

Student Approaches to Learning Chinese Vocabulary

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the strategies that native English speakers use as they learn to speak and write Chinese vocabulary words in the first year of an elementary Chinese class. The main research question was: what strategies do native English-speaking beginning learners of Chinese use to learn Chinese vocabulary words in their speaking and writing? The study was conducted at a medium-sized comprehensive university in the Southeastern U.S. The study drew from concepts and theories in second language acquisition and psycholinguistic studies. A random sampling of four students was selected in their first year of Chinese study for qualitative analyses. Data were collected from demographic student surveys, reflection papers, interviews, observation and field notes, weekly diary of the students and Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

The conclusions from this study provide insight as to how students of this demographic approach the challenge of learning Chinese. From this study, a clear picture emerges that students use different strategies to learn Chinese. Some students respond better to sound while others are more visually based learners. However, in this study, students used combinations of audio, visual, and kinesthetic learning techniques. The tonality of spoken Chinese was one of the

most difficult skills to master and this aspect of the language frustrated many students. This is a widely recognized problem with Chinese education. Nevertheless, students enjoyed the artistic nature of Chinese characters and for the most part enjoyed writing them. This element can be emphasized in Chinese instruction to motivate students and appeal to visual learners. Similarly, integrating instruction on Chinese culture into language classes made the Elementary Chinese curriculum more appealing to students. Using native Chinese speakers from the local community in the language curriculum, reinforced classroom instruction, made the instruction more relevant, and increased student interest. Encouraging students to attend Chinese cultural events in the community had many of the same positive benefits for students. The motivations for learning revealed in this study are very interesting and support earlier studies of Chinese learners. Personal and profession interests as well as a combination of both these factors were the most commonly cited reasons for learning Chinese. Maintaining proper motivation is a pivotal factor that determines the success of many elementary learners including the students in this study. When students lost their motivation, interest in the curriculum and learning declined as well. Teachers need to be aware of motivations and attempt to foster them in individual students in order to maximize the learning experience.

DEDICATION

Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will eat for a lifetime.

Ancient Chinese Proverb

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Chan Lu Fu, who sacrificed their comfort for their children's education. It is also dedicated to my sister, I-Mo Fu, and my brother-in-law, Dr. Gregory Welbaum, who took me in and provided for all my needs at a time when I needed it the most, and to my daughters, Shannon and Serena, whom I love and who are always present in my heart.

I would also like to thank my church friends for their unfailing support, and my students, who in many ways have become like my own children.

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FOREWORD

Reflective Personal Narrative

I have always valued education because I know it can be a strong catalyst for social change. My respect for education runs deep and was instilled in me by both of my parents. My father left his native Huang-He Valley in Mainland China in order to earn his high school diploma in Beijing. After having surmounted many political and economic obstacles, my father fled with his younger brother to Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War (1926-1949) in order to safeguard their right to a first-rate education and to enroll in the Zhong-Xin University. My mother, as a daughter of a well-known and highly respected General in China, also fled to Taiwan during the Chinese Civil War. Unlike my father, my mother's family had many servants. However, she did not obtain an education beyond the high school level because knowledge and education were seen as poison to women's minds during her time. My mother was attracted to my father because she knew the importance of education and she was impressed by my father's eagerness to pursue his higher education despite his poverty.

Although my parents' backgrounds were very diverse, they were committed to raising their children with a passion for education. I am the second of four children born in a little valley in Central Taiwan. As long as I can remember, both of my parents were very strict disciplinarians. Of course, education was among the top priorities in our agenda. Every day, my older sister, two younger brothers and I had to wake up at five o'clock to do our daily exercises and memorize articles, which were pre-selected by my mother. We were taught that memorizing good passages or articles was like eating healthy food. Once we digested the "food", it became the nutrition for our intellectual growth.

At school, repetition and memorization were also common practices. It was believed that children had good memories and thus memorization was the best way for mastering any subject matter. Students at that time were expected to respect and obey their teachers just as they would respect their parents at home. A famous Chinese saying, “A teacher for a day is like a parent for life,” has captured the essence of the Chinese culture and the respect for all teachers. Most people look up to teachers as the most educated scholars, and their profession was considered as the most secure and respected one of all. The teaching profession was commonly described as a “golden bowl” in the old days.

I have always wanted to become a teacher because I believe it is my calling, and it is an honorable profession to be able to share the passion and the knowledge of the subject with my students. However, I also had painful experiences as a student growing up in Taiwan. To show respect for the teachers, students were discouraged from asking questions because it could be interpreted as a challenge to teachers. To show obedience, students would internally sacrifice or suppress their imagination and creativity throughout the process. For example, I remember in my English class at junior high school, a whole row of students was sent to the restroom as part of a punishment when one or a few individuals did not memorize the vocabulary for the day. As a consequence, learning English had become a scary and torturous experience for many of my classmates. Nevertheless, that teacher believed he had a legitimate method to enforce good learning. He explained the logic behind the punishment, “the ammonia coming from the waste products would stimulate five senses, which would benefit students’ memory capacities since no one would want to stay in a stinking and dirty restroom longer than he or she needed to.” This kind of teaching technique apparently succeeded to some extent since I could still remember up

to this day what that teacher said. I, however, from that day on was determined to teach differently when one day I became a teacher.

Coming to the United States was a remarkable, eye opening experience for me. Again, pursuing the freedom to higher education for their children, my parents were willing to sacrifice their good lives and gave up everything they had established in Taiwan to start a new life in the United States. Despite our language deficiency, my family began a difficult struggle to establish a new home in California.

I am always fascinated by the amount of freedom that American children and students have in this country. Bringing unique Chinese cultural and linguistic backgrounds to my studies, I feel very fortunate to be able to understand both cultures and be able to combine the best of the two. Understanding that students possess different learning styles, I believe the role of a teacher is to allow students to have the freedom to explore knowledge. Teachers need to utilize many teaching methods and guide the students throughout the journey of learning.

During my five years of college teaching, I have been fascinated by the ability of my first year English-speaking students in learning Chinese language. I know it must be a challenge for them to learn the Chinese language because it is a totally different language, which is unrelated to Indo-European languages. As I am motivated to learn more about my students' learning process, I have discovered that most of the research before 1997 emphasized more on how Chinese language instructors teach the language than how learners of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) learn or how learners of Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) learn. I am sure this might be due to the Chinese culture, in which teachers have great authority and power over than their students. Even though there were a few research studies emphasizing learner-centered

language instruction after 1997 (Chao, 1998; Cui, 1998; Kubler, 1997; and Samimy & Lee, 1997), none of them were qualitative in nature. I believe students' perspectives are important and they constitute a worthwhile contribution to the field of CSL/CFL teaching. Thus, in this research I intend to use a qualitative research method to record the strategies that native English speaking learners of Chinese use to acquire written and speaking Chinese vocabulary and to identify the patterns and theme from these data.

My Teaching Philosophy

I take pride in my teaching, and I find it a very rewarding profession. I am genuinely excited about Chinese language and culture, and I try to convey my enthusiasm to my students by giving them various hands-on learning activities both in and outside the classroom.

As a teacher, my goal is to create an inviting and stimulating classroom environment in which students form a learning community based on mutual respect. I see myself as a facilitator who guides students through the maze of understanding new language concepts and a new culture. I strive to help students make their learning experience more meaningful and personal.

I believe that language and culture are inseparable. Thus, my Chinese instruction always draws upon the interplay between culture and language while emphasizing the four basic language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is my belief that teaching and learning can often best occur outside the classroom. Each semester I create opportunities to involve my students with the local Chinese community, such as Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival. I provide authentic cultural materials such as Chinese money, videotapes, books and magazines, etc.; and invite interdisciplinary speakers to class or outside of the classroom. I have also conducted cooking lessons and taken students to Chinese restaurants. Beginning five years ago, I plan, organize and lead a group of 20 to 30 students and faculty members on a 21-30 day study abroad program to China every summer. In summary, I enjoy involving my students in various cultural activities as a part of the curriculum so they can personally experience the everyday use of Chinese language. I find the incorporation of diverse language learning activities makes my courses exciting, rewarding, and popular with students.

Every student has individual strengths and aptitudes in terms of learning a second language. As a teacher, it is my responsibility to identify and nurture those strengths and meet each student's individual needs. My objective is to make learning meaningful and accessible to all students by creating a content- and context-based curriculum. Therefore, I present concepts and structures in several different fashions that cognitively engage my students regardless of their individual learning styles and abilities. My background in the field of Education - Teaching and Learning, has also helped me to apply many of the pedagogical concepts that I have studied, into my teaching.

Another important aspect of my teaching is the practice of reflection. After each class, students write a critique about which classroom activities were most successful or unsuccessful in helping them acquire better language skills. This feedback allows me to constantly refine teaching technique. It gives me the opportunity to be continually sensitive to my students' needs and frustrations and grow as an educator.

In conclusion, my ultimate goal is to improve students' language proficiency and their understanding of the differences between Eastern and Western cultures. "There are no right or wrong approaches in these cultures; they are simply different," as I often remind them. After finishing two semesters of Elementary Chinese courses, my students are ready to communicate with other Chinese-speaking people. They, too, gain an expanded understanding of Chinese language and culture that will forever broaden and enrich their lives as world citizens by traveling to China with me.

*Chapter One***INTRODUCTION**

From 1998 to 2002, enrollment in the Chinese language courses in the United States institutions of higher education rose 20 percent; and enrollment in the Chinese language courses in community colleges rose 32.3 percent (Welles, 2004). It is recognized that appropriate instruction and strategy training facilitate and accelerate second language acquisition. However, few studies have investigated the teaching and learning of Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) or Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL), especially in the area of vocabulary acquisition.

Vocabulary, or lexicon, is often considered the basis of all language. Many difficulties in both receptive and productive use of the target language (TL) arise from learners' inadequate vocabulary knowledge (Laufer, 1986; Meara, 1980; Nation, 1990). Wilkins (1972) states that "...without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p.110). Hatch (1983) points out that "... when our first goal is communication...it is the lexicon that is crucial to make basic communication possible" (p.74). In a classroom context, lexical instruction also plays an important role in language acquisition since one cannot teach the various components of language without using lexical items. If learning vocabulary is so important, then what strategies do native English speakers who are novice learners of Chinese use when they acquire Chinese vocabulary words in their first year of studies?

Since vocabulary acquisition is the key to making basic communication possible (Hatch, 1983), it is important for students to acquire adequate vocabulary so they can carry on basic communication with others. Effectively teaching Chinese vocabulary is, therefore, an important job and a challenging task for all instructors. In theories of second language acquisition,

scholars proclaim that appropriate instruction and strategy training facilitate and accelerate the process of second language acquisition. Compared to other foreign languages, the study of teaching and learning Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) and Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) is very new. Research on vocabulary acquisition in CSL/CFL has received little research attention. Most of the studies of vocabulary learning and teaching focus on English as a Second Language (ESL). Meara (1996) argued that, “All the current work is based on Indo-European languages, despite the fact that cognate vocabularies seem relatively easy to learn and that non-Indo-European languages are known to cause special problems in the area of vocabulary acquisition” (p. 37). Vocabulary learning can cover areas in listening, speaking, reading and writing; they are interrelated to one another. However, in this research I will study the learning of spoken and written Chinese vocabulary from learners’ perspective.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about what strategies native English speaking beginning learners of Chinese use as they learn to speak and write Chinese vocabulary words in their first year of an Elementary Chinese class. My emphasis is not on the grammar structure, but I will keep a journal of the students’ pattern of grammar mistakes.

Research Question

The main research question that will guide this study is: What strategies do native English speaking beginning learners of Chinese use to acquire Chinese vocabulary words in their first year of speaking and writing?

In recent years, Chinese language training has increased because of the geo-political and economic rise of the Pacific Rim and Asia, particularly the Chinese-speaking regions of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. From the perspective of language education, interest in Chinese parallels the political, economic, and social goals of the United States and highlights the need to invest in the study of Chinese. Now, as a result of political and economical reasons, the American education system is being pressured to respond to this new surge of interest by teaching Chinese language and culture. The first Advanced Placement (AP) Chinese course will be offered in Fall 2006 and the first AP Chinese Exam is scheduled for May 2007 by the College Board (<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/chinese>).

In Chapter 2, I will present a review of literature based on the historical context of the Chinese language, language/vocabulary acquisition in general, research specifically in Chinese vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary learning strategies in general and beliefs and strategies for teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language.

In Chapter 3, I will describe my qualitative research approaches in conducting this research and also discuss its limitations. In Chapter 4, I will introduce each of four participants; the interpretations and analysis of four themes. Lastly, in Chapter 5, I will present my findings along with discussion, recommendation and suggestions for further studies.

