic success. This is especially

complex for minority language children in Quebec who are members of more than one speech community.

Language maintenance is as crucial as acculturation for minority children. The history in North America has demonstrated that forced assimilation has been disastrous for many native and aboriginal people (Lucas & Katz, 1994; Auerbach, 1993). Assimilation educational policies (advocated by cultural pluralists) have attempted to do away with cultural and linguistic differences by getting children to abandon their native languages and adopt English as quickly as possible. With respect to the Quebec context, some of my interviewees claim that they are not allowed to use other languages than French in their school. Many school districts are convinced that minority children are best served in 'regular' classrooms despite the diversity of their needs and abilities (Toohey, 1996). Denying students the use of their primary language in school, as mentioned by Lyster (1998) about the French schools in Quebec where the administration tries to diminish the opportunity for the children to use their mother tongue, is to deny the validity of the children's experiences and their identities (Lucas & Katz, 1994). Where these policies have been efficiently carried out in schools, many children have lost their ethnic languages and have been assimilated with mainstream language speakers with consequent psychosocial identity problems later in life (Wright and Taylor, 1995, 1997). As an example, I can mention that in the Asian language institutes at universities in both Europe and North America, one can find many oriental-looking young people who speak only the mainstream language/s; I have myself encountered some young students who claimed that they wanted to find their own identities by enrolling in the Asian language departments to regain their lost mother tongue.

Understanding the power relationship between the HL and mainstream language can provide insight into immigrant children's academic performance (Wright & Taylor 1995, 1997). Listening to the learners' own voice of why they prefer one language over the other can also help us better understand the existing situation (Maguire, 1997; 1998).

### **Language Loss, Language Maintenance, and Bilingualism**

Loss of a primary language as the consequence of encountering a second one can have a detrimental effect on the social and academic abilities of minority children.

Lily Wong Fillmore has reported research on immigrant children's loss of Heritage Language (HL) while acquiring English in the United States (1991). She found that when immigrant children begin learning English *"the patterns of language use change in their homes, and the younger they are when they learn English, the greater the effect"* (p. 341). Most immigrant children have experienced language shifts from HL to mainstream languages (Saville-Troike, 1994; Wright & Taylor, 1997). Children socialised in a multilingual society give up their HL when they realise that their native language is without value in the surrounding society. Teachers and administrative personnel in their immediate surroundings tend to be mainstream language speakers; TV media, books, stories and even advertisement are all in mainstream languages. When they return home from school, they do not 'negotiate' with their parents. This may be because their parents do not understand what they are talking about nor what they have experienced at school. For example, one of the parents in my study complained to me that her child's ability to use Chinese is reduced to the minimum level of communication such as 'qi chuang, chi fan, he shui jiao' (to get up, to eat, and to sleep).

However, encountering a second language does not always result in primary language loss. Bilingual education in Canada such as French immersion has proved a success for many children. Maguire (1997) has also reported case studies of multi-lingual children learning English and French as third or fourth languages. Two girls spoke Persian and Arabic at home, one girl spoke Javanese and Indonesian at home. Through their writing and conversation, it is obvious to see that they master *'negotiating more than one language, community and culture at a given time'* and are capable of *'cultural positioning in different contexts'* (p.55).

Cummins asserts that maintaining and developing one's native language does not interfere with the development of L2 proficiency. There is a linguistic interdependence which enables cognitive/academic and literacy-related skills to transfer across languages (Cummins, 1981). The exposure to grammatical concepts and patterns in the primary language forces the children to make conscious comparisons between their mother tongue and the mainstream language. Much research asserts evidence that native language use and development have psychological (self-esteem) benefits in addition to serving as a practical pedagogical tool for providing access to academic content and knowledge. Using the HL supports and enhances the students' learning, as it indirectly values the students' primary culture (Lucas & Katz, 1994).

## **Social Identity Theory**

In the seventies, Tajfel (1981) was one of the most notable theorists in this domain. He believes that identity is derived from group membership. He defines social identity as *'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership'* (p.69). He

suggests that because individuals' identities are derived from in-group membership, an individual may change his group membership if he is aware of negative evaluations of his social identity by an out-group.

Drawing from Tajfel's theory, Giles and Johnson (1987) in their ethnolinguistic identity theory state that language is a salient marker of group membership and social identity. They suggest that individuals compare their own social group to out-groups in order to make their own favourably distinct and that this positive distinctiveness allows individuals to achieve a positive social identity. If the comparison is negative, one may adopt several strategies to gain a more positive identity by removing the most obvious cues to category membership, such as changing one's name, modifying one's accent and assimilate into a group that the individual or the groups view more positively. If language is a salient marker of group membership, the individual may choose linguistic adaptation, which may result in subtractive bilingualism or even language erosion. Americans forcing assimilation on aboriginal people in the fifties is an example of this issue. However, more recent research (Crago, 1992; Crago et al., 1993) focuses on language socialisation and the role of cultural contexts in the communicative interactions. In her study of Inuit children in Northern Quebec, Crago found that the discourse features of a primary language socialisation in Inuit families is not congruent with the classroom discourses taught by non-Inuit second language teachers.

## **Social Identity, Ethnicity and Language**

The dynamics of inter-group relations involving the social groups of students, parents and teachers play a powerful role in influencing much of what goes on in schools, classrooms and

community at large. Immigrant students frequently experience a complex renegotiation of their social identity in a new country, new society and new school - a process that has profound implications for their attitudes to their own language and the learning of the language of the majority group.

Sociolinguists Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz stated: *'social identity and ethnicity are in large part established and maintained through language'* (1982, p.7). They conducted research in Norway on speech events to examine the relationship between a speaker's choice of linguistic categories such as phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis, and the social situation. They also looked at the code switching between languages to find out in what situation and with whom code switching occurs as *'linguistic alternates within the repertoire serve to symbolise the differing social identities which members may assume'* (Blom & Gumperz, 1972, p.421 - quoted from Hansen and Liu, 1997). The minority group's language is often the in-group 'we code' language, whereas the majority group's language is considered as the out-group 'they code' language (Gumperz, 1982, p.66). Therefore, code switching may signal various group memberships and identities.

Heller (1982) conducted a study on language choice in social interactions in a Quebec brewery to investigate how language was used among workers from different ethnic backgrounds. She maintains that *'language is a symbol of ethnic identity, and language choice is a symbol of ethnic relations as well as a means of communication'* (p.308).

Ethnicity may limit or enhance one's ability to participate in some social situations and networks and may signal a shared ethnic background (Heller, 1982; Goldstein 1995), which is reinforced by a sharing of behaviour, values, language and lifestyles. Goldstein (1995) in her

study of Portuguese immigrant women in an Ontario factory found that power structures influenced the women's acquisition and use of English and their social investment in language learning. In this case, Portuguese was associated with social and economic benefits. It is a reflection on West (1992) identity theory, since identity relates to desire - the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety. Such desires cannot be separated from the distribution of material resources in society. Those who have access to a wide range of resources in a society may also have power and privilege (Peirce 1995).

## **Speech Community in Sociolinguistic Perspective**

Understanding the ways in which learners use the native and target languages with peers and teachers can provide important clues to understanding language (L2) learning processes. Studies (Guthrie and Guthrie, 1985; Allwright & Bailey, 1991) have shown that the language use of students and teachers in the classroom plays a role in facilitating students' acquisition of both social and academic skills.

Recent research on language use patterns is concerned with immersion programmes. Tarone and Swain (1995) reported on the language use in French and Spanish immersion classroom interactions. They found that older immersion students do not use the L2 in the classroom, neither when talking to their teachers nor when talking with each other. Blanco et al (1996) reported, after observing kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classes in a Spanish immersion school in Minnesota, that children tended to use Spanish only in structured, task oriented activities. Heitzman (1993) and Parker et al (1995) reported that their analysis of 51 instances of language use in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes in the same programme showed that Spanish was used

only for task oriented situations but never for social interaction among the children. Tarone and Swain (1995) suggest that an immersion class is a speech community in which diglossia is the norm.

The term *diglossia* was first introduced by Ferguson (1959) as a linguistic term to describe the situation that exists in Arabic speaking countries in which a regional variety of Arabic is learned at home as a first language, but a quite different variety, standard Arabic, is learned at school and used exclusively in formal public situations. Fishman (1971) extended the term diglossia to include any society in which two languages or two versions of a language, usually a high variety and a low variety, exist side by side, but are used under distinct circumstances and for different purposes. Tarone and Swain (1995) view the issue from a socio-linguistic perspective, but not from a cultural perspective. They hypothesise that in immersion classroom interactions, the L2 may function as a superordinate language variety used predominantly for academic topics in conversations with the teacher or for 'public' discourse addressed to the class as a whole. On the other hand, L1 may be used as a vernacular by older children for more private peer-to-peer social interactions.

As I mentioned earlier, the L2 use in social interactions among Chinese immigrant children is a very common phenomenon, which has been noticed and reported informally by parents and teachers. But to my knowledge this phenomenon has never been systematically studied in a Quebec context and, in particular, in the context of a Chinese Saturday school.



## Summary

In this chapter I presented relevant research in language socialisation and social identity.

Language is the most important component of socialisation for it is through language and symbols that children become members of a culture. Culture can be defined as the beliefs, values and ways of acting that mark membership of a specific group. Classrooms can be understood as cultures and are dynamic interactional spaces. Classroom interactions are shaped by what teachers and students bring to the classroom. Teachers' and students' beliefs, experiences and culture backgrounds have great impact on their patterns of language use. Learning language also involves learning a culture's norms and values. Gaining access into a new culture can be problematic for new immigrant children as their primary culture may conflict with their appropriation of the norms and values of a new culture. For some, culture adaptation means dropping their primary language and culture when they perceive that the mainstream culture has greater value. Thus, language loss and language maintenance can be crucial for understanding academic success. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language has different functions. For example, a superordinate language can be used for formal purposes, and lingua franca, a vernacular form, can be used for children's social interactions. In the next chapter, I present the context of this study and outline my data collection procedures.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

Much of the past research into immigrant children's L2 acquisition, identity and self-esteem has been based on quantitative studies that have included administration of tests. The assumption was that 'the psychological reality of the test' reflected and represented what children feel and know. Product orientation was the norm. Little recognition was given to learning process, individual variables and social contexts where participants live. Ethnographic studies allow researchers to look at the participants from a **contextualist and emic perspective**. McKay & Wong (1996) explain this term as *"a perspective that, unlike a product orientation or process orientation, takes as axiomatic the need to examine interconnections of discourse and power in the language learning setting."* (p. 8).

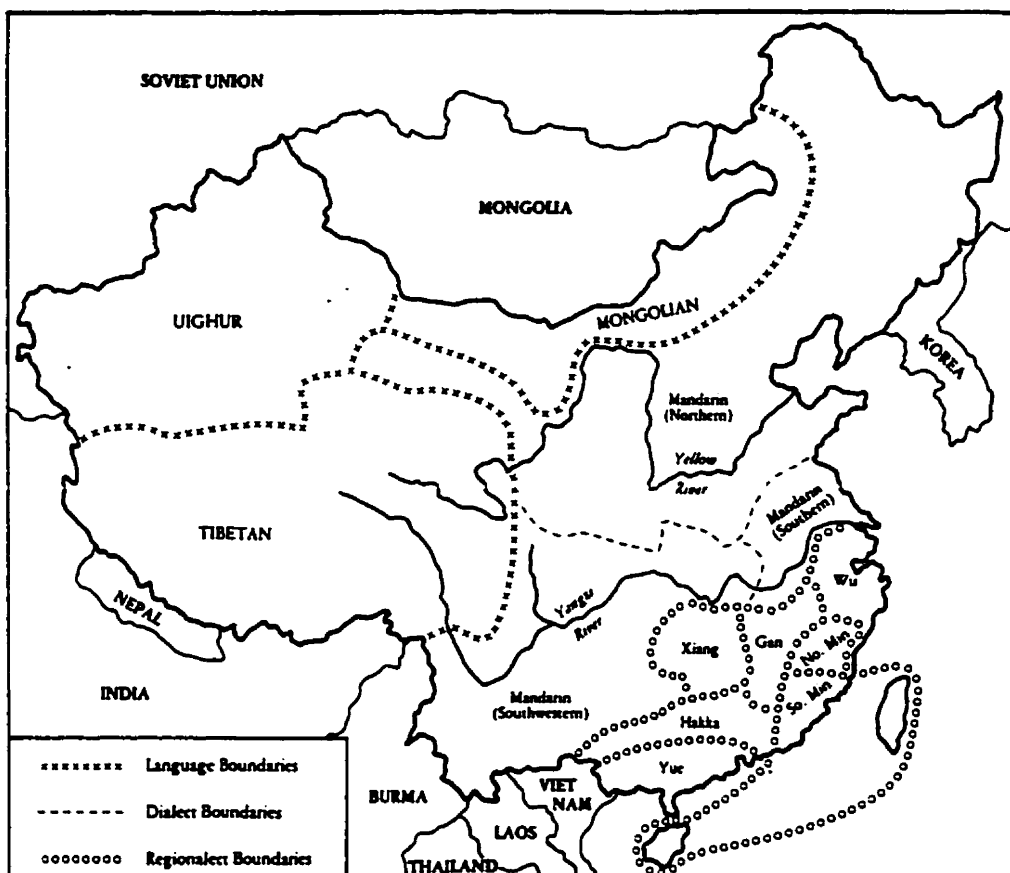
### Setting

My interest in language shift and language maintenance stems from my daughter Baijie's patterns of language use at home and with her school friends. I, like most other Chinese parents, hope that my daughter can be fluent and literate in Chinese and at the same time fluent and literate also in other languages (Danish, English, and French). I, too, like all the other parents, sacrifice every Saturday to drive her to Chinese School and wait for her in the school lobby to complete her classes.

The setting for the study is the Saturday Chinese school which my daughter Baijie attends, the Zhonguo school in Montreal. This private school was founded in 1994. It is independent and autonomous and receives no government grants. It has no formal connection to the school boards of Quebec and has obtained no public support. The purpose was to build a school where Pinyin (Chinese phonetic script) would be applied to the teaching of simplified Chinese. Pinyin is also referred as phonetic spelling which was adopted in 1958 as a writing system using the letters of the Roman alphabet. The previously used system of transliteration by Wade-Giles was deemed inappropriate. This is partly due to political reasons as it was devised by foreigners, and partly due to linguistic considerations as it was based on the Cantonese pronunciation. The main functions of Pinyin are to facilitate the spread of *Putonghua* and the learning of Chinese characters. *Hanyu pinyin* (Chinese alphabet) is now in widespread use; it has the 26 roman letters, plus ü and four diacritical intonations. For example,

	中国	北京	广州
Wade-Giles:	Chungkuo	Peking	Canton
Pinyin:	Zhongguó	Beijing	Gǔangzhou

The Zhonguo school rents the building of a major college in Westmount as its location on weekends. It has about five hundred students. It has a predominantly Chinese student population with seventy percent of the students coming from Mainland China, twenty percent from Hong Kong. The remaining ten percent of the students come from Taiwan or are Caucasian Canadians. More than 50 percent of the students speak some regionalect other than Mandarin. There are thirty-one teachers and one treasurer employed at the moment. All the three school committee members, including the principal, are also teachers at the school.



**Linguistic Geography of China**

See discussion in Chapter 3, especially pages 64–66 and Table 2 on page 67.

### ***Figure 1 Linguistic Geography of China***

The students come from all over the greater Montreal area, some from Dorval, some from the West Islands, some from the South Shore, some from Laval, some even from Vermont (USA). Most of them speak one of the Chinese language varieties (regionalelects) at home and attend either French school or English school during the week. The school employs a 'semi-imported' curriculum. Text books are imported from China, those used for teaching mathematics and other subjects are standards textbooks used in all schools in China; those used for teaching Chinese language are special textbooks designed for teaching Chinese to Chinese children living abroad (see Appendix A). The teaching methodology is mainly traditional Chinese, i.e. teacher centred. Courses are offered in Chinese standard language (Mandarin or Putonghua), mathematics,

Chinese chess, drawing/painting, dance and music. For newcomers, courses in English and French are also available. The school timetable is presented in Figure 2.

蒙特利尔佳华学校课程安排		
1998.9.5 - 1999.5.15 (每星期六)		
课 程 名 称 和 课 号	时	间
汉语拼音(B01),小学语文1(Y01) 美术二,三班(Z21,31),美术设计基础(Z61) 少儿舞蹈(Z41)	9:45-11:35	
围棋一班(X01)	11:00-12:00	
围棋二班(X02)	10:00-11:30	
汉语特殊班1-3 (T01-3),小学语文2-6 (Y02-6) 中学数学2,3 (S22,S23) 幼儿汉语a (K01a) 儿童绘画1(Z01)	12:45-14:35	
小学语文9(Y09),中学语文(Y23) 小学数学1,3,4 (S01-6),中学数学1(S21) 英文1-6 (E01-6) 幼儿汉语b(K01b) 儿童绘画2(Z02),美术一班(Z11)	14:45-16:35	
成人语文1-3 (YA1-3)	13:00-15:00	
少儿合唱团(X40)	11:30-12:30	
注 意: 根据招生情况, 所列课程 和时间安排可能有变.		
联系电话: 767-0033, 989-7158		

Figure 2. School timetable (see Appendix B for English translation)

All teaching is in Mandarin. Most of the teachers have been professional teachers in China where training in pedagogy is usually not given except to those who study exclusively to teach in primary schools. Students at higher levels, such as universities, do not receive pedagogical courses, nor do they get any practice teaching children. Students receive only subject training and pedagogical training is limited to informal on-the-job training by older colleagues. Even so, some of the teachers have adopted North American teaching methodology after they came to Canada and continued teaching professionally here. Mostly, the teachers of Zhonguo school are highly qualified and very proficient in their respective subjects.

### Gaining Access to the Site

Being a friend of the principal and knowing many of the teachers and parents personally, I had no problems obtaining permission to videotape and collect my data. I also got permission from the principal to use the real name of the school and from the students I interviewed to use their real names. Even so, **all names mentioned in this thesis are fictitious**. Since the Zhonguo school is totally an independent and autonomous non-profit community school, the principal saw some merit in my using the real name of the school as this might help get some attention from authorities and public funds in terms of support both financially and politically.

开始是很难的。我们没有什么钱。我们给有些有关部门写了信，但从来没得到答复。现在是所有的费用都由家长来出。付给老师的工资并不高，可是加上还要付房租和各种其他的杂费。我是希望中国学校可以给社会各个阶层做个榜样。我认为教授孩子们母语很重要，不论是对于加强家庭之间的关系也好，还是对于了解和传扬祖宗的文化也好，都很重要。

*We had a difficult start. We had no money. We wrote letters to the authorities asking for*

*support but they never replied. Now all is paid by the parents. The salaries paid to the teachers are low but we have to pay rental and cleaning and electricity etc. I hope the Zhonguo school can be an example for this society and for the authorities. In my view, it is important for children to be taught their mother tongue - it is so very important for strengthening family ties and also for understanding one's own cultural background. I don't think a child can develop socially and academically without knowing its own language. But the authorities don't understand this. There have been many problems running the school, mainly lack of money. My dream is that schools such as ours can one day be free of all charges and offered to all immigrant children for free.*

(Telephone interview with Ms. Peng, principal, 18 June 1998)

The principal's viewpoints on the connection between language, culture and academic success reflect the findings of many researchers such as Au (1993), Cummins (1984, 1989), and Maguire (1997) about the importance of children's maintenance of their mother tongue.

## **Data Collection**

This study was conducted on selected Saturdays from February to October 1998. In order to get a clear picture of what language the children use at school, in the class, during recess and at home, we used the following data collecting methods: 1) Video tape recording of five Chinese language arts classes. 2) Audio and video tape recording of interviews with thirteen of the students, chosen at random, and all five teachers. 3) Questionnaires to 31 parents, 23 were received back (74%). 4) Informal conversations with students and parents. Each component of the data collection strategies will be provided in detail in this chapter and the inventory of data collection is presented in table 3.

***Table 3: Inventory of Data Collection***

DATA	TYPE OF DATA	TIME OF DATA COLLECTION
Video recording	Observations of five Chinese language art classrooms	7 February 1998 from 12.45 to 13.30. 21 February 1998 from 12.45 to 13.30. 28 February 1998 from 12.45 to 14.35 7 March 1998 from 13.30 to 14.35 4 April 1998 from 12.45 to 13.30
Audio + video recording	Interviews with 13 students and five teachers	7, 21, 28 February; 7, 14 March; and 4 April 1998 7, 21, 28 February; 7 March ; and 4 April 1998
Questionnaires	31 parents	3 October 1998
Informal Conversations	The principal (telephone) Circa 20 parents	18 June 1998 All school Saturdays from February to October 1998 except September.