Definition of Terms

CFL: Chinese as a foreign language.

CSL: Chinese as a second language.

Chinese: modern standard speaking and written Chinese commonly referred to as Mandarin, “Putonghua” or “Guoyu”, which is the official language of government and education in the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan.

L1: the first language

L2: the second language

Learning Strategies: operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information... (they are) specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situation.

Native English Speaker: American born native English speakers whose English language is their first mother language.

Pinyin: the Chinese pronunciation that are written in Roman alphabets.

SILL: Strategies Inventory for Language Learning, developed by Oxford (1989).

Target Language: a language into which another language is to be mastered or translated.

Vocabulary: the range of words known to an individual. Vocabulary size is an important measure of a person’s literacy level; it generally reflects the amount of reading a person has done and is commonly used in standardized measures of intelligence. In educational research, it is used as a measure of the level of a child’s language development, degree of bilingualism, and level of second language learning. (The Greenwood Dictionary of Education, 2003, p. 375)

Vocabulary knowledge: a continuum between ability to make sense of a word and ability to activate the word automatically for productive purpose. The vocabulary knowledge of second language speakers (L2) can serve as an indicator of their proficiency level of the target language.

Vocabulary-learning strategies: special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to comprehend, study, or retain new vocabulary information.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature is divided into six parts: (1) historical context of the Chinese language; (2) language acquisition in general; (3) vocabulary acquisition in general; (4) research in Chinese vocabulary acquisition specifically; (5) vocabulary learning strategies in general; and (6) beliefs and strategies for teaching and learning Chinese as a foreign language. The background information of the Chinese language in the historical context of the Chinese language section is meant to provide understanding of the complexities of the Chinese language for native English readers.

Historical Context of the Chinese Language

There are seven major dialects and many minor dialects of Chinese language spoken along the coastline of China. The seven major dialects are Cantonese, Hakka, Amoy, Foochow, Wenchow, Shanghai and Mandarin. Spoken dialects differ substantively to the extent that a speaker of Mandarin is unable to understand Cantonese or other southern dialects. Despite the different dialects, Chinese characters are universally used as the written language.

The Written Chinese Language

The earliest examples of written Chinese are found on the “oracle” bones used in divination rites during the Shang dynasty in 1500 B.C. (Shaw, 1990). Even 3,500 years ago Chinese was already a sophisticated language with an extensive vocabulary. Nearly 2,500 separate characters have been found on bone fragments from the Shang and Yin dynasties. Of

these, 600 have been identified. Although the style of writing then was not the same as in the modern language, many characters are recognizable.

Today the number of words needed for everyday living is about 3,000, but a working vocabulary adequate for reading newspapers is 7,000 characters. The Shuo Wen Dictionary of the Han dynasty (207 B.C. – 220 A.D.) contained 9,353 words. The Kang Hsi dictionary of the Ching dynasty (1644 -1911) contained 40,545. The Chung Hua dictionary, compiled in the early 1911 of the Republic of China, includes 50,000 words (Shaw, 1990).

The initial step in adopting a written language in China was the use of simple pictographs which represented objects. The most popular legend in the Elementary Chinese textbooks says that it was Cang Jie, a minister of the Emperor Huang Di who first invented the script, possibly three thousand years ago. According to the story, Cang Jie observed the footprints of birds and beasts whose lines and shapes were distinct and discernible. Deeply inspired by this sight, he then drew pictures of objects in accordance with their shapes and forms. Over time, pictographs from this primitive age were further reduced to the essentials, conventionalized, and, in time, highly stylized. In other words, they were reduced for the sake of simplicity to a few strokes. These pictorial characters are now known as “pictography.” For example: the sun “日”, and the moon “月” are written in a format that closely relates to the drawing of the subjects. However, this early pictorial writing was sequentially modified. It was difficult for pictures to represent abstract thoughts, and different people's drawings of the same object differed greatly. It was also simply cumbersome to express lengthy messages by pictures. Writing became more common but the nature of written material became more complicated.

Even though the written Chinese language has grown more stylized and less pictorial, for many people it still represents an art form to the human mind because the words do not need to be spelled out. “As pictures of ideas, Chinese characters reveal the human mind at work. They travel directly from eye to brain, bypassing pathways of speech. Westerners who never quite master spellings, and whose deepest responses are to pictures, often find themselves drawn to written Chinese. Its appeal to the artistic eye is unequalled by the Western alphabet.” (Chang & Chang, 1978, p.14)

This appeal, however, can make the language learning very different for Western students. Unlike words in Western languages, Chinese characters cannot be spelled out with alphabets, and the spoken language and the written characters are not phonetically related. Many of my students described the act of writing Chinese characters as “drawing pictures.” Even though learning the Chinese language appears to be more intimidating than learning European languages, the number of students who are interested in learning the Chinese language is rising yearly.

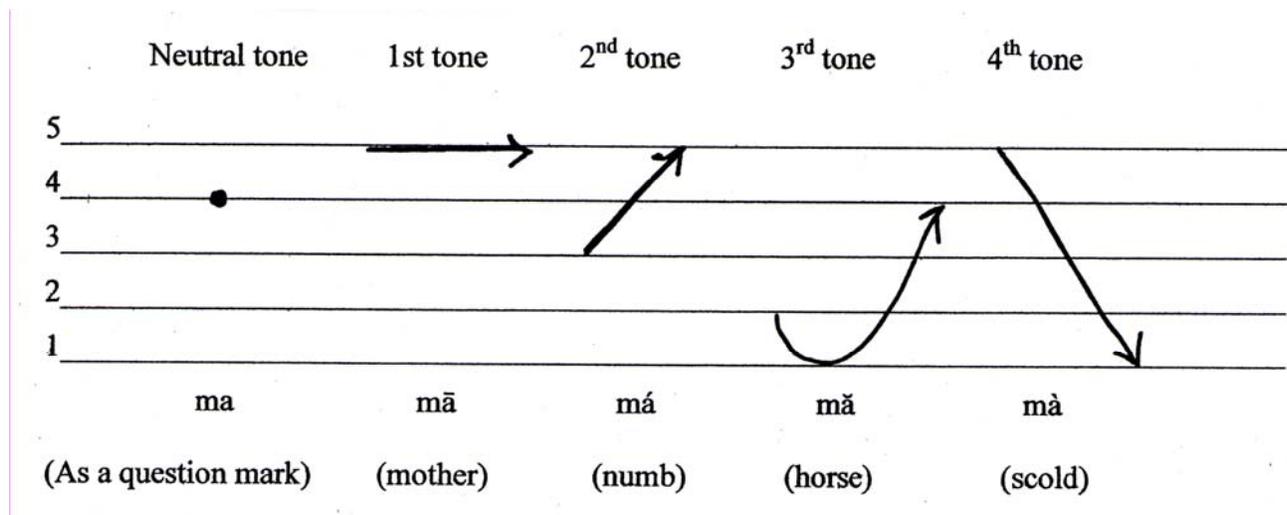
Spoken Chinese

The Chinese language is a tonal language. There are five tones in Mandarin Chinese: one neutral tone, one level tone and three contour tones that are totally different from English. Unlike Western languages, speakers cannot raise or drop tones as they wish when speaking Chinese words. The reason is because words in Chinese may be spelled out the same way in Pinyin, but they have different meanings when pronounced in different tones. For example, the word, ‘mother’, is spelled out in Pinyin as “mā”, which is pronounced in the first tone. If this

Pinyin is pronounced in a third tone as “mǎ”, then ‘mother’ becomes ‘horse’. More illustration and explanation of five Mandarin Chinese tones are listed in Figure 1.

In the following diagrams the vertical line serves as a reference for pitch tone, and the number represents the pitch registered according to a scale of five levels. Level 5 indicates the highest pitch of the speaker’s normal speech voice and level 1 is the lowest. The five basic tones are represented by the following tone-graphs. For example: first tone (hēng = to hum); second tone (hén = trace); third tone (hěn = cruel); fourth tone (hèn = to hate). Please note some characters have neutral tones, some do not. The symbol for the neutral tone can be a dot (●) on top of the alphabet or with no symbol at all which is unstressed and pronounced soft and short. Let me continue the example of “ma”. The word “ma” can have five different meanings depending on its tones:

Figure 1 Five Tones in Mandarin Chinese: one neutral tone, one level tone and three contour tones.



In English, intonation patterns indicate whether a sentence is a statement such as “She is hungry.”, or a question, “She is hungry?” or an exclamation, “She is hungry!” Entire sentences carry particular tones, but individual words do not. In Chinese, words have a particular tone value, and these tones are important in determining the meaning of a word. Observe the meanings of the earlier example in Chinese: mā (high, steady tone) becomes “mother;” má (rising tone, like a question) becomes “numb;” mǎ (dipping tone) becomes a “horse;” and mà (dropping tone) becomes “scold”. For these reasons, native English speaking beginning learners of Chinese find it extremely difficult to pay attention to individual tones in any sentences in addition to translate the meaning of each word in order to make sense. It is important for the students to distinguish the pitch and thus to pronounce it correctly. They are advised to model the oral speech of a native speaker precisely because each word is characterized by a fixed pitch pattern. In my Elementary Chinese classes, I like to use hand gestures as a kind of visual aid to demonstrate the tones when I speak the language in order to assist students in recognizing the tone differences and to enhance their memory. When students learn to associate hand gestures with the five different tones in spoken Chinese, the brain further processes the information to reinforce students’ memories of the sounds (Paivio, 1971, 1981).

History of Chinese as a Foreign Language in the U.S.

It is not clear when the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language started in North America. However, a great surge in interest in learning and teaching Chinese language started in the early 1940s when the United States was involved in World War II. Interest in Chinese language rose even more after President Nixon visited China and established diplomatic relations

with Beijing in the early 1970s. In recent years, Chinese language training has increased because of the geo-political and economic rise of the Pacific Rim and Asia, particularly the Chinese-speaking regions of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. From the perspective of language education, interest in Chinese parallels the political, economic, and social goals of the United States and highlights the need to invest in the study of Chinese. Now, as a result of political and economical reasons, the American education system is being pressured to respond to this new surge of interest by teaching Chinese language and culture. The first Advanced Placement (AP) Chinese course will be offered in Fall 2006 and the first AP Chinese Exam is scheduled for May 2007 by the College Board (<http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/chinese>).

This interest is evident in the increasing number of programs offering Chinese language courses in the colleges and universities in the United States, as well as the increased popularity of Chinese language programs in Taiwan and Mainland China for non-native speakers. In the 1960s there were 25-degree programs in Chinese language studies in American universities. In the 70's the number gradually increased to 40-degree programs. (Quick, 1975). In the 90s the number further increased to 74 degree programs. (Peterson's Guide to Four Year Colleges, 1994). In the five years from 1978 to 1983, the number of universities and colleges that offered Mandarin Chinese language courses jumped from 180 institutions to 250 institutions. (Eddy, 1980; Ning, 1983; Welles, 2004).

In addition to the increase in academic programs, Chinese communities across the United States and immigrants from Taiwan and Mainland China during the last two decades have organized weekend Chinese language schools to teach Chinese language and culture classes. Many of these alternative schools offer credit classes approved by local school districts to fulfill

language requirements in public school. In summary, over the last twenty years, enrollment and offerings of Mandarin Chinese has increased dramatically.

Language Acquisition in General

The research in language acquisition has been rich and productive over the past 20 years. Research throughout the 1960s and 1970s was mostly on children as they acquired first languages. It indicated that children must pass through a series of roughly predictable stages as they moved from baby talk to an adult-like language system. As the English language plays a vital role in the world today, there has been a substantial increase in studies of the language acquisition behaviors of English as Second Language (ESL) learners since the 1970s. As a result, second language researchers began to examine whether the same learning characteristics were shared by both first and second language learners.

Previously, the approaches to learning a second language primarily consisted of translating passages by using bilingual dictionaries. This was called the grammar translation method. Linguists such as Krashen and Terrell (1983), and other educators discovered effective ways to support students in their acquisition of new languages and development of content knowledge based on explanations of the complexity of learning.

Krashen (1982) makes a distinction between language **acquisition** and language **learning** that is vital to the support of students in the classroom in their gradual acquisition of fluency in a new language. Krashen states that “language acquisition is a natural thing, but learning is a conscious knowledge of a second language” (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Young children acquire their home language easily without formal teaching. This acquisition is gradual, based on

receiving and understanding messages, building a listening (receptive) vocabulary, and slowly attempting verbal production of the language in a highly supportive, non-stressful situation. It is exactly these same conditions that foster the acquisition of a second language. The teacher is responsible for providing the understandable language (comprehensible input), along with whatever supports are necessary in order for the students to understand the message. Using approaches and materials that add context to the language such as props, gestures, and pictures, all contribute to the students' acquisition and eventual verbal production of language.