We observed five Chinese language classes for a total of 270 minutes during five Saturdays from February to April 1998. This was followed by interviews with teachers, students and parents, questionnaires to parents, and informal conversations with teachers, students and parents until end October 1998. I observed five classes, including the kindergarten class, grade two, grade S (special class), grade five and grade six. The grades in this Chinese school are not necessarily consistent with those of regular schools as they are defined according to the students' proficiency in reading and writing Chinese. A small-scale test of proficiency is normally given for new comers (see Appendix C). Nevertheless, the age differences are not so pronounced. If both a six-year old and nine-year-old are beginners, they may be assigned the same class. But there is a limit to the age differences accepted by the administration. For example, an eleven-year-old student

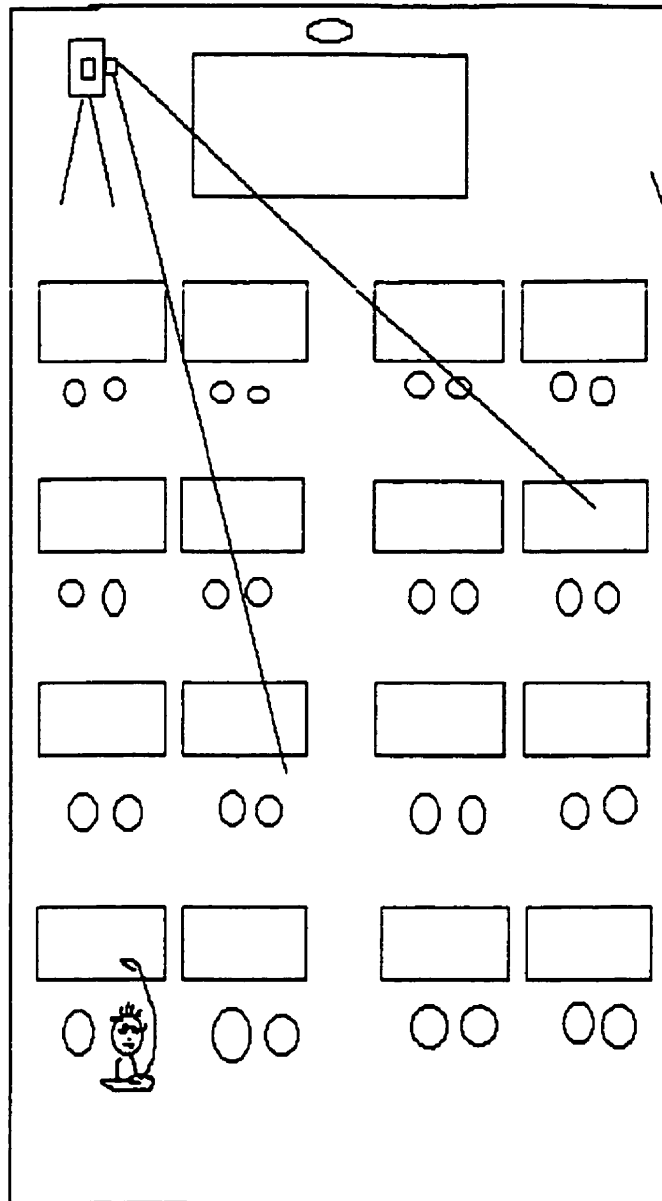


will not be placed together with a six-year-old. Generally, the school attempts to avoid significant age differences within the same class as this is considered detrimental to the self-esteem and motivation of the older students and also because it is believed that cognitive maturity is a better indicator for the ability to learn Chinese than pre-existing proficiency in the language.

For this study, I used participant observations, questionnaires and interviews as tools of inquiry. I took field notes in the classroom and used videotaping for classroom social interaction and audio taping for structured conversations and took notes during face-to-face interviews. Data were transcribed and analysed for emergent patterns.

#### Video tape recording

For video tape recording I used a Sony Handicam 8 mm video camera on a tripod. The video camera was set up in one of the corners in the front of the classroom. Because of the angle, it was not possible to focus on every one in the classroom. I sat in the back of the classroom, took field notes so that I could triangulate these data with the video recording data (see appendix D). At the beginning of each lesson, students were very aware of the camera and also of me. I noticed that they kept glancing at me; some students tried to hide themselves behind each other to avoid the camera; others would make faces and giggle at each other. But a few minutes into the lesson their attention would usually shift to the teacher and their tasks. The children were very enthusiastic and volunteered to be my interviewees. They were eager to tell me what language they speak, how they were doing in school, and they also wanted to ask me why I had to know about it.



***Figure 3: Position of the camera next to the teacher's desk and the researcher in the bottom left corner of the classroom.***

### Classroom situations

The classrooms are all arranged in the traditional auditorium setting with the teacher in front and students sitting in rows and lines. The arrangement reflects the teachers' commitment to Chinese theoretical beliefs about teacher-student relationship. Traditional Chinese educators believe that teachers should be the one to impart knowledge to students and students are not encouraged to question what they are taught or to challenge the teacher in any way. Whatever the teacher says is correct. The classrooms are teacher-centred and very teacher-controlled.

The one exception is the kindergarten classroom, which is not arranged in the same way as the other classes. Children are sitting in a half circle with the teacher in the middle. This makes it easier for the children and teacher to move around.

### Participants

The participants in this study are the students from the five selected classes (grades 6, 5, 2, Kindergarten, and the Special class) and their five teachers. In addition, I audio-taped individual interviews with six students.

#### Grade 6.

Grade 6 teacher Ms Gu is in her mid 50's. She came to Canada in 1994. She has been teaching English at a Beijing high school for some twenty years before she joined the Zhonguo school. She was originally trained as a Russian language teacher. When China and Russia broke their relationship, she changed her profession to teaching English. She had attended some English courses during her teaching period but never obtained a diploma in the English language. Through the years of teaching, she states that she became very experienced in analysing grammatical

mistakes of Chinese students. Thus, she had published four teachers' handbooks in helping teachers design a lesson and one students' guidebook for passing Entrance Examinations in English. She states that *"teaching is my entire life, and seeing how my students make progress is my greatest joy"*.

The students in her class are from 12 to 15 years of age. Some of her students came to Canada after they had begun school in China (i.e., they were older than six years when they emigrated), so they have learned some Chinese before they joined the Zhonguo school. Their pre-existent knowledge of Chinese makes them more proficient than their classmates who were born in Canada. They are able to write essays, stories and compose cohesive narratives using more than one thousand characters. Some of her students' written works have been published in the local Chinese newspaper.

Ms Gu had planned a trial examination paper for the midterm examination for this lesson. Three papers of exercises were delivered to the students. She guided the students in filling in missing words, fixed expressions, and making sentences.

#### Grade 5.

The teacher of grade 5 class is the principal of the school, Ms Peng who was one of the founders of the school. She is about forty years of age. She was educated in China as a language teacher and later obtained her M.Ed. at McGill University in the Department of Administration and Policy Studies at the Faculty of Education. I am a personal friend of hers. She is bilingual Mandarin and Wu (Shanghai dialect), and in addition she speaks fluent English.

There are 31 students in the class. Most of them are enrolled in French schools. In Quebec, the access to English schools is restricted by law. In Bill 101 - *"La charte de la langue française"*

- it is stated that the law '*restreint l'accès à l'école anglaise aux seuls enfants dont l'un des parents a reçu son enseignement primaire en anglais au Québec*'. The number of Zhonguo students attending English schools is consequently very limited and this is most likely the reason that I observed so very few utterances in English.

The activity of the observed lesson was to review some homework exercises. Ms Peng normally asks individual volunteers to answer questions. At times when there are too many hands up or the class is too quiet, she calls upon individual students to reply.

Grade 2.

Grade 2 teacher Ms Lee is in her late twenties. She has been in Canada for only two years. She was very shy and nervous when I told her that I would like to videotape her class. However, after I had explained the purpose of my research to her and promised her that nobody apart from myself would ever see the recording, she seemed at ease with the camera. She is a very strict teacher who believes in stern discipline. Her major at a Beijing normal college was mathematics. As the Zhonguo school needs mostly Chinese language arts teachers, she is hired as a language teacher, not as a math teacher. Her mother tongue is Mandarin and she speaks some English.

This classroom seemed rather crowded to me. There are about 30 -35 students in this class. As usual, I positioned myself in the back of the classroom. Consequently, I could not avoid attracting everybody's attention. I noticed immediately three boys in one of the corners near me who were talking loud and pushing each other. One of them was asked to recite the previous text and write a few characters on the blackboard so as to start the class activity. I observed that he did not appear to be able to do any of these tasks. He was teased by the other two boys and started

to punch them back. Ms Lee was angry and ordered him to stand in front of the class. After this, the class became quiet.

A new lesson began. The students were to learn how to read and write new characters. Ms Lee demonstrated every word a few times by asking the students to recognise the familiar radicals and to pronounce the new words according to their pinyin spelling. Then she read the new text aloud, asked the whole class to repeat after her and asked a few individuals to read the text.

Grade S.

Ms Wang, the teacher of grade S, is from Sichuan. She is in her early 40's. She graduated from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music and was a music teacher in a high school before her arrival in Canada in 1993. Although she has been in Canada for more than five years, her English is still not fluent. She speaks Mandarin and also the Sichuan regional dialect. She and her husband are very active members of the Chinese community in Montreal. He is a musician by profession and they are both enthusiastically involved in the musical events of the Chinese community. She gives private piano lessons during the week and teaches music and Chinese language at the Zhonguo School on Saturdays.

Her class is called "special class" because the students' backgrounds differ very much. There are twenty-one students in this class. The majority of them come from Cantonese families, four of them from mixed marriage families (one Chinese and one non-Chinese parent), and five are Canadian Caucasian. In addition to their different cultural backgrounds, the students are also of very different ages, varying from eight to fourteen years. The reason for placing these students in the same class in spite of their age differences is simply that they all have very limited knowledge of Chinese. Most have (had) very little exposure to the Chinese language (Mandarin)

and culture as their social environments differ from that of the Mandarin speaking community. Most of the Cantonese speaking children are from families who immigrated to Canada many years ago. These children have adequate oral communicative skills in Cantonese, but their Chinese literacy skills are almost non-existent. Because their parents cannot read and write in Chinese, they have (had) little or no contact with Chinese literacy.

Tina, age fourteen, is one of the students from a mixed marriage family; she told me that her mother thought that since she is half Chinese, she should know something about her Chinese culture. By attending a Chinese school, she will at least have some exposure to the Chinese language. Nadine, age thirteen, a Canadian student, says that she comes to Zhonguo because she loves Chinese culture, and her best friend from public school is also studying at Zhonguo. Joan, age twelve, told me that her father loves travelling and it will be nice for her to be able to speak Chinese when one day they go to China.

This special class is remarkable for its social organisation. I have observed this class for three consecutive weekends and during six lessons. I stayed also with the students during recess. They group themselves by age and race. Tina is always with her friend Janny, occasionally they would come to Joan for a question. Mixed marriage students tend to socialise more with white students. Younger Cantonese students seemed always to gather together.

#### Grade K.

According to parents, Ms. Huang, the teacher of grade K, is the best teacher in the School. Her reputation was confirmed by my observations. She is in her mid-thirties and a very charming and beautiful lady. She graduated from Beijing Normal University with a major in child psychology. She speaks Mandarin with a rather pronounced Shanghai accent and she also speaks some

English. She did not permit me to videotape my interview with her, so I have only written notes to support my recollections of our formal conversation.

Ms Huang started the class by introducing me to the twelve children in the class as a 'big friend' who would like to know how clever the children in this school are. Their ages are around 4 to 6 years. Most were born in Canada.

Then she began with a lullaby containing riddles and asked the children about them by showing many pictures of the corresponding characters. In the first riddle, the children found the word easily by pointing to 'apple'. She then continued to ask them where apples grow and when some one answered 'on trees', she asked the class how the character for a tree looks. Then fruits were reviewed. She continued by saying to the children: *"There are some new friends who would like very much to meet you "* and *"I know that you all like them"*. She introduced the new friends = new words by showing pictures and making animal sounds. Her class is very enjoyable and entertaining. She speaks exclusively Chinese in the class.

### ***General Characteristics of Students***

The proficiency levels in Chinese are different from student to student in every class. In many cases there are significant age differences between students. Some students speak Cantonese at home, some speak other regionalects such as Wu and Hakka, some speak French and some code switch among languages. The opportunities to practise Mandarin are few. The target language environments are limited to Zhonguo School, although some students participate in the relatively few community activities and the Chinese social circles of the parents. Motivation and investment are not considerable since most students do not come to Zhonguo School on their own volition. Often parents are the forces behind their attendance. Many lack adequate motivation and



investment. Many (not all) feel little incentive to study Chinese. They have to sacrifice every Saturday in order to attend the Zhonguo School. In comparison with their public school peers, their homework is almost doubled. And furthermore, they often miss some birthday parties or some other activities, which are arranged by their school friends on Saturdays. Last but not least, the acquisition of Chinese literacy skills demands more time, practise, and memorisation than any other subject a school child is required to learn.

Competition can be a positive force that drives some children to become successful. The students in the Zhonguo school are not facing any competition, nor are they under any pressure. Their performance at the Zhonguo school does not affect their grading in both the Zhonguo and public school and has no academic consequences. The only possible incentive to work hard may be the approval of their parents. This, however, is very important to most Chinese children.

### Interviews

I conducted interviews with students and teachers both formally and informally during the period from February to October 1998. After each observation (video taping), I chose one or two of the students from the class, asked them questions such as the following: what public school they go to, what language they speak with their friends in the public school and what language they use in the Chinese school. I also interviewed each teacher about what they thought about their students' proficiency level of Chinese and what problems they feel their students have to overcome when studying at the Zhonguo school. I also interviewed (audiotape) six students whom I met in the school cafeteria during the breaks. I paid particular attention to a group of four girls - Ma Yaoyao, Ju Yang, Geng Lin and Cui Zhuzi - while they were doing homework together. To my surprise, I

found that they spoke Mandarin together. The two boys I interviewed were David and Even who were born in Canada and whose parents' mother tongues are Hu and Mandarin..

*Table 4: Audio taped interviewees*

NAME	AGE	SCHOOL	GRADE	HOME LANGUAGE
Cui Zhuzi	11	public French	B	Xiang (Sichuan dialect)
Geng Lin	13	private French	A	Mandarin (Beijing)
Ju Yang	13	private French	A	Wu (Shanghai)
Ma Yaoyao	13	public English	A	Mandarin (Beijing)
David	11	public French	A	Wu (Shanghai)
Kevin	11	public English	B	Mandarin (Beijing)

(In Quebec schools, students are graded according to their all-over academical proficiency. The grades are A: 'dépasse les habiletés visées', B: 'démontre les habiletés visées', C: 'commence à démontrer les habiletés visées, and D: 'a encore à démontrer les habiletés visées').

### Questionnaires

A questionnaire was distributed among parents (see Appendix E). I observed that about one third of the parents of the students would usually sit in the cafeteria, waiting for their children to finish school. Others would go shopping during the school time. Some of them do car pooling with other

other parents. Those who wait for their children either read a book, newspaper or chat with other parents. I used this opportunity to distribute my questionnaires. I explained that my concerns were about their children's language-use patterns at home, with their siblings and friends, their perception of speaking Chinese, and their perspective on improving HL schools such as the Zhonguo school. All parents volunteered to fill out the questionnaires.

### Informal Conversations

I became friends with many parents. It gave us great pleasure to talk about our children.

Conversations covered mostly with whom they play together, whether there are any other Chinese children in the same school, and what kind of lunch box they prepare for their children. Some were proud to tell how well their children were doing at school; others complained about the Canadian schools that they are not teaching their children enough, at least when compared with education in China. But the most popular topic of those conversations related to their concerns about their children maintaining their mother tongue. Some claim that no matter how hard they try to speak only Chinese at home, their children still speak English or French. As one of the parents complained: *"I never have a chance to talk to my son, he is so busy with his home work. He won't let me help him, 'cause it's in French. Now I am just a servant for him. He turns to me only when he is hungry. Talking about interacting in Chinese? No way. I only hope that he can learn some Chinese here".*

In the analysis of data, I will use their valuable opinions as evidence for my research argument that an immigrant child's language socialisation in the heritage culture is likely to be in conflict with the socialisation which takes place simultaneously in the mainstream culture in which the child grows up.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I have presented the context of this study, the Zhonguo school in urban Montreal, described the five teachers and their classes which I had selected for my study, and outlined the methodology I used: participant observations, videotaping of classes, interviews with students and teachers and questionnaires to the parents. In the following chapters I present the results of my analysis of the interactions between teachers and students.

## Chapter 4

### Classroom Language Use

我有一个圆脸蛋,  
有红有绿真好看,  
吃在嘴里香又甜,  
小朋友们都喜欢,  
猜猜我的名字看?

*I have a round round face,  
with red and green colours.  
It taste sweet in the mouth,  
and kids like me very much,  
Can you guess who I am?*

(A riddle lullaby told by Ms Huang in her kindergarten class, February 1998)

Ms Huang's riddle song reflects her love for children. Her way of opening the class attracts the children's attention and makes the class entertaining and learning interesting. She is a good representative example of the many devoted teachers at Zhonguo school who work hard to make the acquisition of Chinese language a memorable and happy experience for children. From the Chinese interactions between teachers and students, whether or not this is supported by use of English, it is apparent how much these teachers want to pass on the knowledge of Chinese language and the passion for Chinese culture to their students. The teachers love what they are doing and they are proud of being part of that culture. Throughout the lessons I observed, the Chinese culture is highlighted. Thus, the children's cultural identity is reaffirmed in the school because the teachers frequently and explicitly point to its salience, importance and value in their teaching.

The Zhonguo students show the complexity of their social identities through the patterns of their language use. A constant conflict between the mainstream culture and Chinese culture is revealed in their language. For these students, Zhonguo is a community where they learn something extra such as Chinese language, Chinese culture, chess and etc. which their peers in the public schools do not learn. In addition, the Zhonguo school is also a place where they can meet children of their own skin colour and where they learn the Chinese ways of behaviour and acquire Chinese beliefs and values.

### **Patterns of Classroom Communication**

In a language classroom, the language is the usual medium through which teachers teach and students demonstrate what they have learned. How teachers and students use language to communicate in a language classroom mediates between teaching, learning, and students' language acquisition. Meaningful classroom communication is essential for successful learning to occur. The patterns of classroom communication established and maintained by teachers, as the British researcher Douglas Barnes (1976) puts forth, determines not only the ways in which students use language but also what students ultimately learn. Barnes maintains that teachers and students interpret classroom activities through their own frames of reference. Moreover, since these frames of reference tend to be different, teachers and students are likely to have different interpretations of the activities in which they participate. Therefore, Barnes believes that classroom learning is a negotiation between teachers' meanings and students' understandings - a give and take between teachers and students as they construct shared understandings through face-to-face communication. He argues that classroom learning is based primarily on the relationship between what students know and what teachers offer them in classrooms. So the

patterns of communication in classrooms represent a crucial aspect in the learning process in that they constrain or enhance, to a greater or lesser degree, students' participation in learning and in the construction of knowledge.

Patterns of classroom communication illustrate not only what actually occurs in a language classroom, but also what teachers and students bring to the language classroom, and how that shapes what takes place there. The interrelationship between teachers' and students' interactions and their pre-existing knowledge defines both the teachers and their students as to who they are, what they know, and how they act and interact, why they do so and also shapes how they will communicate with one another. Thus, the patterns of classroom communication can also be understood as shared understandings of how, when, where, why and with whom language is to be used. These patterns are not permanent. They are continually constructed, reconstructed and negotiated by teachers as they attempt to control the patterns of classroom communication and by students as they interpret and respond to what their teachers say, do and expect. Teachers' control of the patterns of communication is shaped, in part, by their frames of reference, by aspects of their professional and practical knowledge which in turn shape how they interpret and understand their own and their students' communicative behaviour within a classroom context. In addition, students' perceptions of the patterns of communication are shaped by their frames of reference; the norms and expectations they hold for their own and their teachers' communicative behaviour based on their prior experiences as students, observers of life and teachers' discursive practices. In this Chapter, I present the language use by the teachers and students at the Zhonguo school. I will examine the factors which shape the teachers' and students' language use.

## General Emerging Patterns

*The world is of the opinion that those who know Chinese characters are wise and worthy, whereas those who do not know characters are simple and stupid.*

Zheng Qiao (1104-1162) in Tong Zhi [Encyclopedic annals].

### Teachers

#### Teachers' training, their knowledge and beliefs

What teachers bring to their classrooms shapes what they do and how they use language. This includes their prior experiences as students, their knowledge of the subjects, other personal and professional knowledge about teaching, learning, classroom contexts, and their theoretical beliefs.