Krashen and Terrell (1983) also stress the need for language learners to be allowed to move into verbal production of the new language at a comfortable rate. Students must hear and understand messages in the target language and build a listening vocabulary before being expected to produce spoken language. This does not mean that language learners should be uninvolved in the classroom activities, but that the activities should be structured so that language learners can participate at a level of comfort. Instructors should observe the students and are sensitive about their language acquisition stages. They should ask questions that encourages students to answer according to their language acquisition stage using so-called leveled question (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). When instructors ask questions, students should answer at first with the use of gestures, nods, or other nonverbal responses. This language acquisition stage is called the silent or preproduction period, and it is a vital beginning to language acquisition. During this stage, teachers can make a statement like, "Show me." Or ask questions like, "Which one?" In the next stage called the early production stage, teachers can probe with questions that only require students to answer with one or two words, such as, "is it this one or the other one?" Next comes the speech emergence stage, in which the teacher can

make a request like, “What happened next? Or, where did you find the answer?” And, in the final intermediate fluency stage, the teachers can encourage the students to explain the answer in more detail, e.g., “What was the character trying to do?”

No matter which stage the learners are in, the key is that instructors ask the question in a way that encourages the students to answer by at their level of language acquisition, either pointing to a visual, giving a one-word response or a complete sentence or long explanation. The teacher’s role in this strategy involves knowing the students’ level of language acquisition and providing enough contexts in the question so that the students can respond, either verbally or nonverbally, with understanding and confidence.

It is important that instructors provide a supportive environment for students; meaningful exposure to language alone is not enough. Students need many opportunities for language interaction. Swain (1993) proposes that a classroom where children work together to solve problems and produce projects supports their language development in several ways. It gives them authentic reasons to communicate and gives them support in refining their language production. It also provides students with the realization that others do not always understand their verbal communication. This realization helps to move the learners from receptive, semantic processing (listening to understanding) to expressive, syntactic processing (formation of words and sentences in order to communicate). According to Swain, if students are left to simply listen and observe without the opportunity or necessity to communicate, they remain in the pre-productive stage for an extended period of time. Thus, instructors need to provide adequate communicative practice and classroom activities to assist students in moving beyond this pre-productive stage.

Many researchers such as Krashen (1982), Krashen and Terrell (1983), and McLaughlin (1990) have studied the role of emotions in the acquisition of language. Krashen calls the impact of emotions on learning the “affective filter”. When learners are placed in a stressful situation in which language production or performance is demanded, the students’ ability to learn or produce spoken language is impaired. This further indicates that instructors need to provide a supportive environment in the classroom so students can participate at a comfortable level without having to worry about being embarrassed or feeling foolish. Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis stressed that in order for students to learn effectively, the students’ motivation and self-esteem must be supported while diminishing their anxiety. This provides an opportunity for the language learners to take in information, process vocabulary and eventually produce language because their stress levels are low and their affective filter is not interfering with thinking or learning.

In an extension of Krashen’s Input Theory, VanPatten (2004) and other researchers claimed that “when input is simplified and tailored to the level of the learner, learners are able to make connections between form and meaning and thus convert input to intake” (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p.16). Intake is “language that is comprehended and used by learners to develop a linguistic system that they then use to produce output in the language” (Shrum & Glisan, 2005, p.16). Before novice language learners can use the language to produce output, they need structured input activities to focus on meaning so they can pay attention to form (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993). Shrum and Glisan (2005, p.16) point out that “research across languages and with a variety of grammatical structures has indicated that instructional strategies that

incorporate input are successful in helping learners build linguistic systems (Buck, 2000; Cheng, 2002; Frawley, 2003; Wong & VanPatten, 2003).”

Furthermore, Cummins’s research (1994) contributed to the understanding of language acquisition and effective classroom practice in several ways. First, Cummins differentiates between social language called basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), and academic language called cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). While students may acquire BICS and be able to communicate efficiently outside of the classroom or be able to ask and answer simple questions, students may not have the level of language proficiency necessary to benefit fully from academic instruction without additional support outside of the classroom.

Cummins identifies two dimensions of language that help us to understand what must be added to instruction to make language comprehensible to students’ cognitive demand and context embedded language. The dimension of cognitive language demand is the language that is used in academic classroom lectures or in academic textbooks. Context-embedded language is like a math formula used in explaining math lectures or maps that are used in geography classrooms. Even though students may still have difficulties understanding the academic terminologies, the math formula and the maps serve as relevant context that will assist students to understand the subjects better than a social studies lecture or a multiple choice test. Cummins further demonstrates how the addition of context supports the students’ understanding of more cognitively demanding language such as the language of content instruction in the classroom with a graph called a quadrant matrix. By the addition of context, even social language is made more understandable for the students. For example, directions given orally with gestures are

more easily understood than the same words spoken over the telephone without the aid of gestures.

Vocabulary Acquisition in General

Vocabulary or lexicon is often considered the basis of all language. Many difficulties in both receptive and productive use of the target language (TL) arise from learners' inadequate vocabulary knowledge (Laufer, 1986; Meara, 1980; Nation, 1990). Wilkins (1972) states that "...without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p. 110). Hatch (1983) points out that "... when our first goal is communication...it is the lexicon that is crucial to make basic communication possible" (p. 74). In a classroom context, vocabulary instruction also plays an important role in language acquisition, since one cannot teach the various components of language without using lexical items. Vocabulary knowledge is the ability to understand and use a word automatically for communication. The vocabulary knowledge of second language speakers (L2) can serve as an indicator of their proficiency level of the target language. For example, the knowledge of an advanced level of English speaker should consist of over 7,000 lexical items (Laufer, 1992). Coady (1997) claimed that for understanding advanced and authentic academic texts, L2 learners of English should have "good knowledge of at least 5,000 words, in addition to significant reading skill" (p. 237). For advanced level Chinese learners, the knowledge of the words is over 8,000 (Beijing Language Institute, 1988). Of course, native speakers of either language acquire much larger size vocabularies. According to recent research, the average size of English vocabulary that native English speaking university students know and use is more than 50,000 words (Aitchison, 1996, p. 16).

“It has been said that learning a second language means learning its vocabulary” (Gass, 1999, p. 325). Laufer pointed out, “Any experienced teacher knows that even after students have mastered grammar, they still face masses of unknown words (Laufer, 1986, p. 131). Studies on reading in Second Language Acquisition also demonstrate that vocabularies are the most basic building blocks underlying the reading process. Nevertheless, the vocabulary problem was largely ignored in the study of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) until the 1980s. Partly because of the overwhelming concentration on syntactic structure, vocabulary did not have a separate identity for a long time. Vocabulary was simply treated as a subject within the study of reading or writing. Coady (1997) made a good point that on the one hand students feel that vocabulary words are very important in mastering the language thus they are eager to learn them. On the other hand, instructors feel that teaching vocabulary is a low-level intellectual activity because words will eventually be learned from reading. Thus, they do not teach vocabulary specifically.

Vocabulary acquisition began to attract attention in the 1980s and has generated much research since then. However, most of the research is focused on English as a second/foreign language and includes the following topics: (1) what vocabulary knowledge is, (2) the strategies learners use to acquire vocabulary, and (3) vocabulary teaching.

In second/foreign language education, vocabulary knowledge is defined as “a continuum between ability to make sense of a word and ability to activate the word automatically for productive purposes” (Faerch, Haastrup, & Phillipson, 1984, p. 100). Vocabulary is defined as:

The range of words that is known to an individual. Vocabulary size is an important measure of a person’s literacy level; it generally reflects the

amount of reading a person has done and is commonly used in standardized measures of intelligence. In educational research, it is used as a measure of the level of a child's language development, degree of bilingualism, and level of second language learning. (The Greenwood Dictionary of Education, 2003, p. 375)

Vocabulary can be classified as potential vocabulary, which are new words to the learners, but can be understood upon first encountering them (Palmberg, 1987). Or, it can be active vocabulary that the learners have learned and can understand or use. Nation (1990) developed a list of the various types of vocabulary knowledge: (1) the spoken form of a word, (2) the written form of a word, (3) the grammatical behavior of the word, (4) the collocational behavior of the word, (5) the stylistic register constraints of a word, (6) the conceptual meaning of a word, (7) the associations a word has with other related words, and (8) how frequent the word is. When learners master all these types of knowledge, they are able to use a word in a fluent manner. The studies of vocabulary knowledge have made it clear what learners should master in order to use a word and what the study of vocabulary teaching and acquisition should focus on. The result of these studies has paved the way for further vocabulary acquisition research. Much of this research focuses on vocabulary learning processes and strategies. The research consisted of several experimental studies on lexical acquisition in L2. Extensive reading, lexical inference, structure study and word associations are a few strategies that were found to be effective.

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading to improve learners' vocabulary knowledge is endorsed by many studies (e.g. Carnine, Kameenui, and Coyle, 1984; Clarke & Nation, 1980; Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Krashen, 1989). It is claimed that words can be acquired "incidentally" from extensive reading, and the reasons given are:

- (a) It is contextualized, giving the learner a richer sense of a word's use and meaning than can be provided in traditional paired associate exercises, (b) it is pedagogically efficient in that it enables two activities---vocabulary acquisition and reading---to occur at the same time, and
- (c) It is more individualized and learner-based because the vocabulary being acquired is dependent on the learner's own selection of reading materials.

(Huckin & Coady, 1999, p. 182)

However, all this research on the use of extensive reading and vocabulary was based on the way L1 learners acquire their vocabulary. Many other studies also find that extensive reading does not automatically lead to the acquisition of vocabulary, and there is no clear way to show that a word has been learned incidentally. Paribakht and Wesche (1999) noted that vocabulary acquisition "is in some fundamental sense not 'incidental' (p. 215). It depends on the context surrounding each word, the nature of the learners' attention, the task demands and other factors (Huckin & Coady, 1999). Moreover, increasing vocabulary through extensive reading takes much time and practice and might not be very effective in intensive L2 learning. It is also hard to ask L2 learners at low language levels to do extensive reading. "In spite of the evident role of reading in much advanced vocabulary acquisition, it is also apparent from both research and

experience that the process is slow, often misguided, and seemingly haphazard, with differential outcomes for different learner, word types, and contexts” (Paribakht and Wesche, 1999, p. 197).

Lexical Inference

Other researchers, like Bensoussan (1992), Fraser (1999), Hulstijn (1997) and Scherfer (1993) have discovered that guessing the meaning of words from context, particularly in reading, results in a high rate of vocabulary memory and acquisition. Currently, lexical inference has been strongly suggested in L2 vocabulary development. Nevertheless, as some scholars pointed out, lexical inference will not be successful if a context contains many unknown words or cannot offer enough hints to infer the meaning of a word. Furthermore, “it requires a great deal of prior training in basic vocabulary, word recognition, metacognition, and subject matter” (Huckin & Coady, 1999, p. 190). Therefore, lexical inference is limited in many language contexts and cannot be used all by itself.

Word Associations and Structure Study

Furthermore, Schmitt & Meara (1997) claimed that word associations, which connect or link words that are connected in some manner in a person’s mind, and verbal suffixes, are related to learners’ vocabulary size and can also help the learners acquire vocabulary.

The progress in vocabulary learning is the most focused area in the research of vocabulary acquisition. Studies (Paribakht & Wesche, 1997; Zimmerman, 1997) have concluded that “although vocabulary learning certainly does take place through the presumed ordinary contextual approach, such learning can indeed be improved by adding formal instruction”

(Coady, 1997, p. 287). Through tests, interviews and self-reports, Sanaoui (1995) found that learners who engaged in independent study and self-initiated learning activities of recording, reviewing and practicing lexical items outside their L2 course were more successful in vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, he recommends that vocabulary study should be structured.

Other studies (Nation, 1990) are aimed at vocabulary teaching and teaching techniques. The purpose of vocabulary teaching is to train and help learners to derive and produce meanings from lexical items both by themselves and outside of the classroom (Carter, 1987). Core words and high-frequency words are recommended to be taught first (Carter, 1987; Coady, 1997). The teaching techniques presented are mainly the following:

1. Keyword Imagination: (a) to teach the target language (TL) words through sound associations with the native language, (b) to associate a new word with an imagined picture, or (c) to teach a word with semantic or functional relations (e.g. to learn the word 'food' with related ones like 'meat', 'vegetable', 'knife and fork', 'bowl', 'table and chair', 'kitchen', etc.) (Barcrof, 2003; Gairns & Redman, 1986; Hulstijn, 1997).
2. Context Technique: to teach words in typical contexts (Hulstijn, 1992, 1997; Scherfer, 1993; Shrum & Glisan, 2005).
3. Communication: to teach vocabulary through different communicative activities (Nation, 1990; Nation & Newton, 1997; Shrum & Glisan, 2005).

Summary of Vocabulary Acquisition in General

Although vocabulary has gained its importance status in second language acquisition, no systematic vocabulary acquisition rules have been established, and vocabulary teaching is not as

systematized as the techniques of teaching phonology and syntax. While courses on reading, writing, grammar, speaking and listening are common in L2 programs, there are very few vocabulary courses. In addition, the field still lacks operational comprehensive models; our knowledge is not systematized or synthesized. (Manguerra, 1993) and most studies of vocabulary acquisition and teaching are limited mainly to the area of English as a Second Language (Meara, 1996).

Research in Chinese Vocabulary Acquisition

In comparison to the increasing amount of work in English word acquisition, the studies of Chinese word acquisition are very few and superficial. Only ten years ago research in the Chinese as a second language/Chinese as a foreign language (CSL/CFL) field began to emerge. The reason for this increasing interest in the CSL/CFL field may be due to the economic growth of China in the world market place, and thus a commensurate growth in the popularity of the Chinese language and the realization of the difficulties in learning the language.

In the area of Chinese vocabulary acquisition research, numerous studies have involved character encoding strategies (Hayes, 1988), and word/character recognition in relation to various matters, such as meaning recognition (Everson, 1998), production (Ke, 1996; Laufer, 1998; Laufer & Paribakht, 1998; Lin, 2000), orthographic effect (Yang, 2000), and the reading process (Ke, 1998). When learning Chinese, one expects words that conform to phonetic and orthographic patterns of the learner's mother tongue are easiest to assimilate (Ellis & Beaton, 1993; Laufer, 1990).

Vocabulary is difficult for all CFL learners, and is the main problem in all learning processes i.e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Gao, Li & Guo, 1993). Research on reading in CFL also indicates that word identification undoubtedly facilitates the ability to read Chinese. Due to the challenging nature of Chinese vocabulary and a lack of Chinese word knowledge, it is difficult for Beginning to Advanced CFL learners to identify and isolate units of meaning, to build up Chinese character networks, and to demonstrate intratextual perceptions (i.e. how different parts of a text are integrated into a coherent discourse structure) in Chinese reading; thus, the development of Chinese reading proficiency is seriously hindered (Everson & Ke, 1997, Li, 1997).

However, Chinese word study is still limited to the morphological area, and the discussions are focused on the linguistic description of Chinese words, such as the definition of a ‘word’, word categories and grammatical functions, the historical development of Chinese words and analysis of word structure. The only major achievement in vocabulary pedagogy is the statistics of basic and frequently used words in Modern Chinese. It has been found that 3,000 frequently-used words cover 86.7% of reading materials (Wang, 1986). Among them, 1645 are compounds (Wang, 1994). It has been widely accepted that these high-frequency words have to be taught first in CSL/CFL. Beside this research, only a few studies have discussed some pedagogical techniques in vocabulary teaching. The following techniques have been suggested:

1. Comparative and Contrastive Technique: to compare and contrast the meanings and functions of synonyms (Huang, 1993; Huang, 1990).

2. Key Word Imagination: to image a picture and situation where a key word can describe or be used, or to link a key word with other related words to form a network (Huang, 1994; Lin 1997; Zhang, 1990).
3. Context Technique: to teach words in sentences and contexts (Huang, 1993; Zhang, 1990; Zhu, 1993).
4. Word Structure: to list together the words with the same morpheme, or to analyze word structure in order to help learners distinguish similar words (Liu, 1997; Zhang, 1990).

In conclusion, studies mentioned above are highly limited in both scope and quantity. There is no investigation or analysis of how learners learn, store and produce Chinese words. Furthermore, vocabulary is rarely considered as an important component in textbooks. In most Chinese textbooks currently used, there are only vocabulary lists of Chinese words and their English, or Japanese translation, but no exercises especially designed for learning vocabulary. Given the difficulties of vocabulary learning as stated earlier and the importance of vocabulary to the process of communication, there is a need for research on Chinese vocabulary acquisition and the strategies that native English speakers use to learn speaking, reading, or written Chinese vocabulary. For this very reason, I am motivated to conduct this research from the learners' perspective and emphasize the strategies that native English speakers use to learn written and spoken Chinese vocabulary.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies in General

Vocabulary-learning strategies in this research are defined as “operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information... (they are) specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). Numerous researchers have tried to conceptualize what constitutes vocabulary knowledge (Anderson, 1980; Laufer & Paribakht, 1998; Nation, 1990; Richards, 1976). As elaborated by Anderson (1980), knowing a second language (L2) word includes “*knowing that*” i.e., declarative knowledge of facts, definitions, or relationships; and “*knowing how*” i.e., procedural knowledge about the communicative use of L2 words. The goal in a learning context is to develop oral proficiency with vocabulary acquisition focused mainly on passive and productive vocabulary knowledge in the spoken mode. Much of the research on language-learning strategies has established the role that strategies play in making the learning of various languages more efficient and successful (Chamot, 1993; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975, 1987; Wenden & Rubin, 1987).

The search for learning strategies began with Rubin in 1975, when attention was drawn to what makes a person a good language learner. Research in this area addressed “assumptions found throughout the literature that the difference between successful and unsuccessful language learners is either a factor of the quantity, quality or combination of strategies that learners of each group use” (Kaylani, 1996, p. 77). A distinction between the learning of a language and acquisition of a language was defined. While they are not mutually exclusive, learning is defined as a conscious focus on language rules; acquisition is defined as an unconscious and

spontaneous occurrence in a naturalistic language setting that leads to conversational fluency (Oxford, 1990, p. 4).

In the field of second language acquisition, several studies investigating vocabulary-learning strategies have made a distinction between mnemonic strategies that use systematic techniques to enhance memorization of lexical items in isolation (e.g., word lists) and contextual strategies. The latter strategies are used to enhance the meaningfulness of vocabulary items through the use of context clues embedded in sentences or paragraphs, which elaborate definitions (Sternberg, 1987). Some studies revealed that learners engage in various learning strategies in order to learn vocabulary in a target language (Nation, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden & Rubin, 1987). For example, students use dictionaries, notebooks, word lists, flash cards, repetition, mental imagery, and review. Brown & Perry (1991) provided evidence that the combined strategies that require a deeper level of processing promote and enhance retention of target words. The results of other studies indicated that simple strategies, such as rote repetition, note taking, and word lists were also widely applied by learners and could be effective too (Ahmed, 1989; Cohen & Aphek, 1980; Nation, 1982). Cohen and Aphek further suggested that simple strategies might be more suitable for lower proficiency learners, while intermediate or advanced learners may find tasks or activities that involve contextualizing more effective. As Meara's (1984) research suggested, however, learners of different languages may use different strategies.

Oxford (1990), on the other hand, suggested the choice of language-learning strategies may be the purpose for which a language is learned. The following reported vocabulary strategies were common among learners in learning context:

- (a) Word Lists – One of the most widely used methods of learning vocabulary observed by the researcher is the use of word lists (Nation, 1982). Learners usually focus on rote memorizing of a paired list. To compensate for the fact that the degree of context offered is minimal, learners engage in extensive drilling as follow up; the goal is to help learners in using new words correctly to communicate.
- (b) Flash Cards – some learners employ this technique. It is used for previewing, reviewing, and testing vocabulary items.” In the case of Chinese, learners write down the pinyin and the word on the front of the card, and write the L1 translation and its meaning in English on the back. The act of copying or making flash cards might have both visual and kinesthetic benefits in helping learners to remember the words. Some learners use flashcards as a tool to test themselves with words.
- (c) Word Grouping - The technique of word grouping involves reclassifying the TL terms according to one or more characteristics. New groups or sets of words are grouped together based on some common theme or characteristic. In this way, some degree of context is created. All learners reported that it was helpful to categorize these grouped words in both situational (e.g., according to topic) and semantic sets (e.g., connecting the word to its synonyms or antonyms), along with a number of lexical phrases or idioms that are frequently used in certain situations. In addition, they reported grouping words and practicing them within a story or personal experience. This helped them to remember more effectively, and make specific relations among the words in a group.” Gairns and Redman (1986) and Hulstijn (1997) suggest teaching a word with semantic or functional relations (e.g., to learn the

word ‘food’ with related ones like ‘meat’, ‘vegetable’, ‘knife’ and ‘folk’, ‘bowl’, ‘table and chair’, ‘kitchen’, etc.)

- (d) Visual Imagery – The use of visual imagery for vocabulary learning involves creating associations between an image and a word through sound associations with the native language. With use of visual imagery, the learners are able to associate new information with concepts in their memory through meaningful visual images, and visual images make learning and retention of new words more effective (Sokman, 1993). In addition, Clark and Nation (1980) maintain that memory can be enhanced by linking vocabulary to past experience, “concreteness”, or to visual images, “imaging”.
- (e) Repetition – Various researchers such as O’Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; and Schmitt and Meara, 1997 have identified the value of repetition. Repetition is a simple, widely applied strategy and an effective way to learn a large quantity of vocabulary in a short time.
- (f) Structured Reviewing – All learners reported that they apply the technique of structured reviewing. Each individual, however, has a different definition of “structured” reviewing. For example, some learners review target language (TL) vocabulary at different intervals; others set aside a certain amount of time every day to review everything from vocabularies learned most recently to those learned in the more distant past. Another learner reviews by linking the new word to the word previously learned. Structured reviewing is also supported by Sanaoui’s (1995) finding that learners with higher proficiency levels generally undertake a more self-

initiated, structured vocabulary-learning approach. Overall, the extent of learners' independent study and the range of their self-initiated learning activities indicate that all participants shared common approaches to vocabulary learning. Their vocabulary-learning strategies fit Schmitt's (1997) list of consolidation strategies.

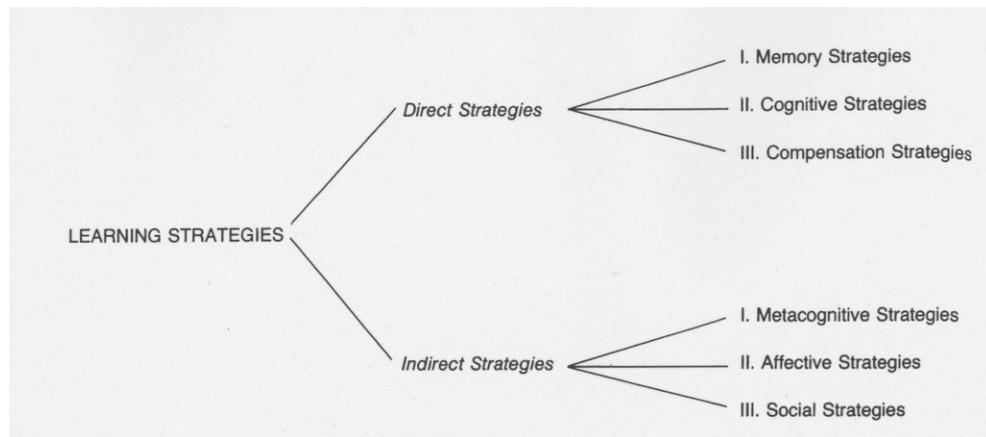
- (g) Other Strategies – Among other strategies used by learners are the following: (1) linguistic associations, i.e., connection of the lexical item with another item in English; (2) use of a bilingual dictionary with pinyin; (3) verification of the correctness of their paraphrasing of a word's meaning or of the synonym provided, through consultation with Chinese-speaking friends, visiting China or Chinese speaking communities ; (4) use of Chinese language media (e.g., radio, news programs, tapes); and (5) keeping a vocabulary notebook.

Furthermore, Oxford (1990) created taxonomy of different strategies that divided into two main, equally important categories (Figure 2). First, the direct strategies, which involve direct use of language and which contain there are three sub-areas: (1) memory strategies that deal with memory and the entering and retrieving of information; (2) cognition strategies that manipulate the reception and production of language; (3) compensation strategies that are used to overcome the limitations of existing knowledge.

The second main category is indirect strategies, which support language learning, but do not directly involve using the language. Under this category, there are three sub-areas: (1) metacognitive strategies that deal with the organization and evaluation of learning; (2) affective

strategies that deal with the management of emotions and attitudes; and (3) social strategies that deal with the learning of a language with the help of others.