Of the six teachers I observed, none has been trained as a Chinese language arts teacher in China. The knowledge they bring to the classroom is from their prior experiences as students in China and their teaching experiences from teaching other subject matter. However, their general knowledge about China such as the culture and history of the country brings a valuable addition to their teaching at the Zhonguo school.

All six teachers received their higher education in China. I assume that their knowledge about China is satisfactory as they were brought up and went to school in China. Their knowledge is not limited to the subject matter. The environment they grew up in contributes in an important way to what they bring into the classroom. I use excerpts from my transcriptions to illustrate how their knowledge shapes the content of their lessons, for example, the following excerpt is from Ms Huang's kindergarten class.

The teaching context for this excerpt is learning new Chinese characters (how to write new words – a core activity in all teaching of Chinese). Ms Huang shows a picture of a panda,



then the character for 'panda'; after that she approaches the individual students to make sure that they remember what the characters for 'panda' looks like.

*Excerpt 1 – 'panda'*

(All discourse in the excerpts has been transcribed from the videotapes, on occasion supported by field notes. The name of the speaker is stated in English, immediately followed by the original utterance in the language in which it was said. When the utterance is in Chinese, I have given a translation into English directly under the Chinese texts. In case of code switching within a Chinese text, the English word is printed in bold typeface).

Ms Huang: 这是什么字啊?  
What is this?

Sall: 熊猫!  
Panda!

Min: 老师，我有一个在家里。  
Teacher, I have one at home.

Liang: 我也有。  
I also have one [a few more students raise their hands]

Ms Huang: 对了，是熊猫，大家真聪明。现在你们也要知道它是怎么写的。  
Right, how clever you are! Now you should also know how it is written in character [shows the picture of the characters to students]

Ms Huang: 记住了吗？第一个字是小熊的熊，第二个字是猫咪的猫。  
Remember? The first word is a bear and the second is a cat.  
[She approaches everyone individually showing the characters and asks them to read.]

Ms Huang: 有谁见过真的熊猫啊？  
Has anyone seen a real panda?

Liang: 我。  
I have.

Ms Huang: 在哪儿？  
Where?

Liang: 嗯。。。 The zoo  
er..[tries to think of the Chinese word for zoo]  
The zoo.

Ms Huang: 啊，是中国的动物园吗？  
Ah, the zoo, is it a zoo in China?

Liang: [nods his head in an uncertain manner]

Ms Huang: 熊猫是我们中国特有的动物，它住在四川，有没有人知道四川在哪？  
Panda is a unique animal that lives only in China. It habits in Sichuan.  
Does anyone know where Sichuan is?

Sall: [no answer]

Ms Huang: 我们中国很大很大，有个地方叫北京，有个地方叫上海，  
还有个地方叫四川。四川有很多很多山，  
山上长竹子树，熊猫就最爱吃这种树上长的叶子。  
Our China is very very big. She has a place called Beijing, a place called  
Shanghai and also a place called Sichuan. In Sichuan there are many high  
mountains. On the mountains there grow bamboo trees. And you know  
what pandas like eating most - the leaves on these trees.

...

Teaching language cannot be separated from teaching culture and history. But how teachers embed the culture and historical events in their teaching is very different. Ms Huang tells the students about Chinese geography. It is natural for her to bring the subject up and she states that *'it's also important to let the kids know about their country as they begin to acquire knowledge'* (interview Ms Hung in Feb, 1998). Some students know only that they are from China without knowing specifically where in China. For example, I interviewed a student, Tian, from Ms Lee's class. Since I wanted to find out if he uses a regionalect or Mandarin at home, I asked him *'where are you from in China?'* The answer was: *'I am from China!'* When I pointed out that I am aware of the fact that he is from China, but that I would like to know what province or city

he was from, he became confused and did not answer until I explained the question to him three times. I am sad in a way that children like Tian seem to have no concept of China as a country. Perhaps it is because they are not mature enough; perhaps they have never heard of China as a nation but only as a remote place somewhere.

### Teachers' Theoretical Beliefs

The theoretical beliefs that teachers hold about learning and teaching influence to a high degree their expectations, their instructional judgements and decisions. Pajares (1992) suggests that beliefs are formed early in life through a process of cultural transmission and that they help shape the ways in which we construct an understanding of ourselves and the world. Teachers' theoretical beliefs act as filters which have an effect on their thinking and information processing. This filter effect also plays a critical role in shaping a person's perceptions and behaviour. Teachers' theoretical beliefs do not operate in isolation, but are interrelated with other beliefs. These beliefs are connected with their early experiences as students. When teachers enter a classroom, they bring with them an accumulation of prior experiences that together with their upbringing and cultural background form their attitudes and *Weltanschauung* (world-view or philosophy of life). Beliefs can usually become stable and hard to change.

In China, competition is a way of life. Students compete to get into one of the better primary schools; they compete to get into a key point secondary school (Lin, 1995; Gasper, 1989) and they compete for admission to higher education and universities. Competition occurs ubiquitously but is particularly prominent in the examination system, which has played an important role in Chinese society throughout history. The Chinese examination practice dates back to the Sui Dynasty (c. 400 AD) when it was introduced by Emperor himself. It developed

further over the centuries and lasted until it was abolished in 1905, shortly before the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). For fourteen hundred years, state examinations were relied upon to select Mandarins (senior officials) for all important and influential positions within state and government. Scholars who went through years of study and successfully passed a series of examinations at increasingly advanced levels were given titles, power, prestige, and land. Since the competitive examinations determined social rank, wealth and occupational achievement, the examination system came to exert a profound influence on the attitude of most Chinese people towards education, in particular higher education, and their valuing of academical degrees. In contemporary China this tradition of improving social status through education and degrees is still alive and virtually all Chinese teachers have a firm belief that doing well at examinations is the only gate to success in this life. In Canada, at Zhonguo school, this belief is still held by most of Chinese parents and teachers. For example, the following excerpt illustrates how a teacher's belief in examinations shapes her manner of teaching.

Ms Gu is preparing her grade 6 class for the midterm examination. She has made a trial examination paper for her students to try out. In order to guide and help the students, she writes down every single word on the blackboard and goes through one exercise after another. The following excerpt illustrates how she prepares her students for the forthcoming examination.

***Excerpt 2 – 'examination'***

Ms Gu: 来晚的人下课再补上，我帮你们补。找几个人帮。因为我们下次考  
就从这里挑，所以一定要抄好。Do you understand?  
从这里挑那么十句吧，有的是听写，有的是填空，都在这里面。  
Those who came late make the previous exercise during the break. Okay? I'll help  
you to make them, I will find some other students to help you catch up. It is  
important that you follow me now, because all the examination items will be

chosen from some of exercises we are doing today. You must copy them down, **do you understand?** There are probably ten sentences from here, some of them will be dictation, some of them will be fill in blanks.

Tu:           全部这些字?  
All the words.

Ms Gu :       就是带横线的字。  
All the words with underlining.

Ms Gu emphasised the importance of copying down the answers of these exercises. She told the class that the examination would be chosen from the exercises while indicating that doing well on examinations is essential for them. She guided the students to find the right answer for the questions. Though some students complained that it went too fast for them, she did not try to slow down. Instead she suggested to them: *'to make them during the break'*. She is communicating the message to them that nothing is more important than examination scores. Since the examinations have been determining one's fate in China for hundreds of years, her beliefs in the traditional system may be too strong to be changed even now when she lives in Canada. This educational examination system has a tremendous impact on her beliefs, as it has on my beliefs (some times) and on that of hundreds of thousands of Chinese. For them (us), education is the same as an examination and a test for giving right answers. Emperor Chen Tong of Sung Dynasty (reigned 998-1022) has summed up the **real meaning of education** in the most succinct and convincing way. In his 'Exhortation to Learning' there are these four lines of verse (quoted from Hu, 1984, p.15):

*In books there are houses of gold;  
In books there are thousands of bushels of grain;  
In books horses and carriages abound;  
In books can be found women with complexions of jade*

In Chinese, the word 'learning' - dushu- means 'to read books' or rather 'to remember by heart what the book contains'. This is the traditional Chinese way of acquiring knowledge. Here the mentioning of 'books' as repositories of great riches indicates that learning or academic education is the path to success in life. Superficially the four items mentioned have to do with shelter, food, transportation, and marriage, but no Chinese could miss the metaphorical reference to position, wealth, power and sex.

Not all the teachers' beliefs have negative effect. Chinese are raised to love their culture and country. Patriotism is promoted and emphasised through the teaching of subjects such as Chinese history, music, and geography, etc. The belief in loyalty to one's country, filial piety and respect for one's ancestors shapes the life styles and world-view of Chinese people (Geertz, 1983). Let us look at the next excerpt – from Ms Peng's grade five class.

### ***Excerpt 3 – 'ancestor'***

Xiao-Qing: 我的中文一塌糊涂。  
My Chinese is horrible.

Ms Peng: 越不练就越糟糕。  
It won't get better if you don't practice.

...

想想看,如果你回中国去,你的表兄亲戚都以为你是中国人,可是你不会说中国话,大街上的字一个也不认识,更别提写个东西了。可你看上去却是个中国人。难不难为情,人家会笑话你的。看看这孩子把老祖宗都忘了。

Think about going back to China, your cousins and relatives think that you are Chinese, but you can't speak their language, recognise any of the signs on the street, not to mention writing anything, ah, however, you look like Chinese. What do you say? Don't you think people will laugh at you, ah? Look at this child, he has forgotten his ancestors, his roots, what a shame!

(Chinese people are very aware of the reverence they owe to their ancestors and some are quite superstitious also, expecting their ancestors to take care of them whenever help is needed).

Although first addressing Xiao-Qing, Ms Peng quickly changed her direction and spoke to all students in the class. Her immediate reaction to Xiao-Qing's statement – *'My Chinese is horrible'* – was to tell her to practice. This reflects her frequently stated belief that only practice and repetition are efficient means to learn a language. But she soon turned to another aspect of having 'a horrible Chinese', that it would only make people in China laugh and provoke contempt. She emphasised this point by making a patriotic speech. Her beliefs about being a proud Chinese acted as a powerful filter through which she made it clear that it is important for a Chinese to learn the Chinese language.

#### Structure of communication pattern.

Teachers control what goes on in their classrooms through the ways in which they use language. Mehan (1979) argues that typically, they retain this control through a question-answer mode of interaction which can be characterised as following a pattern of acts: an initiation act (teacher), a response act (student), and an evaluation act (teacher). This pattern of acts has become to be characterized as the I-R-E structure (Mehan 1979).

In general teaching in Zhonguo school would appear to be mainly in the I-R-E format. My videotape data indicate that teacher talk corresponds to more than 60 % of the total number of utterances in their classroom discourse. Teachers also take conversational initiative and often limit the students' responses to simple utterances within a restricted range of grammatical and syntactical constructions. Excerpt 4 is an example of this type of interaction mode. It is taken from videotape of Grade 2, where Ms Lee was teaching a new character 'da' ( to beat).

*Excerpt 4 – 'how to beat'*

- Ms Lee: 下面我们学打扫教室的打, 也就是打人的打。  
Next, we are going to learn how to write the 打(beat) in 打扫教室 (sweep and clean the classroom), which is also the same 打 as in 打人 (beat person).
- Ding: 打枪  
Fire gun.
- Ms Lee: 打人的打, 不管是打人还是打枪, 要用什么呀?  
打 in 打人, no matter whether it is beating a person or firing a gun, you will have to use something, what?
- Ding: 枪。  
Gun.
- Ms Lee: 用嘴吗?  
Would you use mouth?
- Ssome: 用...  
use...
- Ms Lee: 用手。跟手有关的字都有什么旁啊?  
You'd use your hand.  
What is the radical in characters related to hand?
- Ssome: [no answer]
- Xiang: 与手有关?  
Related to hand?
- Ms Lee: 提手旁。  
It's hand radical.
- Xiang: 提手旁。  
Hand radical [together with Lee].
- Ms Lee: 提手旁, 怎么写, 大家还记得这叫什么吗? 提  
Hand radical, how to write it? Everybody, can you remember this [demonstrates hand radical on the blackboard]? What is it called?
- Sall: 提手旁。  
Hand radical.



Ms Lee: 打人的打，打扫教室的打，因为都根手有关，所以都有//手字旁//。  
'beat' in beat a person, 'beat' in clean up the classroom, both are related to hand,  
that's why they contain the radical of //hand radical//

Sall: //手字旁//  
//hand radical// [// - // for simultaneously]

In this excerpt, the teacher's initiation consists of an *assertion* "'打' in 打人, no matter whether it is beating a person or firing a gun, you will have to use something, what?" It indicates to the students that they are to name the right word 'hand'. Ding's response, 'gun', is an incorrect answer. It is not evaluated by Ms Lee; instead it is followed by a second initiation with another question, "would you use your mouth?". The student seems to miss the cue and instead merely responds '...use...' Ms Lee continues the evaluation with the correct answer, "you'd use your hand." Then she starts another initiation by asking a question: "What is the radical in characters related to hand?" She seems to be cueing the indication to her students that she would like to hear the word 'hand radical'. This exchange between Ms Lee and students continues until everybody in the classroom simultaneously says 'hand radical'. Ms Lee ends her evaluation by saying, "'beat' in beat a person, 'beat' in wipe and clean the classroom, both are related to hand, that's why they contain the radical of //hand radical//".

As Excerpt 4 illustrates, the I-R-E pattern allows teachers to maintain control over the structure of classroom communication. When Ding gives the incorrect answer, Ms Lee initiates another question, indicating to other students that Ding was wrong and they need to give the correct response. Ms Lee maintains strict discipline by barring students' attempts to self-initiate discourse. The question arises why Ms Lee uses I-R-E North-American style of classroom

discourse. Perhaps the explanation is that this style is universal in teacher talk and discourse rather than culture specific.

### Teacher utterances

When teachers address students, they either exclusively speak Chinese, as in the case of Ms Peng, Ms Lee and Ms Huang, or, as in the case of Ms Wang and Ms Gu, use some English to support their utterances in Chinese which remain their predominant language. More than 60% of their utterances are in Chinese. Their language use controls the pattern of communication (I-R-E), the contents of the lesson and influences also the students' language use in the classrooms.

*Preformulation* and *reformulation* (MacLure & French, 1980) are the strategies used by teachers to indicate to students what they want. *Preformulation* used by the teachers serves to orientate the students to the context of the question and provides some indication of how it should be answered. For example, in Excerpt 4, Ms Lee was trying to introduce the new word 'da'. She wanted the students to recognize the radical of hand. Thus, she asked a preformulated question:

"*'da' in da ren, no matter whether it is beating a person or firing a gun, you will have to use something, what?*" This question is a cue for the students to give the correct answer 'use hand'.

However, most of students miss the cue and say almost whatever comes to their minds. Since the students' responses were not what Ms Lee expected, she uses another strategy, *reformulation*, which involves rephrasing the question so that it is less complex and more specific. Her reformulated question, "*Would you use your mouth [to beat]?*" is an attempt to help her students produce the correct answer that she wants.

### The teachers' English language use:

When I analysed the transcript of the video of grade 5 and grade 6, I discovered that most of Ms Wang and Ms Gu's utterances in English are restricted to instructions. They do not use English for in-depth explanation of subject contents, but only for instructional purposes. The following excerpt illustrates their use of code switching in English for instructions. The context is that Ms Wang was separating the students into two groups and each group should take a role in reading the dialogue from text.

#### *Excerpt 5 – 'first, second'*

Ms Wang: 好，再来一遍。你们first，你们second, after change, Okay? One, two. Good, Lets try again. You first, You second, after change. Okay? One, two.

Group 1: 你读几年级?  
Which grade are you in?

Group 2: 我读五年级。  
I am in grade 5.

Group 1: 你会说汉语吗?  
Can you speak Chinese?

Group 2: 会。  
yes.

.....

I mentioned earlier in chapter 3 that Ms Wang's English is rather rudimentary in spite of the fact that she has been in Canada for more than four years. She does not appear to have sufficient proficiency in English to teach academic content in English. The few words that make up her English vocabulary all stem from the basic English lessons she received as a student in China. I recognise several of her phrases such as the formulaic chunks 'read after me', 'look at the

blackboard' and 'one, two, begin' as typical English teacher language in standard use. I even used those phrases myself when I was a teacher in China and so did my English teacher when I was a student. Why she insists on using English words here and there is difficult to tell. Obviously, she is aware that the students can understand 'one', 'two', 'begin' just as well in Chinese as in English. It may be that she believes that repeating an instruction in English emphasizes its content, makes it stand out a little, as using bold font in writing a text. When I asked her about this, she simply said: " *some students don't understand Chinese enough to follow instructions in Chinese only.*" To some extent this maybe the case, but the few English words she uses can just as easily be understood by the students in Chinese. Perhaps she thinks it is a way to control the classroom events, to get attention, to underline a command as 'Look here!'

The teachers never appear to use French as an instructional language, actually I never observed them utter one single word in French. I believe the obvious reason is that none of them speaks French or speaks only little French. Most Chinese do not consider knowledge of French language as useful in an international context. Even Chinese immigrants in Quebec prefer to study English and become fluent and proficient in that language rather than in French, because they tend to see English as a gateway to the rest of the world whereas they tend to see French as a limitation to a part of this country. Most of the teachers and parents I interviewed considered Quebecois French of little value outside of the province of Quebec. Although French is spoken in several countries around the world, only knowledge of "standard French" is likely to prove useful in these countries. The Quebecois vernacular is so different from continental French that it is incomprehensible to most people who are learning French as a second language. In addition, the foreign languages that are usually taught in China are English, Japanese and German, and some

years ago also Russian. Only language students at college or university level have the opportunity to study French.

## **Students**

When a student enters a classroom, he enters into a communication community where the norms of participation usually are established by teachers through the pattern of their language use. The students' perception of the norms is based on how they comprehend and respond to what the teachers say and do, what they believe the teachers expect of them, and what they believe is or is not considered appropriate interactional behaviour in classrooms. In other words, the students' previous school experiences, their apprenticeship knowledge, their cultural backgrounds, their frames of reference and perhaps even other aspects determine the way in which they participate in the events of communication in the classrooms.

Pintrich et al. (1986) argue that students who actively engage in the creation of what happens in the classrooms, and affect the classrooms events, are themselves affected by these events. Although teachers can control the classroom events and the contents of the lesson, the success of a classroom event will mainly depend on how students perceive and respond to it, i.e., how the students cooperate with the teachers. An accurate interpretation of the teachers' expectation and intention is an important element in the process of learning. For students to interpret the teacher correctly, they need to recognise the structure of the classroom events. Philips (1972; p.377) defined this structure as "participant structure" which means the rights and obligations of participation with respect to who can talk and when in any social event. For instance, teachers can interact with one student, some students and the whole class in a particular way. Thus, they set up rules for the rights and obligations of participation in the interactions.

Erickson (1982) argues that in order to successfully participate in the classroom events, students need to perceive both the subject matter and social participation structures. The structures of subject matter and social participation are interrelated with each other. The first, *subject matter*, represents the developmental sequences in the *academic task*. The latter, *social participation*, represents the allocation of interactional rights and obligations of participants. These include turns of speaking, pair of turns, I-R-E patterns and '*listening behaviour in relation to speaking behaviour*' (Johnson, 1995). Teachers and students have to constantly make new judgements about these structures in the classroom events. Students' perceptions of the patterns of classroom communication represent an essential component for understanding how students comprehend, participate in, and learn from classroom events. This can be gleaned from observation of what they do, or what they think they do.

The context for the following excerpt from the videotape was Ms Huang's class. She was attempting to teach the children how to write numbers in Chinese.

***Excerpt 6 – 'to count'***

- Ms Huang: 这是几?  
What number is this? [demonstrates with fingers]
- Hong: 三, 四。  
Three, four.
- Lan: 四。  
Four.
- Ms Huang: : 这是几?  
What number is this?
- Sall: 一, 二, 三...  
One, two, tree...  
[Hunag writes numbers on the backboard in Chinese]

- Hong: 老师，我知道二加三等于四。  
Teacher, I know two plus three equals four [*sic*!].
- Ms Huang: 很好。  
Very good.
- Lan: 我也会做算术。  
I can also do math.
- Ms Huang: 好聪明！  
Very clever!
- Ms Huang: 现在，汽车有几个轮子啊？  
Now, how many wheels are there in a car? [shows picture]
- Sall: 四个。  
Four.
- Ms Huang: 一，二...  
One, two...
- Sall: 三  
three...
- Ms Huang: 我不数了。因为亮亮站起来了。你要坐下我才数。你是不是很喜欢这个，我下课以后给你看，好吗？  
I am not going to count any more, because Liangliang is standing up now. I won't count unless you sit down, [to Liangliang] you like this, don't you? I let you look at it during the break, okay?
- Ti: 我也喜欢。  
I like it, too.
- Ms Huang: 你们都可以看。一，二，三..  
You are all allowed to have a look. Now, one, two, three....

In this context, students are not allowed to generate any content of their own. Ms Huang stops the communication to readjust the class events as Liangliang stands up. Liangliang is unruly, disrupts the order of discipline. This is seen as serious misbehaviour and immediate correction is

necessary. Ms Huang frequently uses promises and threats such as "I'll let you..." and "I won't count unless you sit down" to make the students accept her commands and agree to behave themselves in an orderly fashion.

Being born in different places and having had different exposures to the Chinese language and culture can profoundly affect the language proficiency of the Zhonguo students. I sensed that the proficiency level of the students in each class varies widely. I observed that some students have full command of the language and participated actively in the lessons, whereas other students were limited to simple sentence structures and rarely initiated interaction and mostly preferred to respond to teachers' questions in monosyllabic phrases only. Noticeable are the significant differences between the age levels of the students in each class.

#### Language of address

The language taught at Zhonguo school is used almost exclusively for formal speech. When students address their teachers, they use mainly Mandarin. Not surprisingly in Ms Peng's, Ms Huang's and Ms Lee's classes, out of all student-teacher utterances, more than 95% are in Chinese. These three teachers have already set up rules, implicitly and explicitly, of not speaking any other language than Chinese. For example on one occasion I observed right after her class began, Ms.Peng stressed that everyone should use Chinese only - in her class as well as in the school at large. She does not only emphasize the importance of using Chinese in class, but she also explains why it is so important to know the language. She explains to the students:

*It [the children's Chinese] won't get better if you don't practice. Think about going back to China, your cousins and relatives think that you are Chinese, but you can't speak their language, recognize any of the signs on the street, not to mention writing anything, ah, however, you look Chinese. What do you say? Don't you think people*



*will laugh at you, ah? Look at this child, he has forgotten his ancestors, his roots, what a shame!*

It was my observation that the students in these three classes tend to use Chinese when answering the teacher's questions and doing class tasks (see examples in individual classes).

Since none of the teachers has assigned group work to any students, I did not observe student-generated learning tasks. Thus, student interaction among themselves is not pronounced in the classrooms. Student-generated topics are not found. Teachers control the communication patterns in the classroom. In general, the utterances of students are less than 40%. Differences in the teachers' control of patterns of communication influence the extent to which students use language during the lessons. I-R-E patterns tend to limit the student's language use to simple sentences and short responses. However, during recess, there is no limitation to their utterances and the students tend to use French and English for their social interactions.

The context of the following excerpt is the hall next to the foot of the escalator. Two boys, Jun and Tian, are playing there during the break. The escalator is going down. There is a school rule that students are not allowed to play on the escalator (see Appendix F, rule No. 1).

***Excerpt 7 – 'the escalator'***

Jun:   Moi... je peux monter.

Tian:  Moi aussi...mais c'est défendu...

Jun:   Je m'en fou. [He climbs up the escalator against the direction].

Jun:   Tu viens...toi...c'est facile...viens

Tian:  Attends...je viens [he, too, climbs the escalator].

Jun chooses to ignore the school regulations. He dares his friend Tian to follow him. For this kind of recess activity, the boys choose a language in which they can easily express both self-promotion – "*Moi...je peux*" and "*Moi aussi...*" and persuasion – "*Tu viens...toi...c'est facile...*". The language is used in an affective way, aimed at manipulating a friend to do what the speaker (Jun) wants him to do and to show self-confidence.

## **Individual Classroom Results**

In order to find out how and why students and teachers use language, I transcribed the videotapes with the help of my field notes (see appendix C) and recollections of my classroom observations. I counted the utterances of children and teachers. I noted the language use and calculated the percentage of each language use by categorising them into the following patterns: language used by teacher to student, by student to teacher, and by students to each other.

In chapter 5, I use the interview data to analyse the children's explanation of language use to find the motivations behind these choices of language use.

### **Grade K – Ms Huang**

Ms Huang is the teacher of this kindergarten class. She started class with reviewing some Chinese characters from last week by showing pictures of those characters. Then she began a new lesson by introducing new words and helping the children memorise them.

**Table 5: Grade K utterances**

	Teacher-student		Student-teacher		Student-student	
Total n = 529	302	57.1% of utterances	209	39.5% of utterances	18	3.4% of utterances
Chinese	300	99.3%	204	97.6%	11	61.1%
English	2	0.7%	5	2.4%	7	38.9%
French	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5 shows the percentage of language used by students and teacher when addressing one another. The total utterances are 529; teacher's utterances are 302, which correspond to 57.1% of the total utterances. The 209 students-teacher utterances correspond to 39.5% of total number of utterances. And student-student utterances take only a small percentage, 3.4%, of total number of utterances. In my discussion of the results, I will illustrate some examples from my transcriptions of data from the videotapes.

This class is a typical reflection of a teacher-directed lesson. As I mentioned earlier, this particular lesson was also organised around a basic question/answer format. Ms Huang consistently used Chinese to address the children in the class; the children's language use varies in different situations. For example, the following excerpt illustrates the ways in which she used language to control the structure and content of this lesson. As I had observed several times before, she paid more instructional attention to the meaning that was communicated and less to the structure of that communication. In this excerpt, Ms Huang has just reviewed two characters 獅子- 'shi zi' (lion).

**Excerpt 8 - 'lion'**

Ms Huang: : 狮子怎么叫啊?  
How does a lion sound?

Ming: [making lion sounds]

Ms Huang: 狮子的头上有什么?  
What is on the lion's head?

Din: 毛  
Hair.

Ms Huang: 狮子的毛很漂亮, 对不对?  
Lion's hair is beautiful, isn't it?

Liang: 漂亮的 漂亮的 tiger 好  
Beautiful, beautiful tiger good.

Ms Huang: tiger好, tiger 是什么呀?  
Tiger is good, what is tiger?

Ssome: 老虎。  
tiger.

Ms Huang: 老虎也很漂亮, 可是我好怕!  
Tiger is also very beautiful, but I am just scared of it!

Liang: **Tiger is eating** [making a eating gesture by exposing his teeth]

Ms Huang: 现在狮子要跑了, 另外一个要来了, 这是什么?  
Now the lion runs away, but another [animal] is coming. What is this?

Sall: 老虎。  
Tiger.

Ms Huang: 我们快点把老虎放回森林里吧, 否则它该咬我们了。跑, 回去吧。  
Let's put the tiger back to the forest as well, otherwise it might bite us. Run, go back.

The structure of her lesson also follows the I-R-E interactional sequence. Ms Huang starts her initiation by asking "*how does a lion sound?*" This indicates to the students that they are to respond by making such a sound. Without evaluating student Ming's response, she goes on to ask a new question. After receiving an answer, she now gives her evaluation together with a new initiation: "*Lion's hair is beautiful, isn't it?*". This dialogue continues following I-R-E sequences or alternative I-R-E structures.

Her understanding of what her students try to tell her and her way of sustaining the use of the language are typical of her control of content in her classroom lessons. Here Ms Huang is more concerned with understanding what Liang is trying to say than with the incorrect grammatical (wrong code and no verb: "*beautiful, beautiful tiger good*") response. She accepts what Liang produces and, in return, provides a correct linguistic construction - "*the tiger is good*". She does not correct Liang's grammatical mistake directly. Instead of her evaluation, she initiates another question to all students - "*what is a tiger*", attempting to have the students produce the correct answer.

#### Teacher-student utterances

The only two English utterances in Ms Huang's discourse to the students that I noted are repetitions such as what student Liang has articulated. When Liang wanted to express his comments on 'tiger', he was unable to remember the word in Chinese.

- Liang:       漂亮的 漂亮的 tiger 好.  
              Beautiful, beautiful tiger good.
- Ms Huang:   tiger好, tiger 是什么呀?  
              Tiger is good, what is tiger (in Chinese)?
- Some:       老虎。  
              tiger.

Here, she switched code, using the English word *'tiger'* as an initiation question indicating to the children that they should give a correct answer in Chinese. And at the same time she used it to check if other children also know how to say *'tiger'* in Chinese. Despite these two observed utterances in English, she seemed to prefer to speak only Chinese, and the remainder of her utterances in my observations of her class was exclusively in Chinese. The following example illustrates how she uses Chinese to introduce new Chinese characters to the children.

***Excerpt 9 - 'dog'***

Ms Huang: 今天我们要学几个新字。它们是你们的好朋友。但是现在它们还不想认识你们，因为你们还没见过它。但你们一旦认识了它们，你们就会喜欢它，它也会喜欢你们的。  
Today, we are going to learn a few new words. They are your very good friends. But right now, they don't want to meet you yet, because you have never met them [in character]. Once you know them, you will like them. They will like you too.  
[looks at children in silence and takes out the first word]

Ms Huang: 坐好。是个动物，很多人都喜欢它，我也喜欢叫起来的声音是这样的。  
Sit nicely. (It) is an animal. Many people like it. I like it, too. The sound it makes is like this [she barks like a dog]

Sall: 狗  
Dog.

Ms Huang: 是这样叫的。  
It makes such sounds [she barks]

Sall: 狗  
Dog.

Ms Huang: 狗字当中有个口。因为狗叫起来时嘴张得很大。看好了，这是什么字？  
Look, there is a mouth in the word of dog, because when it is barking, it opens its mouth very big, like this [she exaggerates her facial expression with her mouth open]. Okay, have a very good look at it, what it is called?

Sall: 狗。  
Dog.

As I have mentioned before in chapter three, Ms Huang has a special way of teaching children. Song, riddle, lullaby, praise and with much encouragement in her classroom, even the most boring content can become an interesting lesson. In my opinion, she is the best qualified teacher at the Zhonguo school, and her way of teaching is quite atypical. She stimulates the imagination of her students, makes them participate actively in the class room activities. She barks as a dog to demonstrate the big mouth needed for such a sound and makes it obvious to the students that the radical of 'mouth' (口) is an important part of the character for 'dog' (狗).

#### Student-teacher utterances

In order to participate appropriately in a classroom event, students need to understand the norms of the class which are established by the teacher. The earlier example I gave about Liang's use of the word 'tiger' in English sets up an example of how Ms Huang establishes her norms.

Her way of initiating the question, "*what is 'tiger' in Chinese?*", gives the class the impression that knowing 'tiger' in Chinese is important. At the same time, she also sends out the message that it is not welcome to speak other languages than Chinese in the classroom. So when the students converse with her, they use Chinese. The next excerpt illustrates how the students learn a content matter as well as how to use measure words correctly. Measure words are used in Chinese much the same way as collective nouns are used in English.

#### ***Excerpt 10 – 'dog 2'***

Ms Huang: 这是什么字?  
What is this word?

Sall: 狗。  
Dog.

- Ms Huang: 记住了，这个狗中有个大口。  
Remember that there is a big mouth [radical] in the middle of the dog.
- Ms Huang: 狗有几条腿？  
How many *tiao* legs does a dog have? [Chinese measure word for dog's leg is *tiao*].
- Kevin: 四个。  
Four *ge* [the general measure word for substantive is *ge*].
- Ms Huang: 不是四个，是四条腿。  
Not four *ge*, but four *tiao* legs.
- Ai: 象汽车一样。  
Like a car.
- Ms Huang: 对！  
Right.
- Ai: 狗有一个尾巴  
Dog has one *ge* tail.
- Ms Huang: 一条尾巴。  
One *tiao* tail.
- Xiao-Ping: 三条腿。  
Three *tiao* legs.
- Ms Huang: 四条腿，三条腿就只好走路了。  
Four *tiao* legs, it cannot walk well with three *tiao* legs.
- Ms Huang: 这是什么字？  
What is this word?
- Sall: 狗。  
Dog.
- Ms Huang: 狗有几条腿？  
How many *tiao* legs does a dog have?
- Sall: 四条。  
Four *tiao*.
- Ms Huang: 几条尾巴？  
How many *tiao* tails does it have?



- Ai: 一个  
//One *ge*.//
- Ssome: 一条。  
//One *tiao*.//
- Ms Huang: 几条?  
How many *tiao*? [emphasises *tiao*]
- Sall: 一条。  
One *tiao*.
- Ms Huang: 几只眼?  
How many *zhi* eyes? [emphasises *zhi* which is the measure word for eye]
- Sfew: 两条眼  
Two *tiao* eyes.
- Ms Huang: 几只眼?  
How many *zhi* eyes?
- Sfew: 两个。  
Two *ge*.
- 黄 : 几只?  
Huang: How many *zhi*? [emphasises *zhi*]
- Sall: 两只。  
Two *zhi*.

In this excerpt, students demonstrate their ability in using and understanding Chinese. Despite the I-R-E pattern, which allows them to use only two or three words sentences, they seemed, from my observation, to be very concentrated on their learning. From their involvement and active participation in the classroom events, they did not seem to me to disapprove of the teacher's control. They received the teaching in a meaningful and authentic context. Some of the children did not know that dogs have four legs; from their conversations with Ms Huang, it seems that most of them did not know all the measure words in Chinese. It is in such a meaningful teaching environment that learning will occur.

### Student-student utterances

The Student-student utterances in this class correspond to a very small percentage, only 3.4% of the total number of utterances made in this class. Most of the time, the students are occupied by the class activities, which Ms Huang orchestrates. They are actively engaged in the events around learning, which gives them little time to talk among themselves. Further, Ms Huang does not assign any pair or group activities. So the situations that would allow them to speak among themselves in the classroom are very rare. The few student-student utterances in Chinese are related to class events such as shown in the following excerpt. When Ms Huang was reviewing words for fruits with the children, three of them, who were sitting together, began this discussion:

#### *Excerpt 11 – 'strawberry'*

Ms Huang: 看，苹果后面是什么？亮亮？  
Look, what is coming after apple? Liangliang?

Liang: 草莓。  
Strawberry.

Ms Huang: 你喜欢吃吗？  
Do you like strawberry?

Hong: 我喜欢。  
I like it.

Hua: 我喜欢苹果。我妈妈不给我买。  
I like apple, My mom does not buy it [strawberry] for me.

Mei: 我不喜欢吃草莓。  
I don't like to eat strawberry.

Hong: 我喜欢草莓。  
I like strawberry.

Ms Huang: 我也喜欢。  
I like it too.

Hong: 我还喜欢香蕉。  
I like also banana.

Mei: 我也喜欢。  
Me too.

Ms Huang: [Shh...]

Hua: Yak.

[They carried on until Ms Huang stops them for the next activity: singing]

These conversations overlapped each other. This seemed to take place during transition to a new activity, frequently a difficult period to record. Thus, I may have lost some utterances. This poses a methodological problem for researchers using one camera to record several students talking simultaneously. But my classroom field notes do confirm that the topic they were talking about was related to the class activity.

#### English utterances:

The few English utterances used by the students occurred within the classroom but out of the class activity. Ms Huang decided to take a break a few minutes earlier, so that I could interview her while the children were talking freely. The camera was still on. I happened to catch the following conversation. Liangliang was playing with a toy, a kind of plastic animal, and it appeared that he did not want to share it with anyone.

#### ***Excerpt 12 - 'Negotiation toys'***

Liang: No, no.

- Jim: [tries to take it with his hand]
- Liang: No, no, I'm not giving you.
- Kevin: 他不想给你玩儿。  
He does not want to give it to you to play.
- Jim: 我要。  
I want it.
- Liang: I am not giving it to you. [Liang is almost crying].
- Jim: 我要么，我要么。  
I want it, I want it.
- Ms Huang: 别吵了。这是他的玩具，他不愿给你玩。你把它带回家去玩吧，好吗？  
Do not argue anymore. It is his toy, he doesn't want to share. So, can you take it home to play?
- Liang: I'm not giving it to you...

These utterances confirm the report from teachers and parents that students tend to use either French or English, depending on which public school they attend, in their after class social activities. This is a good example of the power of socialisation in public schools that can influence the children's choice of language use. Ms. Huang told me that most of the students in this particular class have some access to Mandarin. Some of the parents already taught their children pinyin and characters which can make her work easier. Liangliang is the only one who has some problems occasionally finding the right Chinese words in the class. In his spontaneous utterances, Liangliang used English. I do not know how many children go to French school and how many to English school as I have limited access to interviewing all the parents. But in the videotape, I found no French utterances in Ms Huang's class.

*Table 6: Grade 2 utterances*

Utterance	Teacher-student		Student-teacher		Student-student	
Total n = 347	222	64% of utterances	116	33.4% of utterances	9	2.6% of utterances
Chinese	222	100%	115	99.1%	4	44%
English	0	0	1	0.9%	2	22.2%
French	0	0	0	0	3	33.3%

#### Teacher-student utterances

Ms Lee uses exclusively Chinese when she speaks to the students. She acts as an informant who provides information about the contents that she feels her students need to know about in order to answer the questions indicated, as for example in Excerpt 4 – 'how to beat'. In order to maintain her role as an authoritative informant, she chooses to exert a greater control over the patterns of communication of the lesson. She disregards a 'wrong' response ( 打枪 – fire gun), and continues the lesson, acknowledging only replies that fit her chosen pattern.

#### Student-teacher utterances

Before children enter school, they have already acquired some of their native language. They also possess an accumulation of culturally acquired knowledge (Johnson, 1995) through which they interpret and respond to the world around them. They are aware of the rules and norms for when, what and how to talk in different social contexts. In the video recording it appears that the

children in the Zhonguo school have learned appropriate Chinese behaviour. For example, they address their teachers and other adults not by name but by their titles. Growing up in a Chinese community, the children have learned the Chinese way to behave and to act together with acquiring Chinese beliefs and values. Embedded in their use of language is the what, how and why of patterns of choice exercised by children.

In the Chinese culture, the respect for parents and teachers is highly valued. Children are normally not allowed to join in or interrupt the adults' conversation. That is especially true in the situation of the Zhonguo school where calm and silence are held in high regard. Students attend school in order to learn from the teachers, not in order to question or challenge them. Obeying teachers and adults is encouraged as good behaviour. Conformity is the norm for many children. Chinese mothers often use "*obey the adults and conform to the rules*" as a motto for their children. Chinese students who grow up with this cultural background, will understand and represent their experiences to themselves and to others through their language use.

***Excerpt 13 – 'Cleaning the classroom'***

- Ms Lee: 今天，我们要学很多新字，不要浪费我的时间，对不对？  
Today, we are going to learn many new words. So don't waste my time, right?
- Ying: 老师，我在家已经学过了。  
Lao shi (teacher) I've learned this at home.
- Ms Lee: 今天我们学一课新的课。这课叫打扫教室。谁在家已经学过了？  
好，放下手。我先读课文，不要打开书。  
Today we are going to learn a new lesson. The lesson is called to cleanup the classroom. Who has already studied it at home? [looks at the raised hands]  
Good, put down your hands. I will read the lesson first. Don't open your book yet.  
[reads text]

下课了，我们要打扫教室。  
你洒水，我扫地，他擦桌子。  
我们把教室打扫得干干净净。  
The class is over, we are going to clean the classroom.  
You sprinkle the water, I sweep the floor, he wipes the table.  
We make the classroom spotlessly clean.

Ms Lee: 我下面要问了，这篇文章里说我们要干什么呀？  
I am going to ask now, what is the lesson about? What is it said that we should do?

Sall: 打扫教室。  
Clean up the classroom.

Ms Lee: 要干什么，天意？  
What should we do, Tianyi?

Tianyi: 要打扫教室。  
Clean up the classroom.

Jun: 那么，我们为什么不做呀？  
But why don't we do it?

Ms Lee: 你们一下课就都跑了，没人打扫教室。  
You all run away as soon as the class is over. Nobody cleans [the classroom].

Ms Lee: 要干什么？  
What should we do?

Jun: 洒水。  
Sprinkle the water.

Lee: 好。  
Good.

Tianyi: 我扫地，他擦桌子。  
I sweep the floor, he wipes the table.

Lee: 很好。  
Very good.

Min: 还有人擦黑板。  
Should someone also rub the blackboard.

Notice in the excerpt above how the student addresses the teacher, 'laoshi' (teacher). In China, teachers enjoy a very high status, commanding a high degree of respect. It is an established social rule that a student cannot address a teacher directly by his name as this would be considered as bad upbringing by the parents. Children at school should respect and obey their teachers and comply with the rules the school has made. Any form of violation of the norms of the school or even those of the classroom will be regarded as bad manners and a shame for the family. Because children are raised to have a sense of empathy for others, one should always be aware that others are thinking about you and watching you. Whether your behaviour is appropriate will depend on the opinion of other people. So for Chinese children training both in empathy and conformity is a critical part of their acquisition of social knowledge.