Figure 2 Oxford's Taxonomy of Learning Strategies



LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Direct Strategies

- I. *Memory Strategies*
 - A. Creating mental linkages
 - B. Applying images and sound
 - C. Reviewing well
 - D. Employing action
- II. *Cognitive Strategies*
 - A. Practicing
 - B. Receiving and sending messages
 - C. Analyzing and reasoning
 - D. Creating structure of input and output
- III. *Compensation Strategies*
 - A. Guessing intelligently
 - B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

Indirect Strategy

- I. *Metacognitive Strategies*
 - A. Centering your learning
 - B. Arranging and planning your learning
 - C. Evaluation your learning
- II. *Affective Strategies*
 - A. Lowering your anxiety
 - B. Encouraging yourself
 - C. Taking your emotional temperature
- III. *Social Strategies*
 - A. Asking questions
 - B. Cooperating with others
 - C. Empathizing with others

Beliefs and Strategies for Teaching and Learning CFL

Kubler (1997) reported results of a project on Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL), noting 64 insightful recommendations on administrative and pedagogical issues that were addressed to guide teachers, teacher trainers, material writers, and test writers in the field. According to Christensen (1999), "... the recommendations are presented clearly and logically, but lack an empirical basis." Christensen said that the strength of the collective work is that its recommendations provide readers with "concrete suggestions on how to put ideas into practice." However, the weakness is that the authors' beliefs are presented "without providing any documented evidence to support their recommendations." Similar complaints were also attributed to research in foreign language learning.

Since 1997, research in the field has been growing in various directions. More studies are from a learner-centered research perspective, which involves how learners of CFL learn instead of how Chinese-language instructors teach. Chao (1998) conducted a case study on the social and psychological aspects of learners. Chao, like Krashen (1982) concluded that the more a student paid attention to accuracy, the more anxious the student became and the less he or she dared to try.

Furthermore, three researchers, Cui (1998) and Samimy and Lee (1997) gave their attention to the cognitive aspects of learners, such as Chinese learning difficulties and strategies. Samimy and Lee surveyed 31 first-year Chinese learners and ten Chinese-language instructors at Ohio State University to compare learners' and teachers' beliefs about learning CFL. The questions in the survey included both psychological and cognitive components about language learning. The results revealed that most students (86%) felt that accurate pronunciation was important for communication in the target language, and all students believed that it was important to repeat and to practice a lot. Sixty percent of the students felt that if they were permitted to make errors in the target language without being corrected right away, it would be difficult to correct their errors later on. Fifty percent felt that grammar was important, and 46% felt writing was the hardest.

In his study, Cui (1998) interviewed ten successful Chinese-language learners who had superior-level Mandarin speaking skills; either they were teaching China-related subjects in academic institutions or were conducting China-related business in international corporations. Cui asked them about their learning strategies when they learned their Chinese at college and found that all 10 learners recited texts, memorized patterns and sample sentences, imitated

Chinese speech, welcomed correction of errors, and paid close attention to pronunciation. All of these different learner-centered behaviors have contributed to our understanding of the nature of learning CFL. Interestingly, the last two studies show that learners of the Chinese language, either at the beginning level or the superior level, felt strongly that emphases on accuracy and repetition were most important in their learning process.

Kubler (1997) makes his recommendations: “Teachers should recognize that the main goal of language learning is communication. While acquiring good pronunciation is important, as the months proceed, emphasis should gradually be shifted from perfecting pronunciation to attaining fluent communicative competence.” In other words, it is the communicative exercises that should be given the highest priority while individual and choral drills are still valuable. These recommendations reflect that communicative competence and exercises are unquestionably paramount in basic CFL pedagogy.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY**Overview**

This research focuses on the strategies that native English speakers use as they learn to speak and write Chinese vocabulary words in the first year of an elementary Chinese class. The main research question that will guide this study is “what strategies do beginning Chinese learners use to acquire Chinese vocabulary?”

I used qualitative research approaches to conduct this research because it focuses on “discovery; insight, and understandings from the perspectives of those are studied. Having an interest in knowing more about the field and in improving the practice of education leads to asking researchable questions, and some of which are best approached through a qualitative research design” (Merriam, 1998, p.1). The qualitative research methods give researchers like me an in-depth understanding of the individual which is not portrayed in experimental methodologies. Through student surveys, reflection papers, interviews, field notes and observations, I have documented and captured students’ perceptions and their strategies on how to acquire Chinese vocabulary, especially in written form during the school year 2004-2005. In this chapter, I will discuss the issues of internal validity, reliability and external validity in the qualitative methods. Then I will give the background information of the Elementary Chinese class, my teaching philosophy, and the design of this study. I include the background of the Elementary Chinese class and my teaching philosophy in this chapter because they constitute of important elements of the study.

Internal Validity

Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality. One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multi-dimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research (Merriam, 1998). Thus, with rich descriptions, I intend to capture the “reality” through interviews, and observations throughout the semester. Reality, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), is “a multiple set of mental constructions...made by humans; their constructions are in their minds, and they are, in the main, accessible to the humans who make them” (p. 295). Since human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews. As a qualitative researcher, I am thus “closer” to reality than a data collection instrument interjected between researcher and the participants. If reality is viewed in this manner, internal validity, which deals with the question of how research findings match reality, is a definitive strength of qualitative research because I am trying to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening.

Reliability

The reliability issue, on the other hand, can be a problem in the social sciences in general because human behavior is never static, and thus studying it repeatedly will not constant yield the same results as happens in laboratory experiments in hard science. Reliability is defined as the extent to which research findings can be replicated and produce the same results (Merriam,

1998). Nevertheless, the qualitative research method is reliable in the sense that I seek to describe and explain the world as those in the world experience it. “If the researcher’s self is the primary instrument of inquiry, and the self-in-the-world is the best source of knowledge about the social world, and social reality is held to be an emergent property of interacting selves, and the meanings people live by are malleable as a basic feature of social life, then concern over reliability is fanciful” (Bednarz, 1985, p. 303).

Since the term “reliability” in the traditional sense seems like a misfit when applied to qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 288) suggest thinking about the “dependability” or “consistency” of the results obtained from the data. In other words, rather than demanding the same result, qualitative researchers aim to find results that are consistent and dependable with the data collected. With rich, extensive descriptions of my participants and their learning strategies, I hope to provide my readers a deeper understanding of how native English speaking beginning learners of Chinese approach learning written Chinese vocabulary. The readers can then determine how closely their situations match my research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred or generalized to other cases. This answers the external validity concerns which deal with whether or not the results of a research study are generalizable.

External Validity

External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situation (Merriam, 1998). The word “generalizability” can be misleading in qualitative design because it is not done in the same way, as do investigators using experimental or correlational designs. Even though every research study is unique in its own way, readers can

draw on tacit knowledge, intuition, and personal experience, and patterns that explain their own experience as well as events in the world around them. For example, I am interested in understanding the strategies English-speaking beginning Chinese learners use to approach learning written Chinese vocabulary. Other researchers or readers might be able to generalize the information to other English-speaking beginning Chinese learners who are learning the same language elsewhere in the United States. Nevertheless, “it is the reader who has to ask, what is there in this study that I can apply to my own situation, and what clearly does not apply?” (Walker, 1980, p. 34). Kennedy (1979) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend that the researcher is less concerned with generalizing than the reader or user would be. However, the researcher has an obligation to provide enough detailed description of the study’s context to enable readers to compare and decide whether the case is suitable for their situations. In order to ensure the credibility of my research, I will use triangulation of methods, that is, I will obtain multiple sources of data from my students to confirm the emerging findings. I will also use member checking, that is, taking interpretations back to my students and asking them if the results are correctly described. In addition, I will use peer examination, that is, asking other foreign language teachers to comment on the findings as they emerge (Merriam, 1998). As I follow these basic strategies with rich description, I wish to present a valid portrait of my students’ learning journey especially in learning written Chinese.

Background Information about the Elementary Chinese Classes

This study will be conducted at a medium-sized comprehensive university in the Southeastern U.S. Besides Latin, German, French, and Spanish courses, Chinese language is the

only Asian language course offered through the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at this university.

The Elementary Chinese class is unique in that it always has a closed enrollment policy. Not everyone in this university is allowed to enroll in the Elementary Chinese language classes like other foreign languages. This class is associated with a donor-funded scholarship. In order for students to qualify for the scholarship and take the initial Chinese classes, students need to have at least a 3.0 GPA, as well as provide two recommendations, and a personal essay (Appendix A). The application deadline is usually at the end of January of each year. Each application will then be viewed by members of the Kirk Committee. The Kirk Committee is composed of six or seven faculty members whose mission is to select qualified students who demonstrate high motivation for wanting to learn the Chinese language and culture with good leadership skills. Once selected, they are named Kirk Scholars. The 2004 Kirk Scholars began their two semesters of Mandarin Chinese studies with me starting in the fall semester of 2004. In May 2005, they departed for approximately three weeks of travel and study in China, with an itinerary that included visits to Beijing, Shanghai, and Xian. Throughout the entire three weeks of Study Abroad, I was the group leader and guide who accompanied these students.

The summer of 2005 was a unique benchmark for the Kirk Program because my proposal for the reform was approved and put into effect. In the past the Kirk Scholars did not have to take language or cultural classes in China. Instead, they traveled with me from city to city like tourists. Now, starting in the summer of 2005, the Kirk Scholars will have a “home base” at a university in Beijing, the capital city of China for two weeks. Students will be required to take

language and cultural classes in the mornings from Monday to Friday and take excursions out to the city in the afternoons and weekends.

The benefits for the new Summer Study Program are (1) students will have more opportunities to practice and develop their language skills, so they are less likely to forget the language when they begin their second year of Chinese and will also be better motivated to continue their studies of Chinese; (2) students will study the Chinese language and culture half of the day from Monday to Friday and still be able to go on excursions to places such as the Great Wall, Summer Palace, National Museum, local markets or the zoo in the afternoons or weekends; (3) students will establish deeper friendships with local students and other citizens; (4) students will then be given the opportunities to better understand Chinese society and its culture; (5) students and faculty are less likely to burn out by traveling with their heavy luggage from city to city.

The class size of 2004 Kirk Scholars was 15 students. Among these 15 students, fourteen students were American-born native English speakers, that is, English language was their first mother language. There were no heritage learners in my class that is to say none of them know the Chinese language and none of their parents speaks Chinese. Among these 15 students, only one student identified himself as French who was born and raised in France.

The 2004 Elementary Chinese class met three times a week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1:00 PM to 1:50 PM. There was another 50 minute session on Wednesday from 3:00 PM to 3:50 PM in the language lab. The classes met in a midsized-classroom with five large tables in a “U” shape facing the whiteboard. The classroom was designed with wireless multimedia where I could easily access the computer, Video tape, or DVD players whenever I

needed. During the first semester students tend to sit with the friends they knew and in the same vicinity for every lecture as though they found their comfort zones in each corner of the classroom. As the semester went on each student began to form a bond with other students at their table and they were always friendly toward other students in the classroom.

During the scheduled lab, the entire class met in a larger room in the same building down the hall. The language lab had 30 brand new PC computers in the front and some sofa seats at the back of the room for conversation. My TA and I often used this comfortable back room to conduct our weekly conversation hours with the students. There are some cabinets in the room where other language teachers and I store our language software. Students were allowed to come in the language lab whenever there is no class in session to check out the software and work. The language lab is managed by different work-study proctors who are also language conversation partners. Students are encouraged to come to the lab room if not working on the software to practice their conversation with their TAs or language conversation partners.

The Design of the Study

The research took place in the school year of 2004-2005 with an Elementary Chinese Language course taught in Fall Semester 2004 and a consecutive course taught in Spring Semester 2005, followed by a travel/study experience in Summer 2005. I have chosen to pursue this study to seek answers to important questions for my teaching that arose out of my classroom queries as illustrated by Hubbard and Power (1993). My research question is: “what strategies do beginning Chinese learners use to acquire written Chinese vocabulary in their first year of the Elementary Chinese class?” Students were informed in the beginning of the class that their

input would be used to help understand the learning process and learning strategies for native English-speaking beginning Chinese students.

The participants for this study were all full-time students, native English speakers who had no Chinese language background. In the first semester Elementary Chinese class, I began the course by introducing an overview of the Chinese language including the history of non-alphabetic written language, and the tonal system. I used songs, games, stories and visual props throughout both fall and spring semesters to target different learning styles among the students. Since there were limited numbers of Chinese population in and around this university, I also hired one native Chinese student from China to help me conduct extra conversation hours outside of the class with the students. Besides language instruction, I, too, coordinated outside class activities such as the Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn festival as an effort to bring students closer to the Chinese culture. I believe learning is not situated exclusively in the academic world or in the classroom. Thus, I see myself as a cultural ambassador to lead my students to connect their western culture to eastern culture.

In the second semester, the class began on January 10, 2005. I used more communicative approaches in which students were encouraged to use the vocabularies that they learned in the first semester to carry out more conversation with Chinese speakers. I continued to introduce new vocabulary just as I did in the first semester, and created lively situations and activities that engaged students in cultural projects to foster a cooperative learning environment where they actively acquired and shared knowledge. My teaching objective was to develop and improve language skills as well as cultural proficiency in order to provide my students the competencies to live and study more Chinese language in China from May to June of 2005.

Study Procedures

In the first semester, I informed all my students about my intention to conduct research on their learning strategies throughout the year. The research was approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix F). A one-page demographic student survey sheet (Appendix B) was distributed to all 15 students the first week of the fall semester in 2004. The purpose of this survey is to familiarize myself with my students' demographic information and to determine their background and experience in the formal and informal study of Chinese and other languages.

Based on this demographic student survey, I verified that 15 students were taking this Elementary Chinese class as the only Chinese language instruction they had ever taken. Then, I assigned numbers to all 15 students and randomly selected four participants for my qualitative analysis. Random sampling ensures that participants are selected on an unbiased and equitable basis. In the meantime, I collected data from all 15 students so I could still follow up with those who appeared to do better or worse on the written exams. All participants were asked to sign the informed consent forms (Appendix C). The informed consent form included information about “the purpose of the research, its duration and procedures, risks and discomforts and benefits for potential [participants]... and procedures for ensuring confidentiality” (Johnston, 2000, p. 43). By signing informed consent forms, participants were further assured of confidentiality with all information.

Another four-page reflection paper (Appendix D) related to their experiences of learning Chinese was given to all 15 students at end of January, February, and March, 2005. Even though I only selected and was interested in the four participants for my study, I encouraged all 15

students to write their weekly diary about their Chinese learning strategies, four-page reflection papers and do the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) form at the end. In order to deepen my understanding of the students' learning processes, I also conducted three interviews with these four participants at the end of January, February and March 2005. I used the Interview Guide (Appendix E) to guide my personal interviews in English. I asked the participants to describe their learning strategies with me and show me step by step on how they learn the Chinese vocabulary, especially the written characters. Based on their descriptions and "show and tell," I then compared my result with the strategies categories that were suggested by Oxford (1990). The interviews were all audio-taped so I could compare them with my field notes. More detail about each category will be described below.

Demographic Student Survey

The demographic student survey was a one-page survey, which had a total of thirteen questions related to students' demographic background. The survey was given to all 15 students in the class. This demographic survey was used as part of my methodology after my research was approved by Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix F).

In the Demographic Survey, I asked about student background information such as class standing, major program, and all the foreign languages studied in the past, and the language spoken at home with parents and grandparents. Sample items included:

- Is the Chinese language spoken at home or in your family?
- What language do your mother, father, and grandparents speak to you?
- In what language do you speak to your mother, father, and grandparents?

- List the foreign languages that you have previously studied and number of years.
- Last year of taking the foreign languages and where studied?
- What are your motivations for taking this Chinese language course?
- How much did you know about the Chinese language prior to taking this course?
- Have you ever visited Asia or other countries? Where and when?
- Will this course [Chinese] fulfill any requirement?
- What are your goals in learning a foreign language?

The Demographic Student Survey helped me to know my students a little better through these answers about their language background. It also gave me a base-line of how much or how little exposure that particular student had toward other languages and cultures. Through this survey, I began to know and understand my students' interests in a personal way.

Reflection Paper

A four-page reflection paper was used to elicit information about students' Chinese language-learning experiences. The reflection paper was composed of 19 questions, which were distributed three times in spring semester to all 15 students in the class. There were questions that emphasized students' perception of learning the Chinese language, especially the spoken and written forms. Sample items included:

- What were your motivations for taking this Chinese language course?
- What kinds of opportunity do you have to practice your Chinese vocabulary words outside of the classroom?
- Do you find Chinese vocabulary words easy or hard to learn? Please explain.

- From your point of view, what makes Chinese vocabulary words easy or hard to learn?
- Describe the problems you have in learning Chinese vocabulary words. What did you do to overcome these problems?
- How do you study Chinese vocabulary words outside of the class? Please explain.
- What strategy or strategies do you use to learn Chinese vocabulary words? What works and what does not work? Please explain in detail.
- How do you describe your learning strength? Would you describe yourself as visual, audio or other learner?

In the reflection papers, I also included questions that elicit students' feedback and reflection on the course assignments and class activities. I then interviewed the four participants three times in spring semester for follow-up.

In the reflection papers, I purposely avoided the multiple-choice format and replaced it with open-ended questions because any presupposed alternatives in numerical forms might limit students' thoughts about their own answers (Merriam, 1998). The open-ended questions were more effective than passive check-off of one answer from any three or four possible alternatives given by the researcher. With open-ended questions, the researcher can collect participants' true individual responses and identify the heterogeneity of each student's Chinese learning process.

Interviews

The purpose of in-depth interviewing was not to get answers to questions, nor test hypotheses. Instead, the root of in-depth interviewing was an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they made of that experience (Seidman, 1998). I took inspiration for the interview process from Patton (2002) when I interviewed my participants. The experience was like looking through a magnifier of a different world.

Go forth now and question. Ask and listen. The world is just beginning to open up to you. Each person you question can take you into a new part of the world. The skilled questioner and attentive listener know how to enter into another's experience. If you ask and listen, the world will always be new. (Patton, 2002, p. 340)

My major task was building upon and exploring participants' responses to their reflection paper. The goal was to have them reconstruct their experiences of their learning strategies. The interview was conducted in English and was semi-structured, and I was guided by an interview guide (Appendix E). Samples of the interview guide are as follow:

- What are the principal difficulties you have encountered when you were learning Chinese vocabulary words?
- How do you study Chinese vocabulary words? Please walk through the process step by step with me.
- What strategy or strategies do you use to study Chinese vocabulary words? Please illustrate with samples.

- In using the strategies you described earlier, how effective or ineffective was each strategy?
- What teaching methods do you find valuable when learning Chinese vocabulary words?
- What outside activities do you find valuable to assist you in learning Chinese vocabulary words?
- How does learning the Chinese language affect your outlook in life?

I am the only one who knows the identity of the participant during and after the entire research project. During my tape-recorded interview, each interviewee was given a pseudonym and these were used in my final write-up to ensure confidentiality. Each interview took about 60 to 90 minutes. Regarding the length of the interviewing time, Dolbeare and Schuman (1982) and Seidman (1998) all recommended a 90 minute interview because “two hours seems too long to sit at one time. Given that the purpose of this approach was to have the participants reconstruct their experience, put it in the context of their lives, and reflect on its meaning, anything shorter than 90 minutes for each interview seems too short” (Seidman, 1998, p. 14).

There were a total of three personal interviews with the randomly selected four participants. I purposely spread out the three interviews to the end of February, March, and April 2005. During the interviews, there were times I asked the participants to describe or elaborate on their answers that they wrote in the reflection papers. I wanted to give the participants extra opportunities to add to or elaborate on their answers to the reflection papers. I understood that not all participants had the time or patience to write down detailed answers on

the paper since it took time and effort to organize and compose. The personal one-to-one sharing interview eliminated this problem or concern. Furthermore, the oral interview was used to triangulate participants' written answers with their oral descriptions. In terms of the interview location, I conducted the interviews either in my office or in the language lab.

In order to make my participants more comfortable about the first initial interview, I began my interview by showing interest in knowing more about their family, personal and work life. Thus, I asked for details that were not covered in the Demographic Student Survey (Appendix B). Such questions were:

- Where and when were you born?
- How would you describe your racial/ethnic background?
- Who are the members of your immediate family; what is their relationship to you?
- Are you currently employed? If so, what kind of work do you do?
- How long have you been attending college?
- When do you anticipate finishing your program?
- What is your favorite subject? Why?
- What is your least favorite subject? Why?
- What is your career goal?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? What would you like to be doing?

Weekly Diary

All Elementary Chinese students were asked and encouraged to write a weekly diary. Specifically, I asked the students to explain in their weekly diary how they approach learning and mastering new vocabulary throughout the entire school year. Students could make diary entries in either English or Chinese language.

Twice a year, students were also asked to give an analogy of their experience in learning the Chinese language. They were asked to finish a statement such as “learning Chinese is like...” and provide a drawing to illustrate their points. I then asked the students to explain their drawings and their strategies in learning the Chinese vocabulary words with the rest of the class. I saw this information as a way to triangulate the information that I collected from those four selected participants. Students might be embarrassed in sharing their reflection on their learning experiences because they had to show their drawings in front of their classmates. However, the processes of writing weekly diary and reflection papers often proved to be cathartic for the students. For example, students told me that “they felt relieved to learn that they were not the only ones who were having difficulties learning the Chinese language. This gave me the confidence to further continue my learning in the class.”

Observation and Field Notes

I also kept a journal of my teaching methods and observations of all fifteen students in every class throughout the spring semester. My notes were used to compare with those of the four students as a way to triangulate the information collected.

The Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Data sources for this study were reflection papers, weekly diaries, and field notes. I also used the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1989). The SILL is a survey instrument used cross-culturally to measure frequency of strategy use among language learners. It has internal consistency reliability in the 90th percentile range, and strong predictive validity with relation to language performance, learning style, and setting characteristics (Oxford, 1986, 1990, 1992; Oxford & Burry-Sock, 1995). It has been used for a variety of languages. It contains six categories in which students rate their use of strategies. Students were asked to read each statement of the SILL and write the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) in the bracket provided that reflected how the statement was in relation to them. For example,

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

The mean score in each category is a three ($m=3$). If the participants scored a four or higher ($m \geq 4$) or a five ($m=5$) in any categories, then I would classify them as having “High” scales in those categories. If the participants scored a two or lower ($m \leq 2$) or a one ($m=1$), then I would classify them as having “Low” scales in those categories.

As Oxford suggested, before I administered the SILL, I gave students advance notice at the end of spring semester in 2005 and asked all 15 students in my class to take the survey. I explained that the SILL was designed to help students to understand how they learn the Chinese

language and how this information could help them become better learners (p. 278). I thanked the students for taking time to write their diaries, reflection papers and participating in my study. I also told them it would be helpful to be thinking about and noticing the things they did to learn the Chinese language when they took the SILL questionnaire. I reminded the students that there were no right or wrong answers and asked them to answer each statement in terms of how well the statement described them instead of how they thought they should be, or what other people did. I also assured the confidentiality of the results of their SILL surveys. Students took about 20-30 minutes to complete the task. Once I collected the SILL from all 15 students, I secured them in a safe place and began my analysis for each section after my completion of the qualitative analysis. When I did my calculations and analysis for all 15 students in the class, I purposely blacked out their names because I did not want to have preconceived ideas about my participants when I wrote the descriptive analysis of them. It was only until I finished my qualitative analysis of the four participants that I began to look at the results of the SILL again.

Part A of the SILL contains nine questions that reveal strategies related to remembering more effectively, which are all direct strategies. They are:

- (1) I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in Chinese.
- (2) I use new Chinese words in a sentence so I can remember them.
- (3) I connect the sound of a new Chinese word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
- (4) I remember a new Chinese by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.

- (5) I use rhymes to remember new Chinese words.
- (6) I use flashcards to remember new Chinese words.
- (7) I physically act out new Chinese words.
- (8) I review Chinese lessons often.
- (9) I remember new Chinese words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

Part B of the SILL contains fourteen questions that reveal strategies related to using all your mental processes, which are all direct strategies, too. They are:

- (1) I say or write new Chinese words several times.
- (2) I try to talk like native Chinese speakers.
- (3) I practice the sounds of Chinese.
- (4) I use the Chinese words I know in different ways.
- (5) I start conversation in Chinese.
- (6) I watch Chinese language TV shows spoken in Chinese or go to movies spoken in Chinese.
- (7) I read for pleasure in Chinese.
- (8) I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in Chinese.
- (9) I first skim a Chinese passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
- (10) I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in Chinese.
- (11) I try to find patterns in Chinese.
- (12) I find the meaning of a Chinese word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
- (13) I try not to translate word-for-word.

(14) I make summaries of information that I hear or read in Chinese.