Children who grow up in China know that the job of cleaning-up-the-classroom is their responsibility. Normally the class will be divided into small groups and each group will be in charge either for a day or for a whole week. The detailed job sharing will be organised by the leader of the group. The job will be evaluated by some kind of student-teacher committee. A good job will be praised and a bad one will receive criticism. In this way students learn how to be a member of a group and they will achieve a sense of collectiveness. In Canada the situation is different as there is a professional cleaning person, a janitor, to do the job. Further, there is no need to sprinkle water on the floor here, although occasionally it may need washing. In China, most of the classroom floors are made of untreated bricks which make sweeping the only way of cleaning them. Water must be sprinkled on the floor, otherwise the whole classroom will be full of brick dust.



### Student-student utterances

Again student-student utterances are not prominent in this class. One reason is that Ms Lee is a strict teacher and in her classroom small talk is not allowed. Another reason is that there is no assigned cooperative task that students could solve independently which would require talking to negotiate. The very small percentage of student-student utterances in Chinese are related to the text.

#### ***Excerpt 14 - 'To beat'***

While Ms Lee was demonstrating how to write 打 (to beat).

Sushi: 这是'打', 我打你。  
This is 'da', I beat you [demonstrates with his hand]

Qien: 你总是打我, 用你的手打我。  
You always beat me, you beat me with your hand.

Ms Lee: 坐好。  
Sit nicely.

Qien: 我坐好了, 可是他老是这样打我。  
I do sit nicely, but he is beating me like this [shows with her hand]

Ms Lee: 俩个人都坐好。  
You both sit nicely.

As for the students' utterances in French, of which there were a few during this lesson, I have difficulty understanding what they were saying.

In this class I interviewed three students: Chen, Tian and Jun who are eight, eight, and nine years old. Chen attends an English school; the other two go to French schools. When asked what languages they speak after class, they answer "French". Chen claims that because most of his classmates speak French, he has to follow them. Chen is the only one who speaks Mandarin at home, Tian speaks Shanghai dialect and Jun speaks Nanking dialect. Tian told me, "*Chinese is only spoken in class, after class no one speaks Chinese*" and "*even with a Chinese schoolmate at*

*public school, we still speak French*". None of them reported reading Chinese books, at least not on their own. If they were ever interested in a Chinese book, they said, their mothers would help them read or read aloud to them. When asked what they talk about in French, Jun said, *"Play and fight"*. They all came to Canada two or three years ago, in 1995 or 1996.

Notice in the beginning of the example in Excerpt 13 where student Ying reports that she has learned the lesson about 'cleaning the classroom' at home. Ms Lee made some comment about it. In my interview with her, she stated that the students' Chinese is better in her class because the parents consistently use Chinese at home and assist the students in learning Chinese. She pointed out that *"home reading plays a crucial role"* in acquiring Chinese as *"reading is the core of learning"*. She believes that more reading can help develop the students' ability for acquiring knowledge; talking-discussing can train their intelligence, motivate them to desire knowledge, open their horizon and cultivate their thinking.

#### Grade S - Ms Wang

**Table 7: Grade S utterances**

Utterance	Teacher-student		Student-teacher		Student-student	
Total n = 428	181	42.3% of utterances	155	36.2% of utterances	92	21.5% of utterances
Chinese	123	68%	126	81.3%	37	40.2%
English	58	32%	20	13%	21	22.8%
French	0	0	11	13%	24	26.1%
Cantonese	0	0	0	0	7	0.8%

Ms Wang has never taught any subjects other than music in China. But she recalls clearly how she learned English in China - by repetition. "*We repeated after the teacher, again and again, this way the words became ours*". Generally, language learning in China has adopted an *audio-lingual* approach where the teaching emphasizes the formation of habits through the practice, memorisation, and repetition of grammatical structures in isolation from each other and from contexts of meaningful use. The following example chosen from the data I collected from her class illustrates the teaching approach that she is familiar with from her experience of learning English in China. She starts a text by reading it aloud herself, then she asks the whole class to repeat it after her.

***Excerpt 15 - 'Read after the teacher'.***

- Ms Wang: 大家跟我读，读 **read** 不要说话 **do not speak**.  
Everybody please read after me, read, **read**, don't talk, **do not speak**.
- Ms Wang: 三课  
Lesson three.
- Roska: Comment ça?
- Ms Wang: Roska, 坐好。好了，跟我读！  
Roska, please sit. Okay, read after me!
- Ms Wang: 你读几年级？  
What grade are you in? .
- Ssome: 我读五年级。  
I am in grade five.
- Ms Wang: **No. Read after me.**
- Ms Wang: 你读几年级？  
What grade are you in?
- Sall: 你读几年级？  
What grade are you in?

- Ms Wang: 我读五年级。  
I am in grade five.
- Sall: 我读五年级。  
I am in grade five.
- Ms Wang: 你会说汉语吗?  
Can you speak Chinese?
- Sall: 你会说汉语吗?  
Can you speak Chinese?
- Ms Wang: 我会。  
Yes, I can.
- Sall: 我会。  
Yes, I can.
- Ms Wang: 你还会写汉字吗?  
Can you also write Chinese?
- Sall: 你还会写汉字吗?  
Can you also write Chinese?
- Ms Wang: 我也会写汉字。我在中文学校学习中文。  
Yes, I can also write Chinese. I go to Chinese school to study Chinese.
- Sall: 我也会写汉字。我在中文学校学习中文。  
Yes, I can also write Chinese. I go to Chinese school to study Chinese.
- Ms Wang: 在来一次。  
Once again.
- Ssome: 在来一次。.....  
Once again.
- Ms Wang: No, no, 在来一次, 明白吗?  
No, no, once again, understand?
- Mei: Oui.
- Yun: Repeat.
- Ms Wang: 在来一次, again.  
Once again, again.

The repetition exercise continues led by her. This is followed by pair reading where the students read dialogues two and two, and group reading where the class is divided into two groups, reading the same dialogues. Once a student and a language teacher in China myself, I recognize the structure and remember vividly how the classroom communication was constructed. Even the text of the lesson is very familiar. It is a translation of the English textbooks we used as English learners at beginner's level decades ago when I was a student in China. I also helped Ms Wang with typing the Chinese translation of this book when she began teaching at the Zhonguo school about a year ago. As her class is very "special", there is no printed textbook or other teaching material, which corresponds to the needs of her students.

This pattern of communication and approach to teaching make me raise the question: what, if anything, did the children learn from this repetition exercise? Notice when she asks the students to read after her again by saying "*once again*", some students followed her by saying the same words without paying attention to what they were saying. I observed that they moved their lips like little robots following her reading. Not only may such a repetition lead to a result very different from the expectations of the teacher, the way she constructed the pattern of classroom communication also limited the opportunity for her students to practise speaking the language and prevented them from using other grammatical structures. They simply just practised the same thing in an isolated classroom again and again for the entire duration of lesson.

#### Teacher-students utterances

More than 60% of the utterances of Ms Wang are in Chinese. They consist mainly of her reading the text aloud to the students. As I have mentioned some examples of her way of teaching, I will

teaching, I will not describe her utterances in Chinese. But her utterances in English are worth looking at.

The context for the following excerpt is that Ms Wang was explaining some new concepts and writing them on the blackboard. She was talking about 'he' and 'she'.

*Excerpt 16 – 'He and she'*

Ms Wang: 看仔细，这个读他。现在跟我读。'他'。  
Look carefully, this is read 'ta'. Now, repeat after me, 'ta' (he).

Sall: '他'  
'He'.

Ms Wang: [writes 'she' on the board],  
这个也是她。这个她是girl，那个他是boy.  
This is also 'ta'. This 'ta' is a girl, that 'ta' is a boy.

Tina: What, boy and girl?

Ms Wang: Yeah.

Jane: [to Tina] This is 'he' and this is 'she'.

Tina: Okay.

Ms Wang has misinterpreted the concept of the personal pronouns which confused the students. What she wanted to say was: this 'ta' is the feminine pronoun as English 'she' and this 'ta' is the masculine pronoun as English 'he'. But that is not made clear by her use of the English words 'boy' and 'girl'. Still, she continues using that language to support her teaching. This is not always consistent with the social cohesion of the classroom.

### Student-teacher utterances

#### Utterances in Chinese:

The high percentage of Chinese utterances from student to teacher does not represent the real situation, as many of these utterances are generated by text reading. Students are given limited opportunity to use language spontaneously.

#### Utterances in English:

How do the students react to the teacher's utterances? I have mentioned earlier that it is important for a student to correctly interpret and respond to the teacher. Some students are confused by her instructions in English. Often they cannot find where they are in the Chinese text or they occupy themselves with other things as illustrated in Excerpt 17.

#### *Excerpt 17 – 'Où sommes-nous?'*

Ms Wang: Tina, [she indicates to Tina that she should continue reading the next sentence from the dialogue following another student]

Tina: Which one?  
[classroom is noisy]

Fen: He is still picking me!

Sushi: I'm just joking with her.

Ms Wang: Everybody look for your paper and listen, okay. 我叫到谁,谁就读。First, Tina.

**Everybody look for your paper and listen, okay.** Whoever I call upon will read. **First, Tina.**

Tina: 你读几年级?  
What grade are you in?

Ms Wang: Xiao Fen.

- Fen: 我读五年级。  
I am in grade five.
- Ms Wang: Good, Roska?
- Roska: Où sommes-nous?
- Ms Wang: 看课文，不看课文就不知哪儿去了，要看哪。再来。First, Han.  
Look at your text, if you don't look at it, you'll get lost. You have to look.  
From beginning. **First, Han.**
- Han: 你还会..  
Can you also ...
- Ms Wang: **No, first.**
- Han: 你读几年级?  
What grade are you in?

First, her utterances in English act like a signal to the students that they do not need to pay attention to what she is saying, because she is going to explain it anyway in English. Secondly, the text is all that they are going to read. The students have tried for some time so far to remain attentive, but there is nothing more to catch their attention. So the class is unruly; at times in chaos. Thirdly, from the students' perspective, if the teacher can understand English, they might question why they should try to speak Chinese to her. Ms Wang is not emphasising that they (the students) have to practice communicating in Chinese.

#### Utterances in French:

Not many students use French when addressing their teacher. The main reason can be that they know that their teacher does not speak or understand French (as a social knowledge of what, when and how to talk to a person). But I observed that at times a student uses French to answer her questions anyway.



### ***Excerpt 18 - 'Chaque personne'***

Ms Wang: 现在Shh... 每个人, 什么是每个人? 每个人?  
Now, Shh... each person, what does each person mean? Ah, each person?

Roska: Chacque personne.

Here Roska answered her in French. Such utterances occurred a few times, relating to topics initiated by Ms Wang. Pursuant to Bill 101 (a law in Quebec province - see chapter 3) immigrants must learn French, consequently most of the children in Zhonguo school go to French schools. That is also the case in this class. Roska is one of them. His French accent is quite pronounced. There is no doubt that he is a 'banana'. In China as well as in overseas Chinese communities, the expression 'banana' is frequently used to describe a Chinese person who is yellow on the outside (skin) and white (westernised) inside. When the teacher asks a question so directly as here, one will answer in one's own language. This is a natural and very spontaneous reaction for Roska.

### **Student-student utterances**

Chinese:

Out of the total number of 92 student-student utterances, there are 37 utterances in Chinese which corresponds to 40.2% of student-student utterances. Most of the utterances are related to classroom events such as reading aloud and repeating after the teacher; students help each other with the right pronunciation, finding the right place in the text book; and they also sometimes read the text together in pairs or in groups.

English:

In the videotape, this grade S class appears to be out of control when Ms Wang directs her attention to pairs reading. Many students' utterances are indistinct. Several students are talking simultaneously, overlapping each other in different languages. But one thing I did notice was that Chinese students, especially Cantonese speaking, seem to be relatively quieter than mixed marriage students, and girls are quieter than boys. Culturally acquired knowledge of expected behaviour can be part of the explanation, as for most of the Chinese students respecting the teacher is a virtue and verbal interaction is not encouraged by teachers and parents alike. The purpose of attending school is to learn, not to ask and certainly not to challenge the teacher. As to the girls, it is commonly acknowledged that girls should be quieter and better behaved than boys.

The topics in English are both related to class events and off-task actions. The example I have chosen in Excerpt 17 illustrates such a situation. When a teacher cannot motivate her students to take an interest in learning and to keep their attention on her teaching, off-task behaviour appears. In the next example, Fen was complaining that the boy sitting next to her bothers her. Before she reported this to the teacher, they have already argued for some time. The utterances were not clear for me to transcribe until Fen spoke up.

Fen:           He is still picking me!

Shushi:       I'm just joking with her.

How to control such a classroom event is an art for teachers. In my opinion, it is also of utmost importance since calm and well organised environment is conducive to learning.

French:

When students address each other, it seems that they use French. The topics cover many subjects, both class related activities and social talk. Take an example from the beginning of the lesson where Ms Wang asked Roska to write two words 'ta' (masc.) and 'ta' (fem.) on the blackboard.

*Excerpt 19 – 'Comme ça'*

- Roska:            Comme ça? Comme ça?  
                      [he comes down from the stage and goes to a student who sits in the first row]
- Mei:               Non, faux.
- Roska:            [goes back to the stage and writes]
- Roska:            Comme ça? Oui? Is it right?
- Mei:               Comme ça! [demonstrates with her hand]

I noticed that although Roska and the girl Mei are both Cantonese speaking (I earlier heard them both speaking Cantonese), they did not use Cantonese for the purpose of a text related activity in class. In Excerpt 19, they spoke French to each other. The short question in English "*is it right?*" was directed to the class at large. It was my impression that Roska and Mei - at least on this occasion – chose French to keep their conversation private from the teacher as she cannot understand this language. Thus, they use French as their own secret code.

This grade S class is mixed with some students in French schools and some in English schools. When the students talk to their teacher, they use mainly English, unless they are reading a text in Chinese. When talking to each other, a few students even use Cantonese. But there were many overlapping utterances and as I do not speak Cantonese very well, I found it difficult to understand these passages on the videotape.

...

大部分家长只想让孩子学中文,所以我们决定就不开象历史啊,地理啊这些课程。而且我们相信孩子们在学校里也能学到一些(中国)知识。所有我们的老师都知道我们的宗旨是在教语言的同时,教给孩子们文化和历史知识。

*Since most of parents only want their children to learn Chinese language, we decided not to run other courses like history and geography as we believe that the kids will learn some of that anyway in the public schools. But all our teachers are aware that our aim is to teach our [Chinese] culture and history through the teaching of the language.*

(Open ended interview with Ms Peng, May, 1998)

**Table 8: Grade 5 utterances**

Utterance	Teacher-student		Student-teacher		Student-student	
Total n = 543	332	61.1 % of utterances	202	37.2% of utterances	9	9.4% of utterances
Chinese	332	100%	159	97%	2	22.2%
French	0	0%	6	0.3%	7	77.8%

#### Teacher-student utterances

Table 8 shows that the total number of utterances is 543, teacher's utterances are 332 which corresponds to more than 60% of the total number of utterances. The language used by Ms Peng when addressing the children is exclusively Chinese. In her class, children not only learn language arts, they receive also anecdotal knowledge of Chinese history. The following excerpt illustrates how she teaches other issues than language arts in her class.

Four-word idioms are an important component of the Chinese literacy. The idioms are often derived from history records/annals, classical works of Confucius and other respectable

philosophers and writers. In the next excerpt, Ms Peng is asking a student to fill in a blank space with a four-word idiom.

***Excerpt 20 – 'four word idiom'***

- Ms Peng: 平，你在下个成语的填空中该填什么字啊？  
Ping, can you tell the missing words of the idiom in the following sentence?
- Ping: '虞' 和 '诈'，就是'尔虞我诈'.  
'yu' and 'zha', that is 'er yūwo zha'.
- Ms Peng: 谁能说一下这个成语的来源？  
Can anyone tell where this idiom come from?
- S: [no answer]
- Ms Peng: 我们中国的成语都是很有典故的，是我们中国文学的重要组成部分。你们要知道这些词语的来源和故事。尔虞我诈讲的是，当时在春秋战国时期，楚国与宋国订立的盟约，什么是盟约呀？  
Most of our Chinese idioms contain classical allusions. These are important components of Chinese literature. You have to know the histories and origins of these idioms.  
'er yū wo zha' is about a historical event that happened during the period of Warring States (475-211 B.C.). The States of Chu and Song had made 'meng yūe' (a treaty of an alliance). What is 'meng yūe'?
- Shui: 盟约就是保证。  
It's an agreement.
- Ms Peng: 对，盟约就是双方签订的保证书。当时的楚国与宋国签订了这么一个保证书，保证'我无尔诈，尔无我虞'，什么意思呢？  
Very good. It's a guarantee agreed by the involved parties. The States of Chu and Song had signed such an agreement at the time. They promised each other that 'wo wu er zha, er wu wo yū'.  
// [she writes down the expression on the blackboard]//  
// What does this mean?//
- Ms Peng: 意思就是，我不受你的欺骗，你也不受我的欺骗。现在这词常常用来形容彼此互相猜疑互相玩弄手段。

It means that I won't be cheated by you. You won't be defrauded by me. Nowadays, we use this idiom to describe a situation where people play games with each other, suspect each other and don't trust each other.

Ms Peng could have stopped at the moment when she received the correct answer from the student. But she continued her teaching by telling the students about a historical event. When I interviewed her about this, she explained that: "*we are trying to give the students as much as we can under our limited conditions*" (interview with Ms. Peng, February 1998). Since the school is a private school and receives no financial support from government and as the tuition fee is minimal, the school board has difficulty in hiring teachers for all kinds of subjects, such as history and geography. (See chapter 3).

This excerpt also demonstrates that she is knowledgeable about Chinese history, and that she wants to pass this knowledge on to her students. Notice how she catches the students' attention when she begins her story with: "*What does this mean?* " However, the intent of this insertion of a question is not an invitation to the students to give an answer, but rather a remark to make the students pay attention to what she is going to tell. Ms. Peng embedded her patriotic speech for China in her conversation with the children; her beliefs about being a proud Chinese acted as a powerful filter through which she made certain instructional decisions and carried out these practices of teaching history and culture within the teaching of languages in the classroom such as the example I gave above. Her teaching is vivid and interesting; there are always laughs in the classroom. On the other hand, this is a typical example of a teacher-directed and adult-centred lesson in the classroom. As I mentioned earlier, this particular lesson was also organized around a basic question/answer format, i. e., I-R-E pattern. The following excerpt illustrates how the students use their language in an I-R-E pattern in Ms Peng's class.

**Excerpt 21 – 'zhu radical'**

- Ms Peng: 姚寒，你找到几个带 '竹字' 头偏旁的字啊？  
How many characters with radical 'zhu' have you found? Yaohan?
- Yaohan: 三个。  
Three
- Ms Peng: 是什么？  
What are they?
- Yaohan: '笔'，'答'，还有 '笑'。  
'bi', 'da' and 'xiao' (pen, answer and laugh).
- Ms Peng: 还有人找到别的有 '竹字' 头的字吗？  
Has anyone found any other characters with the 'zhu' radical?
- Xu Ping: 签。  
Sign.
- Ms Peng: 很好，许平。  
Good, Xu Ping.
- Ms Peng: 谁能告诉我为什么偏旁很重要，是不是可以帮你记住写字？  
Who can tell me why it is important to know the radicals?  
Is it because it makes it easy to remember how to write a character?
- Feifei: 查字典。  
Looking up words in a dictionary.
- Ms Peng: 回答地很好，菲菲。  
Very good answer, Feifei.

In this excerpt, the students' opportunity to use language was limited to one to three-word responses. The way Ms Peng initiated questions gave little opportunity for students to give an elaborate answer. Her purpose in that particular lesson/activity might be just to get 'an answer' - the radical 'zhu'.

French:

The small percentage of French used consists mainly of expressions such as 'non' or 'oui'.

Examples of those interactions are shown below. Ms Peng was asking how to use the verb 寻找 'xunzhao' - to look for, to search. As 寻找 can only be used in formal written discourse, she then asked:

*Excerpt 22 – 'search for key'*

Ms Peng:        能说你在寻找丢失的钥匙吗?  
                    Can you say you search for your lost key when it is missing?

Sall:             Non! [simultaneously – laughing]

As 寻找 'xunzhao' (search for) can only be used in describing abstract concepts such as feelings, lost ideals and truth, the students burst into laughter when they hear 'xunzhao' for a lost key. They understand that such a 'big word' cannot apply to 'a small object'. The expressions in French such as 'non' and 'oui' are salient in situations where the only possible answer is very obvious, closed *versus* open response. The children's use of 'non' and 'oui' may also have to do with the fact that Chinese has no equivalent words. 'Yes' in Chinese is a repetition of the positive statement which the speaker wants to affirm, and 'no' is a negation of a statement. Another reason for the children's use of 'oui', 'yeah' and 'non' may be that these words are kept readily available in the children's vocabulary as these words are used again and again in the mainstream languages, and they are here used spontaneously, almost without reflection. In addition, these words are used by the children to put their linguistic mark on the interaction.