Part C of the SILL contains six questions that compensating for missing knowledge, which are also direct strategies. They are:

- (1) To understand unfamiliar Chinese words, I make guesses.
- (2) When I can't think of a word during a conversation in Chinese, I use gestures.
- (3) I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in Chinese.
- (4) I read Chinese without looking up every new word.
- (5) I try to guess what the other person will say next in Chinese.
- (6) If I can't think of a Chinese word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

Oxford classified all the above strategies under memory strategies. The key functions of all the memory strategies are storage and retrieval of new information. Part D to Part F of the SILL is all related to indirect strategies, which are divided into metacognitive, affective, and social components. Part D contains nine questions of metacognitive strategies that reveal strategies related to planning, organizing and evaluating of self learning. They are:

- (1) I try to find as many ways as I can to use my Chinese.
- (2) I notice my Chinese mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
- (3) I pay attention when someone is speaking Chinese.
- (4) I try to find out how to be a better learner of Chinese.
- (5) I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study Chinese.
- (6) I look for people I can talk to in Chinese.

- (7) I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in Chinese.
- (8) I have clear goals for improving my Chinese skills.
- (9) I think about my progress in learning Chinese.

Part E of the SILL contains six questions that reveal affective strategies that help to manage self emotions, motivations, and attitudes. They are:

- (1) I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using Chinese.
- (2) I encourage myself to speak Chinese even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
- (3) I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in Chinese.
- (4) I notice I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using Chinese.
- (5) I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
- (6) I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning Chinese.

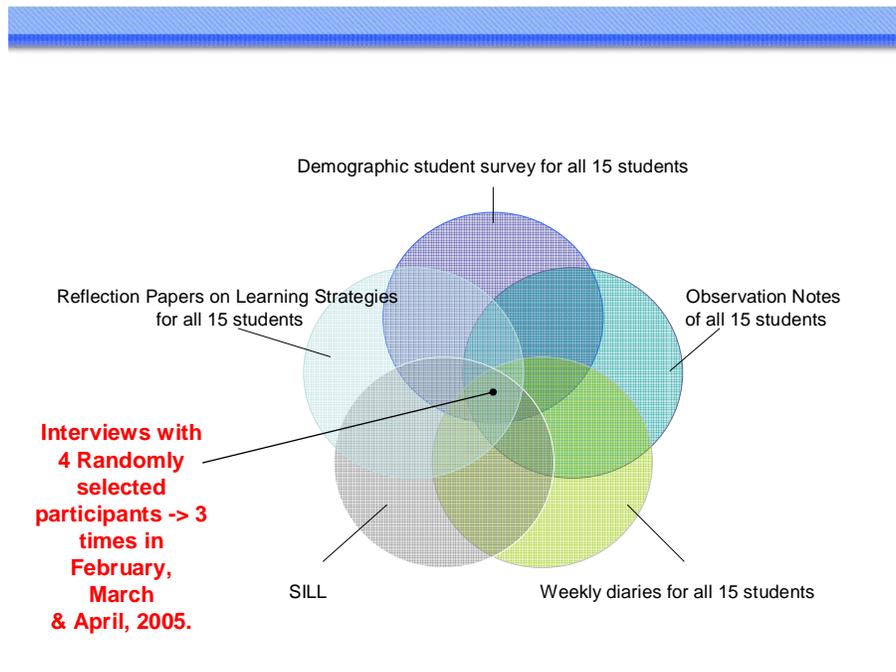
Part F of the SILL contains six questions that reveal social strategies related to learning with others. They are:

- (1) If I do not understand something in Chinese, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
- (2) I ask Chinese speakers to correct me when I talk.
- (3) I practice Chinese with other students.
- (4) I ask for help from Chinese speakers.
- (5) I ask questions in Chinese.

(6) I try to learn about the culture of Chinese speakers.

In summary, the SILL asked learners to comment on the frequency of eight different items which represented the six different direct and indirect strategies of Oxford's taxonomy (Oxford, 1990). The results showed how frequently strategies were used in general, and which group of strategies was used the most. Since the SILL was created as a cross-sectional tool, not a task-based tool, it would provide me another dimension to triangulate students' learning strategies. Figure 3 below illustrates the summary of my data collection.

Figure 3 Summary of Data Collection



Limitations of the Study

Since I was the only teacher of Mandarin Chinese at this university, I was limited in my role as participant observer. First, the only chance I had to be an observer was during lab hours or when the class was broken into small groups for discussion or role playing. However, because of my role as the teacher of the course, I was able to constantly engage and monitor participants' learning processes and make meaning of their participation (Eisner, 1998). Furthermore, since it was natural for me to spend time with participants in class and during lab hours, I did not cause participants or other teachers to feel uncomfortable which might have had an effect on the students and teacher interaction (Merriam, 1998).

Secondly, because my first language is not English, and I am not from a Euro-American background, my understanding and use of English may not be the same as that of my participants. This might have hindered my understanding of participants' struggles in learning the Chinese language. Nevertheless, I understood the Chinese language and the culture that my participants were learning and I had first-hand experience of going through the struggles of learning English as a second/foreign language myself. I found my rich experiences to be a valuable asset because they enabled me to become both an outsider and insider during my research.

Because of my Chinese background and my role as a teacher and researcher, I knew my expectations for my students and for myself were not the same. Thus, I was open-minded when I collected the data in this study. Reflexivity is an interactive and cyclical phenomenon in which the qualitative researcher is open to the interplay of what is considered fact and opinion (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Data Analysis

A rich and meaningful analysis of the data would not be possible if I had not begun my analysis before all data were collected (Merriam, 1998). I began analyzing the data in the fall semester of 2004 when my participants turned in their demographic information, and continued in spring 2005 with their reflection paper, weekly diary and interviews throughout the whole semester. There are three important components of my analysis. They are content analysis, ongoing analysis, and data management.

1. Content Analysis

In order to understand and make sense of all the demographic student surveys, reflection papers, weekly diaries, observation, field notes, and in-depth interviews, I used content analysis. Content analysis is a method used to reduce the volume of qualitative material in order to identify core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2002). Content analysis involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling the primary patterns in the data. This essentially means analyzing the core content of interviews and documents to determine what is significant. In other words, through content analysis, I identified core meanings of patterns in these four participants' interview transcripts, diaries, and other documents I collected. Once the patterns were identified, I further analyzed them and developed themes that I eventually reduced to key themes that accounted for the preponderance of the data. The differences between pattern and theme are that a "pattern usually refers to a descriptive finding; and theme takes a more categorical or topical form" (Patton, 2002, p.453). Theme is an analytical statement that identifies links between categories or patterns. It offers an explanation for patterns that requires

a higher level of interpretation than a pattern. Lastly, I compared my findings with the SILL that participants took toward the end of spring semester in 2005.

To analyze the data from my interviews, I applied the following procedure. First, I read the entire transcript of each interview to have an overall idea of the content. Then, I re-read the transcripts and made comments on another piece of paper about what I could do with the different parts of the data. I organized the data into topics and categories such as motivation, anxiety, strategies of learning, coding and recoding group codes to develop themes. I designed an analysis chart with two columns. I put the original raw data in the left column, and in the right column I put my reflections, observations and analysis which helped me to develop themes. Rossman and Rallis's (2003) suggestions for generating categories, themes and coding were applied in the analytic process of this study. They argued that "coding is the formal representation of categorizing and thematic analysis" (p.284), and I followed their suggestions by "looking for recurring words" from participants' descriptions. I also developed code schemes in three phases in the process of coding and searching for themes (Appendix H). The first coding was "simple" and "used four or five categories initially" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 286). Next, I recoded the data, refined and added codes. Moreover, during the process of searching for themes, I reminded myself of the research questions and theoretical perspectives guiding my research. Additionally, I kept in mind that "qualitative studies prove(d) a blend of analysis and indigenous categorizations" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.283). Indigenous categories are from categories representing researchers' views and are developed through deductive analysis. These categories are "developed through the literature or through previous experiences that are expressed in the conceptual framework" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 283). Therefore, during

the process of the analysis for this study, I combined both inductive and deductive analyses to provide a balance between insiders and outsiders' views. The final review of the transcriptions was used to find examples of different themes, to give consideration to adding or deleting a theme, and to form new questions for the next interview.

2. Ongoing Analysis

As for ongoing analyses, in addition to analysis of my interview transcripts, I continuously reviewed and reflected on my field notes, the audio-taped interviews with participants, and my personal teaching journal. These reflections and decisions enabled me to shape further inquiry and to reform previous themes. The data collection and analysis were actually happening at the same time. Lahman (2001) stated that this process is called the cyclical process of data collection. Some of my reflections were incorporated into a few important threads suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1998): (a) trying to make decisions that narrow the study, (b) developing analytic questions, (c) planning to pursue specific leads for the next data collection, (d) challenging my thinking, (e) writing analytical memos, (f) exploring literature and (g) playing with metaphors, analogies and concepts.

3. Data Management

In regard to management of data, I used several management strategies to organize my data. I created file folders on the computer and in hard copy for each participant and kept their materials separately in these respective folders. I recorded interviews using a digital recorder

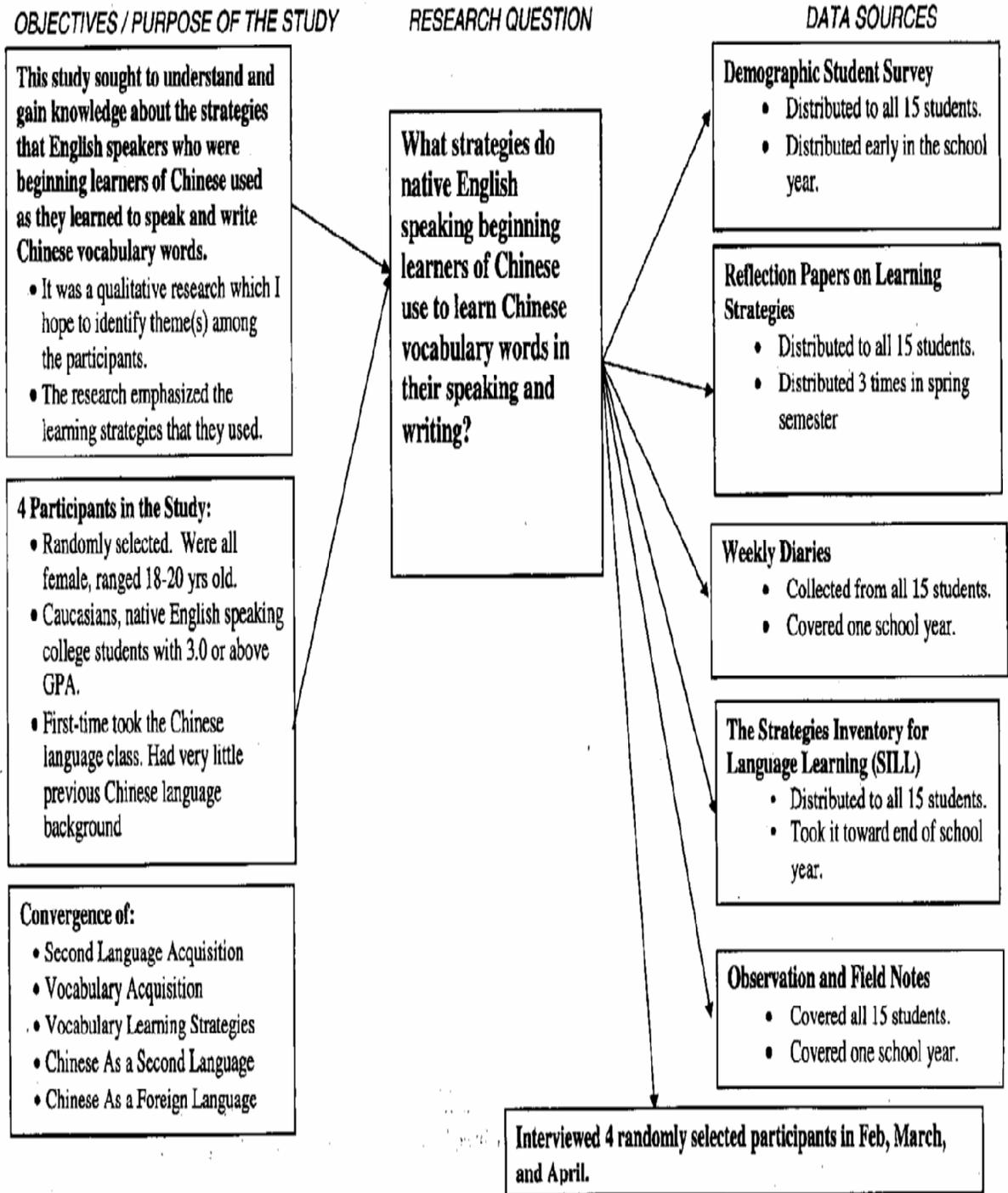
and saved them in the computer files, and transcribed them to hard copies. I also highlighted relevant content in my own notes and students' journals.