### Student-student utterances

My own observation in the school is that the language used among the students during recess is mainly French. The table reveals that almost 80% of the peer to peer utterances are in French. This finding is consistent with the informal reports of the parents and teachers. The topics of French talk in this class are multi-dimensional as my data illustrate. It covers classroom tasks, jokes about other students and discussion about after school activities. In one of these cases, Ms Peng was asking student Sheng to answer a question but he did not pay attention and did not know which question it was.

#### *Excerpt 23 – 'stupid'*

- Sheng:           Quelle question?  
Huzi:           Regarde regarde c'est ici, stupide, numero trois

When Sheng could not find the question he should answer, he spontaneously asked his neighbour Huzi in French to give a hand. What he received was also in French but not so friendly.

Student Yaohan was one of Ms. Peng's more challenging students as he constantly used small talk in class. He was always making fun of his classmates. Ms Peng called upon students to make sentences using some given expressions and phrases such as four-word idioms and 'once...then' etc. When one of the students Sa, a boy who happened to be very shy and has a high-pitched voice, was asked to make a sentence with 'chu le...yiwai, haiyou...' (both...and...), the following discourse developed:

#### *Excerpt 24 – 'joking'*

- Sa:               在我们学校里除了有男同学以外，还有女同学。  
                    In my school the students are both male and female.

Yaohan: Alors tu es une fille toi aussi?

Yaohan noticed how Sa's phrase could be misunderstood and chose to make fun of Sa and insulted Sa by suggesting he is a girl. His comment made everybody laugh.

At the end of the lesson, I noticed two girls sitting beside me talking about going to McDonald's for lunch.

***Excerpt 25 – 'J'ai faim!'***

Xiao Qing: J'ai faim!

Qian Jie: Moi aussi. Est-ce que tu as quelque chose à manger?

Xiao Qing: Non. Ma mère m'a donné de l'argent pour aller chez MacDonald's. Est-ce que tu viens?

Qian Jie: Yeah.

These examples clearly indicate that the students use Chinese only when addressing the teacher in task-oriented activities that are constructed by the teacher. But there is a strong tendency towards using French in their peer-to-peer interactions even during the lesson.

**Grade 6 - Ms Gu**

***Table 9: Grade 6 utterances***

Utterance	Teacher-student		Student-teacher		Student-student	
Total n = 392	265	67.6% of utterances	77	19.6% of utterances	50	12.7% of utterances
Chinese	223	84%	72	93.5%	28	56%
English	43	16%	5	6.5%	9	18%

### Teacher-student utterance

Teachers' practical experience is another aspect of what they bring to their classrooms. It also shapes what language they choose to use in the classroom.

Ms Gu was an English language teacher in China. Shortly after she began teaching in the Zhonguo school, she noticed that some students in her class came to school having prepared home work that was not requested and showing unexpected behaviour. For example, in my interview with her in March 1998, she claims that

*...they [the students] may get some help from their parents to do the home work, but they don't really understand what I've taught them in the class" and " the proficiency level are different from student to student, so it is not always that everyone understands what I say to them. Once a student understood only half of what I said, when I was telling the class that next week we were not going to have any new lesson; he misunderstood it as that we were not going to have any lesson. He stayed at home, he thought he shouldn't go to school. After these few incidents, I decided to use English for an equivalent explanation after I introduce a new concept or just use English to make an announcement.*

(Personal interview, March, 1998)

The data from her class and my observations confirm what she stated in her interview with me. In the next excerpt, the context is that Ms Gu was making a trial test for their mid-term examination. They are engaged in a filling-in-blank-spaces exercise. One of the students, John, was late. Ms Gu is concerned with whether he is able to follow what they have been doing.

#### ***Excerpt 26 – 'did you understand me?'***

Ms Gu: 下面一个填什么？

What should you put in the next blank?

Ms Gu: 下面一个是呼噜。句子是，我爸爸睡觉时，总是打呼噜，吵得我睡不着觉

The next is snore, so the sentence would be, When My Dad is sleeping, he makes such a snoring, I am bothered .....?

Shi: 睡不着觉  
Not be able to sleep.

Ms Gu: 对, 睡不着觉。  
Right, not be able to sleep.

Ms Gu: John, 你现在就接着往下做, 前面的等下课时赶着抄上来。  
Okay? Did you understand me? Now, please go on, please go on. When we have a break, you can write these. [points to the blackboard].

John, you should just follow us now, I will help you to make up the previous ones when we have a break. **Okay? Did you understand me? Now, please go on, please go on. When we have a break, you can write these** [points to the blackboard].

Ms Gu: **Next exercise, Number thirteen, do you understand? Thirteen!**

Ms Gu told me that John is a student who has difficulties in her class. She attributes this to the fact that he speaks Cantonese at home. Ms Gu believes that John would understand her much better if she explains in English. By doing so, the other students who feel uncomfortable speaking out in class will also have a chance to learn something. My personal observation is that I find that Ms Gu's explanation in English only helps up to a certain level. For example, she uses only sentences such as, "*do you understand me?*" or "*can you catch up with me?*" despite her claim that she would support her lesson with "adequate" English. Let us consider this next example where she tries to help a student by using English:

***Excerpt 27 – 'ketchup'***

Ms Gu: 见了叔叔和阿姨, 都干什么?  
When meeting uncles and aunts, what would you do?

Ssome: 都打招呼  
Make 'hello' (say hello)

Ms Gu: Right, 都打招呼  
Right, make 'hello'! (say hello)

Ti:            都打呼噜  
                  make snore.

Ms Gu:        //laughs//

Sall:          //laugh//

Ms Gu:        David

David:         Yes

Ms Gu:        Can you catch up with me?

David:         Ketchup?

Ms Gu:        Catch up with me?

David:         Ketchup? [looks puzzled]

Sa:            No, can you follow her?

David:         Yeah!

The above excerpt illustrates that Ms Gu's explanation in English confuses the students. Her style of using English is not congruent with her use of Chinese. The former is used for simple instructions and commands, the latter for in-depth explanations. A sudden interjection of an English word may cause a misunderstanding. For example, a student, David, is perhaps concentrating on his work and when Ms Gu suddenly asks him "*can you catch up with me?*", he misinterprets this English term as 'ketchup' and displays a facial expression of complete puzzlement.

#### Student-teacher utterances

The student-teacher utterances were restricted by the class event, that is the context of this particular lesson in this class where the teacher made a trial examination paper for the coming

mid-term exam. The students were busy copying what was written on the blackboard as the teacher had told them that it was important to copy down the content which would be used at the examination. Under such circumstances, the students' utterances cannot be expected to be as many as those of the teacher.

Chinese:

Most of student-teacher utterances are in Chinese. They are directly related to the questions asked by the teacher. The students' language use reflects the content teaching led by the teacher. I have already included an example in Excerpt 27 – 'ketchup', the patterns of the communicative interactions are in I-R-E sequence. Throughout the lesson, academic task structure was discontinued a few times as some students complained that the class went too fast, that many of them had to ask the teacher to stop for a while. The social participation structure has also been interrupted when the teacher asked a question which confused the students and made them unable to follow what she was talking about. In the next excerpt, Ms Gu was guiding the students doing some fill-in-the-blank exercises. In one of the exercises where two characters are missing, there is a possibility of filling in either '北京 - Beijing' or '北部 - bei bu' (north part). Students should be able to find the right answer when they have finished reading the whole sentence. The underlining indicates the missing word. The '北 - bei' in '北京 - Beijing' and '北部 - bei bu' means 'north' in Chinese, which can be confused when filling in the blank spaces. One should be careful with the context supplied by the sentence.

***Excerpt 28 – 'The Great Wall'***

Ms Gu: 在中国的什么?  
In the what of China,

Xiao: 北京，北部？  
Beijing, bei bu?

Ms Gu: 中国的北部，不是北京，是北部。它东起山海关，西至岷峪关。  
在中国的北部有一座雄伟的长城叫...  
In the north part of China, not Beijing, north part it starts at Shanhai Guan  
in the east and ends at Jianyu Guan in the west. ....  
In north of China, there is a magnificent wall, it is called \_\_\_\_?

Sall: 万里长城  
The great wall.

Ms Gu: 写四个字'万里长城'。  
Write four words 'ten thousands li long wall' [in Chinese, the Great Wall of  
China is called 'the ten thousand li long wall' – one li is 500m]

The interaction in this excerpt is tightly controlled and teacher-directed. Ms Gu leads her students through the questions by hand, leaving them no opportunity to produce anything themselves nor to engage in any independent problem solving.

English:

The English utterances correspond to 16% of the total number of student-teacher utterances. They are mainly answers directly to teacher's initiation in English. The example in the excerpt above (ketchup) illustrates such interactional pattern.

### Student-student utterances

Chinese:

The pattern of classroom communication can both foster and constrain students' use of language for classroom learning and students' opportunities for language acquisition. What is the role that

language plays in learning?

Student-student utterances in Chinese correspond to 56% of the total number of student-student utterances. They are mostly directly related to the teacher-generated questions. In the next excerpt, Bai was asking Jie what to fill in in the previous sentence.

*Excerpt 29 – 'radio'*

- Bai: 你填得什么?  
What did you fill in?
- Jie: 我在听收音机。  
I am listening to the radio.
- Bai: 怎么写收音机?  
How do you write **radio**?
- Jie: 这样。  
Like this [shows him her paper]
- Bai: *That was hard* [code switching]

As long as the discourse is task-oriented, Bai and Jie interact in Chinese, but when expression of an emotion is needed, Bai switched to English.

French:

John came in late. He is not very good at Chinese. The teacher, Ms Gu, wanted him to understand what was going on in the class. She said:

*Excerpt 30 – '100 point'*

- Ms Gu: JOHN, 这是考试提纲, 这些年全会了, 考试就能考一百分。  
John, These are the guidelines for the examination, if you know all of them, you are guaranteed to get 100 points.



- Ms Gu: 迎接爷爷和奶奶。  
Welcome grand ma and grand pa [she continues with the previous fill-in-the-blank exercise]
- John: C'est où que je dois écrire? [asks a neighbour student]
- Ling: Ici.

In this excerpt, Ms Gu emphasised again the importance of doing well at the examination. John seemed to get lost; he spontaneously asked the neighbour in French for help. This again illustrates that students feel comfortable using French when interacting with each other.

## **Pedagogical Approach**

A pedagogical approach can be essential for the way learning occurs. The pedagogical approach which Ms Wang has adopted might raise some questions for HL schools. I am certain that Ms Wang possesses as much knowledge as the other teachers, but her prior experience as a language student and her theoretical beliefs do not combine to make her teaching inspiring and entertaining. Quite differently, Ms Huang teaches other subjects such as geography at the same time as she teaches the language. She uses lullabies, songs and riddles to help students memorise new concepts; through these activities, habits are formed and memorisation reinforced.

Let us go back to Ms Wang's class and compare the differences of the two teachers' teaching approaches. From Excerpt 2, one can sense the authentic and meaningful interactions are absent in the grade 5 class. How to motivate students to become involved in learning is an important issue for all teachers. Let us look at the next excerpt from Ms Huang's class in which she was reviewing some characters from previous lessons.

**Excerpt 31 – 'sing a song'**

- Ms Huang: 看，下面是谁来了？  
Look, who is coming next? [shows a picture of two characters, indicating to the students to give an answer]
- Sall: 唱歌。  
To sing song.
- Ms Huang: 谁喜欢唱歌啊？  
Who likes to sing?
- Sall: [All put up their hands]
- Ms Huang: 好，我们一起来唱新年歌。 一二  
Good! Lets sing a song together! Happy new year song.  
One, two.
- H & S: 新年好，新年好，祝贺大家新年好！  
我们唱歌，我们跳舞，  
祝贺大家新年好！  
Happy new year, happy new year, happy new year to you all.  
We are singing, we are dancing,  
Happy new year to you all.
- Ms Huang: 唱得真好听。这是什么字啊？  
Very very good.  
Now, what are these words? [shows the picture again]
- Sall: 唱歌。  
To sing song.
- Liang: 新年好，新年好，  
Happy new year, Happy new year..[Liang begins to sing]
- Ms Huang: 唱得很好！  
You are singing really well!
- ...
- 新年好 (happy new year).

Ms Huang seems to understand very well the children's states of mind. If she had adopted the

audio-lingual approach and let the children repeat again and again after her, the classroom might have been less orderly and harmonious. But her way of organising the class and her way of teaching are motivating. The children remember the words through singing. The different activities in a lesson which may seem short for an adult, but rather long for a child, catch their attention and make everyone actively involved. Her motto is *"if learning can be fun, why not make it fun?"* Indeed, she shortens her lesson with songs, nursery rhymes and ditties. If you were a child, would you not like to sing such a lovely rhyme?

树上许多红苹果，  
一个一个采下来，  
我们喜欢吃苹果，  
多吃苹果身体好。

*Many apples on the trees,  
We pick them one by one.  
We love apples very much,  
For they make us healthy.*

## Summary

In this chapter I have analysed the language use of teachers and students from the selected classes. The communicative structures in those teacher-controlled classrooms follow the I-R-E sequence. The teachers use mainly Chinese when addressing their students. The language used by students is also mainly Chinese when addressing their teachers. But the language patterns change when they converse with each other during their social interactions. Teachers' previous experiences and their beliefs have a great impact on what and how they teach. Students' language use is also shaped by their teachers' language use and their perception of classroom events. In the next chapter, I look at the reasons why the students prefer one language over the other from their perspective.

## Chapter 5

### Cultural Identities of the Chinese Children of the Zhonguo School

我一个星期只见一次Kevin, 有时候我们的爸爸妈妈过节一起吃饭时, 我们也见面... 我不知道有些话怎么说, 如果我想告诉Kevin我在学校里做了什么, 我跟他说法语. 因为我们在学校做得事都是用法语. 我不知道怎么说中文, 我在学校做得事.

*I meet Kevin only once a week and sometimes on a holiday when our parents arrange eating together.... We don't know how to say things, if I want to tell Kevin what I have done in my school, I tell him in French, because... I ... what we did at school was in French. I don't know how to tell him in Chinese, like the things we do at school "*

(David, 11 years, personal interview in Mandarin, April 1998)

David's voice once again confirms the findings from this study. The findings from this inquiry suggest that the students in the Zhonguo school mainly use Chinese when talking to their teacher in a teacher-fronted classroom situation. A small amount of English was also used in situations where the teachers occasionally also use English in teacher-student interactions. The students seldom use French when addressing their teachers, presumably because they are aware that none of the teachers has much knowledge of that language.

In a teacher-fronted situation, students probably feel pressure from the teacher and also from some of their classmates to conform with the 'Chinese only' rule of the Zhonguo school. In order to be able to participate in the class events both socially and academically, they perceive that they simply have to follow this rule. However, the situation changes when students are

talking among themselves. When addressing each other, their languages used were mostly French or English depending on the kind of public schools they attend, who they were interacting with and the context of situation. Their French and English conversations in the class cover many topics. Chinese language is used for working in class; French and English tend to be used informally for social interactions as the situation dictates.

To explain this phenomenon that children prefer French or English over Mandarin as described above, a few factors need to be taken into consideration:

1. Different language (regionalect) use at home;
2. Age of arrival in Canada;
3. Desire of being identified with the mainstream culture;
4. The forces of socialisation from children's cultural positioning.

In addition, I shall attempt to give a socio-linguistic explanation within a theoretical framework. In the rest of the chapter, I will discuss the implications for further research and teachers. And finally a review of the methodology issues will be presented.

## **Different Language Use at Home**

Of all the students I interviewed (13), seven speak a regionalect other than Mandarin at home. John speaks Hakka and Cantonese; David speaks Wu (Shanghai dialect), and Cui Zhuzi speaks Hunan (Xiang). Most of the students are from mainland China. Their home languages vary as different provinces have their different regionalects (cf. Table 2 on page 3 for definition of 'Chinese' language). Because of the different languages or regionalects used in the homes of the students (although most of the parents are able to speak Mandarin), it is reasonable to say that

students come to the Chinese community school to learn a 'second language'. Long (1997) asserts that when children are playing together, they need to use a common language to communicate. So French or English which they have already learned at school serves as the 'play language' or *lingua franca*<sup>1</sup> for their communicative endeavours.

In the eyes of many parents, the Zhonguo school is not only a school for children to study Chinese, but also a social community centre for their children as well as themselves to engage in many kinds of community activities. It is the wish of many parents that by sending their children to the Zhonguo school, the children can learn the language and culture and be socialised with other Chinese children. They hope and expect that their children will acquire Chinese literacy (read and write) in this environment as they themselves are too occupied with other daily routines to provide this type of literacy to their children themselves. However, the languages they speak at home are different from that taught in the Zhonguo school. The Chinese language, i.e., Mandarin, which children learn at the school is both a second (and in most cases also a foreign) language and a formal language which is not suitable for use in the children's social interactions. For example, the teachers will not teach them how to curse in Chinese or use words of abuse, and language features that mark activities as playful or 'not serious', which Goffman (1986) referred to as 'keying'; still, the children frequently feel a need to use such words in the course of their social interactions, when they fight for power and position, display anger and frustration, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> *Lingua franca, a language that is used for communication between different groups of people, each speaking a different language. The lingua franca could be an internationally used language of communication. It could be the native language of one of the groups, or it could be a language which is not spoken natively by any of the groups but has a simplified sentence structure and vocabulary and is often a mixture of two or more languages. (Dictionary of language teaching & applied linguistics, 1997, p.214)*

## Age of Arrival in Canada

Second language acquisition researchers such as Cummins (1981,1989) and Saville-Troike(1994) have concluded from their studies that early encounters with a second language can result in the loss of the primary language. But they also claim that if a child encounters a second language at an age later than six years where his native language is relatively developed, he can maintain his primary language if he has a functional need to use it. My interviews with six Zhonguo students illustrate and confirm their claim.

On an ordinary Saturday, while sitting in the school cafeteria reading my course paper and waiting for my daughter, Baijie, to finish her Chinese class, I noticed a group of girls sitting together speaking in Chinese. I felt quite surprised and looked around to see if their parents were near (some Chinese children speak Chinese when their parents are close by). However, these girls were alone. I went over and introduced myself - and learned their names: Geng Lin, Cui Zhuzi, Ma Yaoyao and Ju Yang. Before emigrating to Canada they all had some years (on average four years) formal schooling in China. Geng Lin told me that *"both my parents and myself feel like it will be a waste to throw my Chinese away, because I've already studied Chinese for fours years"*. Although they are all in grade eight classes at the Zhonguo school and have published articles in the local Chinese paper (see Appendix E), they say that *"our level [of Chinese] equals only that of grade four in China."*

Taken together with the viewpoints of the two boys I interviewed, this confirms what Cummins and other researchers (Saville-Troike, 1994; White Taylor & Macarthur, 1997) have stated that when children encounter a L2 before the age of six years, they tend to lose their mother tongue. The two boys, David and Kevin, were both born in Canada. Kevin had been sent back to

for a period when he was four or five years old. They are now in grade two at the Zhonguo school although they are eleven years old. They started the Zhonguo school late and have never been taught Chinese literacy before they came to the Zhonguo school. David speaks Wu (Shanghaiese) at home and he claims he attends the Zhonguo school only because his friend Kevin has agreed to come together with him. He says that otherwise he would not have joined the school in spite of his parents having encouraged and even pressed him to do so. His Mandarin is cohesive and understandable, but not fluent. During the conversation with Kevin, he had code switched to French a few times as he found that the Chinese words or expressions were not readily at his disposal. When the two are by themselves, I observed that they always speak French together.

David says:

*I meet Kevin only once a week and sometimes on a holiday when our parents arrange eating together.... We don't know how to say things; if I want to tell Kevin what I have done in my school, I tell him in French, because... I ... what we did at school was in French. I don't know how to tell him in Chinese, like the things we do at school*

David showed me a picture (in a French textbook of geology) to demonstrate that what they have been doing in school cannot be discussed in Chinese. Just like some other children said that it is not possible to say certain things in Chinese, such as terminologies they have learned in science classes or affective language to express their feelings (cf my interview with Geng Lin, quoted on p.1). Kevin told me that

*...My mom and dad do not always have time for me. I do my homework on my own. I don't have other close Chinese friends to play with. And David lives in South Shore, it is very far for me to go to him every day.*

Kevin and David's statements may help researchers, teachers and parents understand that language is both used and developed during the process of children's socialisation. If socialisation in one particular language is not occurring frequently, then children will have to find another



language in which they have already been socialised and are familiar with as a common tool for socialisation and communication.

## **Desire for Identification with Mainstream Culture**

In Quebec, most children encountered French and English at an early age when starting day-care. At age three or four, the children are in a language-learning mode: their ability for acquiring a language is unrestricted and immeasurable; they learn whatever language or languages they hear, as long as the conditions for language learning are present. Fillmore's report (1991) revealed that when children in the United States encounter English, *"the patterns of language use change in their home, and the younger they are when they learn English, the greater the effect."* (p.341)

In Quebec day-care centres, the children learn the mainstream languages and hear other languages around them. They learn how to use the language in a social context: Language for anger and cursing, for happiness and singing, for interacting with their caregivers and for playing with their friends. Once children learn the mainstream language, they tend not to maintain or to develop the language spoken at home. Children are very sensitive to the functional value of languages. When they realize that the language spoken at home has no function or value in their new social world and that it constitutes a barrier to their participation in the social life of the day-care centre or school, they tend to drop it. Language, like other human tools, has to be constantly functionally used for real authentic purposes with real interactions, lest it will be forgotten and lost. As Lily Wong Fillmore states (1996):

*A language does not have much of a chance of surviving unless many children are being socialised in it and children are encouraged to see it as a useful communicative tool and an important part of who they are (p.437).*

In my conversations with the parents, I found that some of them complained about being too

busy, always having to work. They had no time to practice Chinese language with their children and to help them prepare home work for the Zhonguo school. Some parents were too busy to talk much with their children in any language, let alone to engage in any in-depth discussion of existential issues. Others said that they seldom have time to read a Chinese book to their children. As one of the parents said to me: *"where do I get the time and energy to help them with home work and reading books after working all day and having to cook for the whole family also, 精疲力尽了 (dead tired, utterly exhausted). They have to do it by themselves. We never got any help from our parents when we were young, right?"* But both Ms Huang and Ms Lee acknowledged that parents' support and aid with students' learning can be a tremendous help. Ms Lee said, *"if the parents insist on speaking Chinese at home and consistently help with the studies, the students normally are very articulate and active in class, they feel also more confident about themselves, they are also the good students"*. But not all parents see their educational function as an important factor in shaping their children's language use. Ms Huang complained about some parents wanting to learn English or French from their children; she thought such action may result in jeopardising their children's maintenance of Chinese. This is most likely a valid point. If parents request language lessons from their children, they send a strong message to their children that what really counts in this life is the mainstream language. Although this may be true since the mainstream language is of utmost importance in any society, it carries with it an implication that the native language is unimportant, and that is not necessarily true in every case and context.

Many immigrant parents are eager to have their children integrated into mainstream society. They may feel the pressure for their children to function in the majority language quickly in order to be integrated into the social mainstream and attain academic success. After several

years in Canada, they no longer feel it is imperative to pass on the native language to their children and they have no time to practice it with them. When children keep using an L2, parents do not insist on using Chinese at home. When the HL is perceived as immaterial to success in society and some other language appears to have greater value, a language shift is inevitable. Some parents have ambivalent feelings about Chinese. They are reluctant to use Chinese with their children and they do not read to them in Chinese. They may not interact with the child to 'negotiate meaning' in Chinese. As summarised by Dorian (1980):

*Language loyalty persists so long as the economic and social circumstances are conducive to it; but if some other language proves to have greater value, a shift to that other language begins (p.2).*

Dorian's statement explains why many children, when encountering L2, lose L1. And it also explains why attending Chinese school tends to become learning Chinese as a second language. English or French has become their new 'mother tongue' through which they feel most comfortable to communicate and be communicated with.

## **The Forces of Socialisation**

Children learn language as part of their socialisation. A school is a form of secondary socialisation (Long, 1997). Thus, it is important for children to participate in the school activities both academically and socially. It is also important to gain entry into a peer group through which children acquire social knowledge and become members of peer cultures, identifiable by commonly understood activities, routines, behaviours, values and concerns. The experiences of being accepted by a peer group can be painful for some immigrant students as they have to face the problems of either maintaining or losing their native culture and social norms while acquiring the new cultural values.

For a child to be able to understand what is going on in the classroom, knowing the language is essential; it is indeed the most crucial aspect for learning to occur. Cui Zhuzi has been in Canada for more than two years. She recalls that it was difficult in the beginning that she neither could understand much in the classroom nor had any friends. As her language skills were coming along, she began to make some friends, *"but it is not so easy, as my mom doesn't speak French and it seems not right to have a friend to come over, 'cause they are not Chinese. I always felt a stranger in the school and still feel an outsider once in a while, 'cause I don't always know what they talk about, like pop stars, and my mom won't let me buy many things that my classmates have"*. The wavering of her voice indicates that to her it has been a significant problem that cultural conflicts can diminish a child's opportunity to participate in social activities.

Cui Zhuzi continues to express her feelings about the school: *"I am happy to come to Zhonguo, 'cause I can meet my friends here and go to the drawing class together with them"*. In her article, which was published in the local Chinese paper, she described her day at the Zhonguo school:

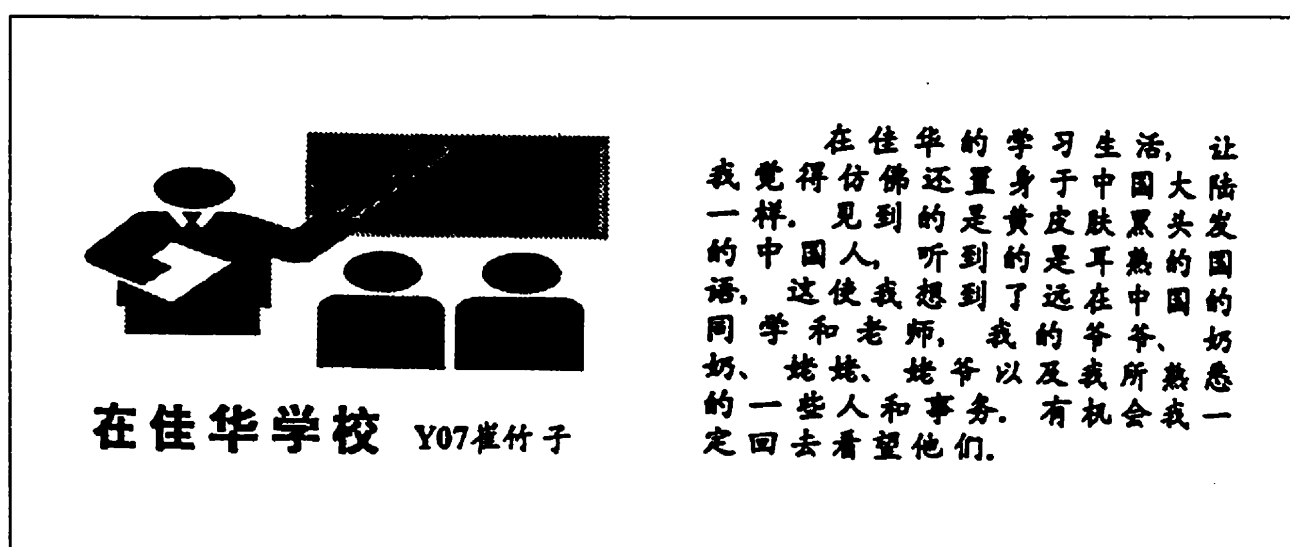


Figure 4: Extract from Cui Zhuzi's article in Zhonguo Journal, September 1998

*The studies and lessons at Zhonguo remind me of China. It makes me feel that I am still living there [in China]. What I see are people with yellow skin and black hair, what I hear are the familiar sounds of our language. All that happens at Zhonguo reminds me of my classmates and teachers far away in China, my grand parents and the environment I was so familiar with. I miss them. When one day I have an opportunity I will go back to visit them.*

(Selected from the Zhonguo School Journal, September 1998)

Cui Zhuzi expresses her nostalgia clearly and eloquently in this article. What she has experienced at public school in Canada, is so different from her experiences in China, in terms of how students dress, what they talk about and how they behave. This suggests that second language students, like her, have acquired different ways of talking and communicating in their L1, and when they enter school in a new country, their linguistic behaviour and communicative styles are unappreciated and can be misunderstood. As Cui Zhuzi mentioned: *"I don't always know things they talk about, and I feel an outsider, and I am afraid that they will laugh at me, so I don't want to be with them [public school peers]"*. She expresses her feelings about China and the Zhonguo school where she feels comfortable as a Chinese person with the people she is used to live with and the language she is used to speak. The Zhonguo school in her mind is a symbol of China where she can still speak Chinese, where she does not feel like an outsider.

Peirce (1995) uses the term *social investment* to indicate the socially and historically constructed relationship of second learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice the language as the right to speak converges with a language learner's identity. Cui Zhuzi says that she feels like an outsider because her peers at public school give her little opportunity to participate in their conversations as the topics are not familiar or understandable to her. She told me that when a classmate mentioned "The Hanson brothers" [a US pop music group] whom she did not know at the time, it made her feel that she does not

belong in Canada and that she is "silly in a way". This made her even more reluctant to involve herself in other social activities, like being together with a classmate to do home work or finding a partner for a project. Her investment in school activities and social participation is minimised because her perception of identity as a Chinese conflicts with the process of becoming a Canadian.

Another student at the Zhonguo school is Qiu Qiu (12 years) who is a close friend of my family. She is three years older than my daughter and plays with her whenever our families are together. She told me that when she came to Canada in 1994, her teacher in the "Welcome Class" did not allow them to speak other languages than French in the class. Although she had a Chinese classmate, French became part of her everyday life, something she says she would automatically speak at school. Even during recess she did not speak Chinese with her friend because she felt that the other children would not approve. At home, as her parents speak only Chinese and some broken English, it is natural to speak only Chinese. She explained to me *"... sometimes if you want to speak Chinese, the other children think you are stupid and don't know how to say that in French"* and *"At school if you try to say something to a Chinese friend in Chinese, the others will look at you strangely and maybe laugh at you."* About the Zhonguo school which she has attended since it opened four years ago, she tells me that *"if I don't speak French at the Zhonguo school, the other children will think that I am stupid or a 'xin yimin' (new immigrant). It is very bad if they think I am a 'xin yimin' because it means that I am poor and don't know anything and don't understand anything"*. Qiu Qiu's story shows that a Chinese cultural background can present a problem for being accepted by other children in the public school and even for being accepted by other Chinese children who equal 'Chinese behaviour', typical of those recently arrived in Canada, with poverty and ignorance. She recalled that *"when I had just arrived here,*

*I would try to use my broken French to communicate with other children at [Zhonguo] school although I spoke Chinese much better than some kids, but I was afraid to be an outsider, and I didn't want to be an outsider and I didn't want the others to think that I was stupid...."* Qiuqiu and some of her friends showed their desire to be identified with the Canadian-French mainstream by trying to communicate in French without being fluent and competent in that language. This is an indication of a strong wish to change identity. Since being 'a newcomer' to Canada implies being economically unestablished and ignorant of the mainstream culture, it is perceived as a negative social identity. Consequently the girls tried to use their broken French in their communication so as not to feel '*an outsider*' and to avoid being treated as '*stupid*' or as some one '*who knows nothing*'.

Not all children consider speaking Chinese as a subtraction from their identities. For example, Geng Lin and Ju Yang are best friends. They attend the same private French school and are even in the same class. The two of them are very proud of their Chinese origin. As Ju Yang puts it *"I feel so special that I can speak Chinese and English and French while my classmates can only speak one or two languages."* She mentioned that some of her friends are envious of her and Geng Lin because they are from China and therefore have another language by nature. Both of them are doing well at school; as Geng Lin said: *"My dad always gives me extra home work in mathematics, so I have to study the Chinese mathematics text book. It is always way ahead of the math we learn at school, the work at school is too easy"*. In this statement, she voiced what many of the Chinese parents think, and it is a fact that some parents will give their children extra curriculum at home.

The Chinese language is also a symbol for Geng Lin and Ju Yang. It is a symbol of distinctiveness, of uniqueness, and of a special culture. As Ju Yang puts it *"Geng Lin and I always*

*have secrets and we can say whatever we want in our language and nobody can understand what we say" and "if anyone laughs at us because of that [that they speak Chinese], we laugh back at them by saying that it is our language, by showing them that it is not us who are stupid."* When the two girls code switch to Chinese, they use that language to symbolise their different social identity as Chinese, they have a *secret language between themselves*, which the *others* will not be able to understand nor could they hope ever to be able to participate in any of their conversations. When they identify themselves as members of the French school, they use French to communicate with their peers. Geng Lin expressed her complex identity of being a different member in various groups: *"When I speak Chinese at [public] school I feel different, but when I speak French I am like everybody else."*

The children's cultural identities are constantly under construction and reconstruction, being negotiated and renegotiated as they acquire new cultural values, social norms and ways of behaviours.

## Socio-linguistic Perspective

"Do you talk about *Leonardo DiCaprio* in Chinese?"  
"Non!"

(Personal interview with grade four student at the Zhonguo school)

*Language is used out of communicative necessity. A common language is necessary in order to communicate with each other (Fillmore, 1996, p.442).*

At school, children have the possibility to learn the adequate variety of French or English for their communicative use - play language - which is not the same variety of English or French their teachers use. Preston's (1989) points about speech community may be applied to the study of L2 use in a Chinese school:



*In any given speech community, a variety of speech styles and registers exist and are used for different purposes. A speech community usually has superordinate (formal) language styles and subordinate (vernacular) language styles. These different language styles are appropriate to different social contexts and role relationships.*

(Quoted from Tarone and Swain, 1995, p.167)

The rules of discourse vary from one social context to another with regard to who may speak, when, and how. Speakers use language for different functions in different social contexts and with different interlocutors. At school, children learn a new superordinate language style for the purpose of academic study. They learn to use language for new functions and learn new language forms to fill in these new functions. Their new language functions as a superordinate language style, which is also institutional (public). At the same time, they also develop another language style for their social life, a vernacular which is used for discourse with peers for the purpose of play, competition and positioning in the peer group, arguing, cursing, insulting, and so on. This vernacular is not appropriate for conversing with teachers in the classroom.

When Chinese children (and other minority immigrants) start formal schooling in Canada, they need to learn both superordinate and vernacular languages. The superordinate language is used for public speech and academic purposes, whereas the vernacular style is necessary for the children to be socialised with mainstream children. It is natural and axiomatic that children desire to be accepted by a group where they feel that they are not different. For this reason, the vernacular becomes a motivation for the purpose of socialisation. While socialising with mainstream children, they learn different discourse topics and conversational styles, and so on; in the process, some of them lose their mother tongue.

For the Chinese children, to attend a Chinese Saturday school, where they have to learn a new superordinate style of Chinese, is the same as going to a public school, especially if they

have lost their L1 (Chinese) and now come back to learn Chinese as they learn a L2. This new style of language serves an academic purpose, they use the new Chinese for conversing with teachers, responding to teachers and addressing the other children in the classroom as a whole. This new superordinate language is different from that used at home. The home vernacular (the regionalect or dialect of the family) is used only at home. Chinese children do not go to Chinese school before they begin attending public schools. By the time they start Chinese school, they have already acquired French or English to some extent in day-care or pre-school. So the public school vernacular (play language) has already been formed. Because the home vernacular has never become a vernacular for common use, the Chinese children adopt a public vernacular (French or English) for the purpose of their social interaction, also in the Chinese school.

Chinese children as well as other minority immigrant children come to a new country with or without any formal schooling from their native countries, eager to become members of the new society. In order to be accepted by the immediate sub-community of their school class, they have to learn the community speech (both superordinate and subordinate). They are motivated by the desire to identify themselves as members of the subgroup. This motivation, sometimes referred to as the desire to achieve interpersonal communicative skills, is tremendous. Although children vary considerably in this regard, it frequently takes a child (before puberty) as little as six to twelve months to acquire a good communicative ability. This ability to use the sub-group vernacular is the essential foundation for being accepted by the school community. In this community, they share an interest of popular music (Spice Girls, Backstreet Boys, The Hanson Brothers), Channel 18 TV shows, film stars, sports heroes, etc. These children develop a special language for talking about their common interests. This language is a sub-group vernacular, it is used throughout the Montreal region and also in the Chinese school. This vernacular language is

deeply embedded in local Montreal children and youth culture.

However, because of the limited cultural supply in Chinese, there is a lack of culture content in Chinese. One just does not talk about the *Monkey King* (a Chinese fairy tale figure) in French nor about *Céline Dion* in Chinese. One can argue that code switching can be used in all social interactions but words from one culture just do not 'sound right' when applied to matters from another culture. Children have a clear feeling that people do not talk about *Liu Xiao-Qing* (famous Chinese film star) in Canada, that here they talk about ice hockey and the Vampire Slayer and so on.

Many of my interviewees agree that *"there are often times that we can't find the proper words or expression when speaking Chinese"* and *"it is much easier and more comfortable to speak French (English)"* (personal informal interview). Using this vernacular makes them feel relaxed, at ease, understood, and entertaining. This language can be used to express their emotions, to show their frustrations, and so on. When speaking this vernacular, they understand each other better.

Some Chinese children speak virtually correct and fluent Mandarin at school. But at home they probably speak another Chinese regionalect or dialect. These two styles of Chinese are different in function. One may argue that they can also develop a vernacular Mandarin at the Zhonguo school. But as children already have a common knowledge of one vernacular (French), they prefer that language. In addition, their Mandarin is learned in a particular context: they live in a Montreal Chinese community where everyone speaks different varieties of Chinese and must speak standard Chinese for the purpose of communication. Moreover, they come to school only once a week which is not much time to start a new language and provides only limited

opportunity for real functional language use. Under those circumstances, they cannot develop a play language in the same way as children living in China who enjoy full cultural support seven days per week. To maintain the French vernacular for use also on Saturdays is the obvious solution to their complex language learning situation.

## **Methodological Issues**

The technical equipment used in research of this type is very important. Sound reproduction must be accurate and clear; and the technology must allow easy identification of individual speakers. The video camera I used had a limitation with regard to visual field. It did not cover the whole classroom; some students could (and did) hide in 'blind' areas of the classroom. The recording of the voices of some students farthest from the camera was not loud enough to be understood (and transcribed). Overlapping utterances (when several speakers spoke together) were mostly incomprehensible and clearly beyond transcribing. Simultaneous use of two or more video cameras might solve this problem.

In spite of the shortcomings of the video camera technique such as distraction of attention, poor sound quality, restricted visual field and, in some situations, inadequate light for recording, this is still a very good method, probably the best available today, as it permits not only recording of spoken language, but also of facial expressions and gestures. Non-verbal behaviour is often used to supplement speech by displaying comprehension, agreement, appreciation, confusion and so on; this 'body language' is therefore important in explaining the meaning of children's and teachers' utterances in any language.

## **Implication for Further Research**

This study is the first of its kind, examining the activities of a Chinese Heritage Language school. I have observed classroom teaching, interviewed students and teachers, and questioned some students' parents. However, I focused on language arts lessons where the communication patterns are strongly controlled by the teachers. Further studies should examine the students' language use when occupied with self-generated topics. An investigation focusing on other lessons such as art, music and mathematics might give a different result.

Furthermore, future detailed studies should consider the language use at home and examine any connection between the language socialisation patterns at home and at school. A follow-up study may be necessary to investigate Chinese students' language use at public schools in order to see how the communication patterns in the classroom of the two schools (Chinese and public) affect each other and contribute to the students' academic performance and achievement.

My study covers only a fraction of the many hundreds of Heritage Language schools in Canada. HL education for minority students has developed over the last decade and is usually considered beneficial both for students and society. However, little research has been conducted into the activities of these schools, looking at how they are doing and what they are doing and what the results are from the viewpoints of students and their parents. There is a need to investigate what is going on in these schools and how children are learning in these schools.

## **Implication for Teachers**

Sociologist Vygotsky (1978) posits two developmental levels, the first is what he refers to as the *actual developmental level*, defined as "*the level of development of a child's mental functions that*

has been established as a result of certain already completed development cycles" (p.85). The second developmental level, the *zone of proximal development*, is "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.86). For Vygotsky, learning is a dynamic social process in which the dialogue between adult and child fosters the development of higher cognitive processes. In addition, he recognises that each child possesses a wealth of prior experiences – the accumulation of culturally acquired knowledge (Johnson, 1995) about language use and learning in general.

Vygotsky (1978) further points out that the child's language use represents the actual level of cognitive development. He also proposes that cognitive development lags behind learning. Thus, the language of instruction should be geared beyond the actual level of development, to the *zone of proximal development*. Based on Vygotsky's theory of development, in particular the *proximal development zone*, the teachers of the Zhonguo school should themselves follow the "Chinese Only" rule of the school as strictly as possible and examine their language-use patterns which have a strong influence shaping the students' language use. Teachers must be knowledgeable about subject matter. Only by using a language of which they have full command, can they provide adequate guidance to their students, leading to a higher developmental level of the students' linguistic abilities. Instructional efforts should focus on the child's potential abilities, creating opportunities for the child to assume joint responsibility for learning tasks that could not be completed independently, but only with the assistance of the teacher. Even during an I-R-E instruction, the teacher can emphasise student participation and make efforts to ensure high levels of interest and attention by modelling, questioning, and explaining, and by making the critical

features of the task explicit. Evaluation can be carried out only as means of assessing appropriate levels of difficulty so that the teacher's *scaffolds* can be adjusted if necessary. If, in an I-R-E sequence, the teacher's evaluation acts more like an expansion than an evaluation, students contributions can actually become part of that dialogue.

Since the patterns of classroom communication determine the ways in which students use language for classroom learning, allowing for variability in the patterns of classroom communication can maximise students' linguistic and interactional competencies and create more opportunities for them to participate in, and learn from, classroom events. And it is the teachers' responsibility to adjust their instructional practices to their students' needs and interests in order to provide appropriate, meaningful and effective classroom instruction. The Chinese language at the Zhonguo school is learned in an isolated context in Montreal, very different from the school environments in China. The problems of learning and teaching should be seen with the cultural background in mind. Second language theorist Ellis (1990) points out that for second language acquisition to occur, the essential condition must be met: students must have the need and desire to communicate. In part, this comes from their involvement and interest in what is being talked about. The problem in the classrooms I observed in the Zhonguo school, which is also a constraint for my data collecting regarding students' interactions among themselves, is that the students have little opportunity to initiate their own topics or work with something they are interested in. The lessons are tightly controlled and directed by the teachers. More independent tasks should be assigned in order to give students more ample opportunities to control the topic of conversation and allow them to self-initiate dialogue in class. Therefore, teacher-training programmes should be established for heritage language schools and for the teachers who teach in them. As most of the teaching pedagogy approach is not very inspiring, teachers need assistance to motivate the

students to learn, and to make learning interesting and enjoyable. The Zhonguo school should consider developing a situation for learning that is more congruent with the style of the public schools that the students are familiar with; this may mean mixing teaching tradition, or a western-eastern combination. Teachers may consider changing their roles in the classroom as authoritarian and to see their roles as a facilitator and a guide for student learning instead of controlling children's learning and behaviour. The formal style may allow students to interact with each other in the classrooms. Thus, peer interactions can be used to complement teacher input in the classroom and students are given more freedom and opportunity to negotiate meanings and understandings through the direct sharing of ideas with each other.

In addition, the school should adjust or revise the curriculum to make it more relevant for all the students. A whole language curriculum could engage students in meaningful and purposeful encounters and involvement with the language. Isolated fill-in-the-blank and dictation can hardly improve their ability to produce cohesive phrases in Chinese. As my interviewee David comments on learning Chinese: "*... learning Chinese is not like learning French, it doesn't need any intelligence, only rote memorisation.*" As to the textbooks, there should be an adequate content, suitable for children not living in China but in Montreal. More cultural and historical issues should be included.

Last but not least, the learning of Chinese is also the parents' responsibility. It is confirmed by the teachers (see Chapter 4) that parents' help makes a difference to the learning result. Parents should not see school as the only institution or place responsible for maintaining their children's primary language. Parents must insist on using Chinese at home, on motivating their children to take an interest in the Chinese culture and to be proud of their heritage. They must negotiate with their children, so that the ties between them, the language and the culture are strengthened. Thus,



the children's self-esteem and self-confidence will also be improved. To this can be added that the society as a whole, but especially the educators and teachers in the public schools, should be more aware of the special needs of students of different cultural backgrounds.

## Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the reasons why Chinese children in the Zhonguo school prefer French or English among themselves during their social and personal interactions. I looked at this phenomenon from different angles: home language use; age of arrival in Canada; desire for identification with mainstream culture; the power of socialisation; and from a sociolinguistic perspective. First, the Chinese language family has many regionalects which are not mutually comprehensible, and many students speak different regionalects at home, different from Mandarin which is being used at school. Secondly, many children encounter French or English at an early age when they are sent to day-care institutions. Under such circumstances, when children experience a socialisation process in another language than their mother tongue, some tend to lose their primary language. This is especially the case when the parents do not see much advantage in using and practising their primary language with their children. However, if the children encounter French or English at an age later than eight or nine, they tend to maintain their Chinese while acquiring the second language. Gaining social access to a new culture can be difficult for some children when their own culture differs significantly from the new one. It is a crucial process for their identity formation, as they constantly construct and reconstruct their new identities. Thirdly, children develop their own lingua franca while playing with each other at school. This language (French or English vernacular) can express their anger, sadness and

happiness. They feel relaxed and comfortable when using the vernacular language.

As language use cannot be separated from its social contexts, the children of the Zhonguo school choose to use different languages in different situations, reflecting their different cultural identities.

我是中国人，是在中国生的，可是我是在加拿大长大的。自然对这个接受了我的国家也产生了感情。  
...不管怎么说，不管我到哪儿，‘中国’这两个字永远都会与‘家’同义。

*Je suis chinois. Je suis né en Chine. Mais je grandit au Canada. Il va sans dire que j'ai des sentiments pour ce pays qui m'a reçu.  
... N'importe où je suis, n'importe comment je parle, 'la Chine' est toujours 'mes racines'.*

*I am Chinese. I was born in China, but I grew up in Canada. Naturally, I have feelings for this country that has received me.  
...No matter where I am, no matter how I speak, 'China' remains synonymous with 'home'*

(Dong Rong, student at the Zhonguo school, quoted from the School Journal, September 1998)

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shí sì dà xióng māo  
十四、大熊猫

běi jīng dòng wù yuán lǐ yǒu hěn duō zhēn  
北 京 动 物 园 里 有 很 多 珍  
guì de dòng wù zuì xī yǐn rén de shì dà  
贵 的 动 物 ， 最 吸 引 人 的 是 大  
xióng māo  
熊 猫 。

dà xióng māo shēn tǐ pàng wěi ba duǎn  
大 熊 猫 身 体 胖 ， 尾 巴 短 ，  
máo hěn guāng huá sì zhī hé jiān bǎng shì hēi  
毛 很 光 滑 。 四 肢 和 肩 膀 是 黑  
de shēn zi hé tóu shì bái de hái yǒu  
的 ， 身 子 和 头 是 白 的 ， 还 有  
liǎng gè yuán yuán de hēi yǎn quān hé yí duì hēi  
两 个 圆 圆 的 黑 眼 圈 和 一 对 黑  
ěr duo  
耳 朵 。

dà xióng māo xiǎo de shí hou hěn huó pō  
大 熊 猫 小 的 时 候 很 活 泼 ，  
xǐ huān pá shàng pá xià zhǎng dà yǐ hòu bù  
喜 欢 爬 上 爬 下 。 长 大 以 后 ， 不  
ài huó dòng xǐ huān shuì jiào tā shuì xǐng  
爱 活 动 ， 喜 欢 睡 觉 。 它 睡 醒



## Translation of the Zhonguo school time table

### Montreal Zhonguo School Time Table 1998.9.5 - 1999.5.15 (Saturdays)

<u>COURSE NAME &amp; COURSE NUMBER</u>	<u>TIME</u>
Chinese Pinyin (B01), primary Chinese 1 (Y01) Art level 2, 3 (Z21, 31); Art design basic (Z61) Dancing (Z41)	9:45-11:35
Chinese chess level one (X01)	11:00-12:00
Chinese chess level two (X02)	10:00-11:30
Chinese special class 1-3 (T01-3); primary Chinese 2-6 (Y02-6) Secondary mathematics class 2, 3 (S22, S23 ) Kindergarten Chinese a (K01a) Drawing for children 1 (Z01)	12:45-14:35
Primary Chinese 9 (Y09), secondary Chinese (Y23) Primary mathematics 1, 3, 4 (S01-6); secondary mathematics 1 (S21) English 1-6 (E)1-6) Kindergarten Chinese b (K01b) Drawing for children 2 (Z02). Art level 1 (Z11)	14:45-16:35
Adult Chinese 1-3 (YA1-3)	13:00-15:00
Children's choir (X40)	11:30-12:30

**Attention:** All courses and this time table can be changed when needed after the enrollment.

**Contact Telephone:** 767-0033, 989-7158

# 蒙特利尔佳华学校

## Appendix C

姓 名

分 数

一. 给下列字词加上拼音 (Put PinYin above the chinese words)

冷      夏      冬      秋      热      凉

难      海 洋      蜜 蜂      蝴 蝶      田 野

二. 根据拼音写出汉字 (write chinese below the PINYIN)

ài cǎi      nuǎn      chūn      liú      bīng xuě

láo dòng      quán shuǐ      ná lǐ      gōng yuán

三. 在下列字中找出相同部分.

(Find out the same part from the following words)

例: 红, 绿      ( 纟 )

春, 暖      (      )

采, 爱      (      )

花, 草      (      )

溪, 海      (      )

这, 进      (      )

冰, 冷      (      )

季, 秋      (      )

冬, 夏      (      )

# 小小的心靈有個“中國”

(編者按)欣逢中華人民共和國國慶節之際，佳寧學校推薦來三篇作文，從那稚嫩的心靈中，我們可以感受到真誠的愛國情懷，這些孩子雖則遠離家鄉，但生命之根還深深地扎在那一方遙遠的故土中，難以忘懷的故國之情，令人讀後，低迴不已。

## 一封信

孔祥菲

我還記得那天下午，我是多麼高興的從爸爸手裡接過一封我等了好久的回信，我激動得流出眼淚了。這是一封我在中國的老師寫來的回信，裡面還有兩封我同學寫的信。那時我是多麼高興呀！我很想念中國，想念我的同學。自從我來到了加拿大，我是多麼的想回中國，想回那個生育我養育我的祖國呀！我想再次的看一看那萬里長城，看一看那時過著的快樂生活，再一起讀一讀“好好學習，天天向上”的口令。這些童年的時光，總是浮現在我腦海中。那歡快的笑聲，一起學習，一起看電影，那時是多麼的快樂呀！

真可惜，我已經過了那些快樂的時期了，但我會永遠記住它們。盡管現在已經不在中國了，但我永遠不會忘記那美好的童年時光，也永遠不會忘記您。

我愛您，親愛的祖國，中國！

## 日記

八月二十一日星期三 陰

耿琳

今天我們去了北京的頤和園。頤和園是以前皇帝和皇后夏天度假的地方，非常漂亮。

我們從東宮門入，從蘇州街出。一共玩了一個半小時。我們因為時間抓得緊所以只玩了德和園、長廊、昆明湖和佛香閣。美麗的長廊是一個非常長的走廊，頂上畫有古代所有的名勝古蹟，要仔細看的話，一天都看不完。長廊左右兩側各有一長排石凳，可以休息。

我們沿著長廊，在昆明湖可以划船的地方停了下來。當時我非常想划船，而且要是我們沿著昆明湖繞一圈的話，就只要將每個要去的地方拍一張照，不

用走好長時間了。可是爸爸一定要說時間來不及，而且以前已經划過船了，有什麼好玩的呢？不過我們其餘三個人都贊成我的提議，少數服從多數，所以爸爸還是被征服了。我們登上船後爸爸還在生氣，滿臉不滿的表情，就和上次在迪斯尼樂園從SPLASH MOUNTAIN上沖下來時的表情差不多。划了一會兒，媽媽看看爸爸的表情，說：“好了，回去吧！”可爸爸卻說：“才剛剛開始划呢，再等一會兒。”我們大家都笑了，爸爸划麼不要划，划了麼不想停，真奇怪。

上岸了後，我們看了看時間還早，我們就準備登上高高的佛香閣後再從後面下去從蘇州街出去。我們爬得非常起勁，這就也算一種運動吧。

今天玩得特別開心，又是划船，又是爬山。我覺得頤和園比故宮還好玩，可能是因為這裡風景好，有個大湖。

## 日記

九六年八月三日

董睿

今天是奧運會開始的第十六天。加拿大又在田徑上得到了一塊金牌，可是中國女排卻輸給了古巴。我真的不知道是應該為加國歡喜還是為中國嘆息。

我是中國人，是在中國生的，可是我是在加拿大長大的，自然對這個接受了我的國家也產生了感情。看中國勝，我高興，可是看加拿大贏，我也高興。

有時我問自己，如果加拿大與中國互相爭的話，我又向著誰呢？想來想去，我覺得我還是會偏向中國的，因為不管怎麼說，不管我到哪兒，“中國”，這兩個字永遠都會與“家”同義。不過，說來說去，誰勝誰敗在體育道德上都是無關緊要的，最主要的是努力參加了……不是嗎？

各位家长:

Appendix F1

你们好!

我是 McGill 大学的学生,正在为我的研究课题收积资料。研究的主要内容是母语的保和失与孩子在校学习成绩及表现之间的关系。

我认为该研究的成果会为我们下一代的成长起到一些积极的作用,希望能给我们做家长的提供一点参考资料,为我们孩子们的教育能做一点贡献。

希望各位家长帮助我一起来完成这个工作,贡献您的十分钟填写下面的表格。也请允许我将下例资料用于研究报告中。

1. 你从哪个城市来?

妻:

夫:

2. 你们在家讲什么语言?

方言(请注明哪种)

普通话

英语

法语

其他

3. 你与孩子交谈时,用什么语言?

方言

普通话

英语

法语

其他

4. 您孩子来加拿大时的年龄?

5. 您的孩子在佳华学校选哪些课程?

6. 您孩子在佳华学校读汉语几班?

7. 您孩子上的是什么学校?几年级?

英语:

法语:

8. 您孩子在佳华学校的成绩如何?

## Translation of questionnaire to parents

Dear parents,

I am a student at McGill University, presently collecting data for my research in second language acquisition. My research focus on the relationship between loss and maintenance of the primary language and academic performance.

I believe the results of this study may be of benefit to the children of the future.

It is my hope that this study may provide guidelines for us as parents and contribute to the education of our children.

Please help me fulfil this task by using ten minutes of your time to fill in the following questionnaire, and by giving me permission to use the information gathered for my research report.

1. From what city do you come?  
Wife:                      Husband:
2. What language (regionalelect/dialect) do you speak at home?  
Dialect:  
Mandarin  
English  
French  
Other
3. When you speak with your children, what language do you use?  
Dialect:  
Mandarin  
English  
French  
Other
4. How old was your child on arrival in Canada?
5. What courses have your children chosen at the Zhonguo school?
6. What grade are your children in?
7. What public school do your children attend?  
English:                      French:
8. What are your children's grades at the Zhonguo school?
9. What are your children's grades at the public school?
10. How many languages do you speak?

11. What language do your children use for communicating with each other?

Dialect:

Mandarin

English

French

Other

12. What language do your children use when communicating with other Zhonguo students?

Dialect:

Mandarin

English

French

Other

13. In your opinion, are your children likely to become fluent in French (English) more quickly if you speak French (English) only at home?

14. Why do you send your children to the Zhonguo school?

# 佳华学校 通知

Appendix G1

Jia Hua School of Montreal

亲爱的家长

欢迎您把孩子送到佳华学校, 希望您对我们的工作多提宝贵意见

为了保持一个良好的学习环境, 希望您能协助我们维持学校正常的教学秩序, 配合学校的保安工作, 教育孩子遵守学生守则, 特别是:

1. 不玩电梯, 不动走廊的紧急电话, 不乱跑, 不乱关门。

2. 课余时间任何人不随便进入 我校没有租赁的空教室休息(二楼有很大的饭厅可供学生和家長休息)。

为了丰富孩子们的文化生活, 我校少儿合唱团成立三年多了。在这三年中, 合唱团的孩子们学习了许多优秀的中外儿童歌曲, 成功的参加过不少表演活动。但是, 近期有不少年龄稍大的学生(主要是中学生)由于时间关系, 不能参加合唱团的活动, 致使合唱团的活动受到一定的影响。因此, 我们殷切希望家长支持孩子(年龄 5-15 岁)参加我校少儿合唱团, 让孩子们歌声回响在四面八方。合唱团从第二周(9月12日)正式开始活动。

另外, 由于许多学生在上午选课, 中午的吃饭和午休需要专人管理。为方便大多数家长的时间, 从第二周(9月12日)开始, 学校特聘家长志愿工作者参加中午的管理工作。我们欢迎愿意参加管理工作的热心家长与我们及时联系。谢谢各位。 致

礼!

Translation of Zhonguo school rules

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**1. Do not play with the escalator; do not touch the emergency telephone in the hallway; do not run around; do not slam the doors.**

**2. During the breaks, no one is to enter any classroom not rented by the Zhonguo school**  
(there is a large canteen in the main lobby where students and parents can take a rest).

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the patterns of language use among a selected group of Chinese students in a Chinese Heritage Language School in urban Montreal, Quebec.

Participants observations (videotaping of 3 Chinese Language arts classes) and interviews (audio tape/ videotape interviews with 13 students, audio taped interviews with 6 students, and the 5 teachers) are used as tools for the inquiry. I also used informal conversations with students and parents. Language socialization theories provide the framework for data interpretation. Classroom interactions are examined in terms of the patterns of language use between teachers and students, students to teachers, and students to students.

My interest in language shift, language maintenance and socialization patterns in children's language use stems from my daughter's patterns of language use at home and with her school friends. I, like most Chinese parents, hope that my daughter can be fluent and literate in Chinese and at the same time fluent and literate also in other languages (Danish, English and French). I like other parents drive my daughter to Chinese Saturday school and wait for her in the school lobby to complete her classes. Thus, knowing the principal, the teachers and parents personally and being able to communicate with them in Chinese, I had easy access obtaining permission to videotape and collect data on Saturdays from February 1998 to October 1998 for this inquiry. I received permission from the Principal and the students to use real names. However, in this thesis, all names mentioned are fictitious.

**Research Ethics Committee of  
The Faculty of Education**

**Statement of Ethics of Proposed Research  
in the Faculty of Education**

It is assumed that the responses to the questions below reflect the author's (or authors') familiarity with the ethical guidelines for research with human subjects that have been adopted by the Faculty of Education.

**1. Informed Consent of Subjects**

Explain how you propose to seek informed consent from each of your subjects (or should they be minors, from their parents or guardian). Informed consent includes comprehension of the nature, procedures, purposes, risks, and benefits of the research in which subjects are participating. Please append to this statement a copy of the consent form that you intend to use.

*Because this project is part of a larger research project, consent was obtained orally built on extensive and progressive contact with participants in the field. That is, verbal approval was initially given by the principal of the participating school and the classroom teachers. Next verbal consent was obtained in informal meetings with parents, the participating teachers and the principal of the school. The project was explained, to all participants individually in Chinese. All participants were informed about their right to withdraw from the project at any time. All parents consented that their child could participate.*

**2. Subject Recruitment**

**2.1** Are the subjects a "captive population" (e.g., residents of a rehabilitation centre, students in a class, inmates in a penal establishment)?

*Participants are the principal, the teachers and students in a Chinese heritage language school. The project was explained to the children by me and the classroom teachers. I told the children that they were not being evaluated and that I was in the class to understand how children use language to interact with their fellow students and teachers.*

**2.2** Explain how institutional or social pressures will not be applied to encourage participation.

*No pressure to participate was applied. Children volunteered to talk with the researcher. Teachers volunteered to be videotaped and have me visit their classroom.*

**2.3** What is the nature of the inducement you intend to present to prospective subjects to persuade them to participate in your study?

*No inducements for participants to participate. Children were not withdrawn from the class.*

**2.4** How will you help prospective participants understand that they may freely withdraw from the study at their own discretion and for any reason?

*All participants informed verbally in Chinese as appropriate that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time at their own discretion. In this school, parents have a close professional relationship with the school principal and teachers. There were ample opportunities throughout the duration of the project for parents to voice any concerns about their children's participation in this project or my presence in the classrooms.*

### **3. Subject Risk and Well-being**

What assurance can you provide this committee (as well as the subjects) that the risks, physical and/or psychological, that are inherent to this study are either minimal or fully justifiable given the benefits that these same subjects can reasonably expect to receive?

*There are no physical, health nor psychological risks to participants. Children were not being tested or evaluated.*

### **4. Deception of Subjects**

**4.1** Will the research design necessitate any deception to the subjects?

*No deception of participants employed in the study design. The purpose and commitments clearly stated in the verbal consents elicited at meetings with parents, the teacher and the principal of the school. Parents were told that the methodology would consist of videotaping lessons, participant observations of classroom interactions.*

**4.2** If so, what assurance can you provide this committee that no alternative methodology is adequate?

*N/A*