Summary

This study was designed to bring in-depth understanding of the strategies that native English speakers at the college level use as they learn to speak and write Chinese vocabulary words in the first year of an elementary Chinese class. The research question was: what strategies do college level native English speaking beginning learners of Chinese use to learn Chinese vocabulary words? The study was conducted at a medium-sized comprehensive university in the Southeastern U.S. Data collection occurred during the school year of 2004-2005. A random sampling of four students of an intact class of 15 was conducted in the first year of Chinese study and used for qualitative analyses. Tools of data collection included a demographic student survey, two reflection papers, three interviews, my observations and field notes, the students' weekly diaries and a one-time administration of the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Strategies of data analysis included content analysis and ongoing analysis. Since I am not from a Euro-American background, and I was the researcher and the teacher of the Chinese class for my research, it might become a limitation to this research. Nevertheless, I understand the frustration and struggle to learn a foreign language. Thus, I constantly monitored my thinking processes, reminding myself to be reflexive and open-minded to the data. (See the Research Design Chart in Figure 4 below).

Figure 4 Research Design Chart

Student Approaches to Learning Chinese Vocabulary



Chapter Four

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, I was interested in discovering the strategies four native English-speakers used to learn elementary Chinese vocabulary words in an introductory college course “Elementary Chinese”. The study was conducted at a medium-sized comprehensive university in Southwest Virginia. The 15 students in the Chinese class were of a homogeneous background, that is, they were from English speaking Caucasian American families. Four students from this class were selected for in-depth analysis. These four students ranged in age from 18 to 20 years and were of sophomore, junior or senior rank (Table 1). The study relied upon the following methodological tools: in-depth interviews with four participants; researcher/teacher’s observations and field notes; students’ reflection papers and diaries; demographic information; and results from the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). As I read and interpreted interview transcripts and conducted content checks with participants, I developed a comprehensive understanding of how the participants learned Chinese vocabulary. Based upon this inquiry and my understanding of the data, I also developed a descriptive profile of each student which I used to identify underlying themes from across all the data. The four major themes that I discovered were: (1) types of learners and the learning strategies participants used, (2) language learning motivations, (3) learning difficulties, and (4) most beneficial learning activities identified.

Table 1 Summary Description of All Four Participants in this Research

	Betty	Cathy	Sandy	Jenny
Sex	F	F	F	F
Year of School	Sophomore (19 years old)	Senior (20 years old)	Sophomore (18 years old)	Junior (20 years old)
Major	Social Work	Psychology	English	Interior Design
Previous Foreign Language Taken	5 years of Spanish in high school	5.5 years of Spanish in high school	One year of Spanish & 2 years of French in high school	One semester of French & one semester of Spanish in high school
Country Visited	Spain (2000); Hungary & Austria (2001); and Italy (2004)	None	None	None

The interviews were conducted in my office at a medium-sized comprehensive university in Southwest Virginia. Each interview took approximately 60 to 90 minutes to complete. The interviews were each audio-taped and transcribed for this study. Student participants were given pseudonyms to protect privacy, so real names of the interviewees do not appear in this dissertation.

The interviews were conducted in English and were semi-structured, that is, shaped by an interview guide (see Appendix E). The interviews validated the data from student's reflection papers and diaries by building upon and exploring participants' responses in their reflection papers and diaries. The interviews also enabled participants to verbally reconstruct their learning

strategies and experiences, which furthered analysis of the learning process for these four students. The following section provides a summary of the four learning themes used by students in this study.

Introduction of the Four Participants in this Research

Before introducing the thematic finding of the interviews, it is essential to introduce the four college participants in this study using pseudonyms: Betty, Cathy, Sandy, and Jenny. Their language and academic background was summarized in Table 1.

Participant #1- Betty

Betty was 19, a sophomore, majoring in Social Work. She appeared to be very energetic, talkative, and outgoing. Her college English teacher described her as a “delightful student who is extremely dedicated to her education and future” (Recommendation Letter, 1/20/2004). Her Philosophy and Religious Studies professor described her as “a hardworking, serious student. She is a likable person with a good sense of humor” (Recommendation Letter, 1/6/2004).

Betty grew up in Annandale, Virginia. She commented that Annandale was fairly diverse, and thus she grew up greatly appreciating the opportunity to live with many different ethnic groups. As a result, Betty developed a natural curiosity and sensitivity toward other races and cultures. She wrote:

The study of different cultures has always been something that has fascinated me. China is a country that is rising as a world power, which makes it that much more important to study in the twenty-first century. I also believe that learning a

foreign language, such as Chinese, is vital when it comes to understanding a culture. This is because there are words and concepts that a country has in their language that we do not have in the English language (Biography, 2004).

Betty had never visited Asia before she took Elementary Chinese. Nevertheless, she always wanted to travel to Asia to learn the culture. She was also very interested in learning Chinese because it is different from Western languages. Betty applied for a special scholarship to study the Chinese language during her sophomore year. She planned to use the Chinese language to improve her chances of doing international work in anthropology or related fields.

In high school, Betty took five years of Spanish. She was a member of the Spanish Honor Society for four years and toured Spain in 2000. She also visited Hungary and Austria in 2001, Italy in 2004, and Canada as a child. Compared to the other 14 students in Elementary Chinese, Betty is well traveled. Betty's career goal is to receive a Masters of Social Work and eventually become a licensed clinical social worker specializing in children and families. In her demographic student survey, she wrote, "In five years I want to be apprenticing in a large urban area in order to get my clinical license to be a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)" (Demographic Student Survey, 8/21/2005).

Participant # 2 - Cathy

Cathy was 20, a senior Psychology major. Compared to Betty, Cathy seemed quiet and more reserved. Her Psychology teacher said, "She is not only an outstanding scholar, but Cathy is nothing short of the most vivacious and positively enthusiastic individual whom I have ever met. She thrives in interpersonal situations. Cathy is dedicated to helping others enjoy and make

the most of their experience in the college year” (Recommendation Letter, 1/12/2004). In the eyes of a New Student Programs Director, Cathy represents the perfect student leader. “She has a maturity and sense of herself not commonly found in undergraduate students. Most importantly, she has the ability to both lead and to follow. When Cathy sees the need to step forward, she does. Otherwise, she is comfortable working as part of a team; always positive and bringing energy to her group” (Recommendation Letter, 1/14/2004).

Cathy was born and lived in Charlotte, NC until she was 16. Cathy moved from Charlotte to Easton, PA, a medium-sized town north of Philadelphia, for two years before starting college in Virginia. Cathy has two adapted siblings from South Korea. In her biography, she wrote, “Culture has always been a very significant influence and aspect in the development of my adult self and character. In my family life alone, with two of my siblings being adopted from South Korea, I learned the importance of hosting unbiased and open-minded appreciations for other cultures and all they may offer to my own” (Biography, 2004). Cathy previously took Spanish to fulfill the language requirement for her Bachelor of Arts program. Cathy took Chinese in part because she felt learning another foreign language would better prepare her for the working world. She also appreciated the challenge of learning a language that involved more than just verb conjugations. She wrote, “The benefit of a foreign language course is the introduction to historical, culinary, or even religious elements of a different civilization” (Reflection Paper, 1/25/2005).

Between high school and college, Cathy took a total of five and a half years of Spanish. She has been very active in academic and leadership roles. She received a superior rating from the National Federation of Music for seven consecutive years, and she was on the Dean’s List at

the university for two years. Cathy had never visited Asia or traveled outside the US. Cathy earned a B.S. in Psychology, and she wants to pursue an M.A. in Pastoral Ministry, and M.A/M.S. in Counseling Psychology. She would like to counsel youth and families as a minister. She is particularly interested in working with families who are adopting children from Asia. In her demographic student survey, she wrote, “In five years I see myself starting my career – applying my various degrees and possibly working on my Ph.D. I hope to start a family, but always continue my education and cultural/travel experiences” (Demographic Student Survey, 8/21/2004).

Participant #3 - Sandy

Sandy was 18, and a sophomore majoring in English. She was the youngest among the four study participants. Sandy appeared to be a gentle and easygoing student. Her teacher wrote in his recommendation that, “Aside from her accomplishments in the classroom and community, I would be remiss if I did not mention that Sandy is the most personable and easygoing individual. She is not pretentious, but self confident and most pleasant” (Recommendation Letter, 1/26/2004). With transfer hours from high school AP classes, Sandy began her college studies as a sophomore, and still earned a 4.0 GPA. Sandy was actively involved in several campus and community activities. Her teachers identified her as a “growing star of a passionate leader” (Recommendation Letter, 1/21/2004).

Sandy grew up in Johnson City, TN. It was a small homogeneous Appalachian community, where she could only dream about living in a different country or culture. In her biography, she wrote, “Ever since I was a young girl, I have had the desire to learn about

different places and their cultures, and then to travel to these locations. I have always held a romanticized idea of what it is like to live in an area completely different from the only world I have ever known. However, I have not been able to fulfill my desires to travel and learn about how people outside of the United States really live” (Biography, 2005).

Sandy is an English major with a concentration in Education. She would like to become a certified teacher of grades 6 to 12 and is considering studying Student Affairs in graduate school so she could work on a college campus. Depending on whether she attends graduate school, she envisioned herself teaching or working at a university during the next five years. Sandy understands the importance of having an appreciation of international culture to share with her students.

In high school, Sandy took one year of Spanish and two years of French. She had very little knowledge of Chinese language or culture prior to taking the course. In her demographic survey, she wrote, “I was not taught about the culture in high school, so I just know what I saw or heard of on TV or movies or other articles. All I knew about the Chinese language was that it used characters instead of an alphabet” (Demographic Student Survey, 8/21/2005). Sandy never visited Asia or other countries before the Study Abroad Program to China in summer 2005. Thus, she was very excited about the opportunity to visit China and practice her language skills.

Participant #4 - Jenny

Jenny was 20 and a Junior majoring in Interior Design. She had an energetic and bubbly personality. Her Interior Design teacher described her this way, “[Jenny] came out at the very top of her class in both of these courses [Interior Design Studio and History of Interiors courses],

demonstrating not only her intellectual abilities, but also her work ethic, creativity, discipline, and positive attitude toward learning. [Jenny] is a mature and focused student. She knows what she wants, demonstrates a keen curiosity, and takes responsibility for her own learning” (Recommendation Letter, 1/16/2004). Her other Interior Design teacher further confirmed that she was well respected by faculty and her peers. She wrote, “[Jenny] was the type of student we want to have in our program and in the professional design field. She puts a 100% into her class work and puts in long hours without complaint. She sets high standards for herself” (Recommendation Letter, 1/28/2004).

Jenny was born in Latrobe, Pennsylvania where she lived for 18 years before her father was transferred to Roanoke, Virginia. Jenny has never traveled outside the US. In high school Jenny took a semester each of French and Spanish. She wrote in her biography, “I took these classes for two semesters but never had the chance to visit a place where I could speak the language. A chance like this [Going to China after one year of studying] doesn’t come around often and being able to speak the language and interact with people in China would be amazing. I want to have the option to say that I went to China and had the experience of a lifetime. I want to see how other cultures live and how they adapt to different life styles” (Biography, 2004).

During her interview, Jenny stressed that she worked very hard on all her subjects. Having critical parents, she “never brought home anything less than a C because [she] would be terrified to bring that home” (Interview, 1/28/2005). Her dad would not be happy if she came home with anything other than an “A” grade.

Jenny wants to become a successful Interior designer and one day run her own company. When asked about “where do you see yourself in five years”, she openly admitted that she wants

to have “a successful career as well as getting married” (Demographic Student Survey, 8/21/2004). Because of her background as an Interior Design Major, Jenny briefly studied Chinese culture in her history of interiors class. “In this class we focused on different styles of homes, their exterior architecture, and famous places such as the Forbidden City,” wrote Jenny (Biography, 2004). Jenny showed great enthusiasm and excitement about the opportunity to visit China after one year of language study. Jenny explained that in her history of interior class, she could only see two-dimensional pictures, but “it would be amazing to be able to see three-dimensional forms when I visit China!” (Biography, 2004).

In summary, all four participants were randomly selected from a pool of numbers to participate in this research. They represented four of 15 students who were taking first year Elementary Chinese at the university. They were all females age 18-20, were all outstanding undergraduate students but not first year freshman, they all grew up in English-speaking families, and all had previous foreign training (Table 1).

Interpretations and Analysis of Four Themes

The following sections describe the four learning themes: (1) types of learners and the learning strategies participants used, (2) language learning motivations, (3) learning difficulties and (4) most beneficial activities students identified. Examples and quotations are from participants’ interviews, reflection papers, and their diaries for the thematic discussion topics.

Theme #1 - Types of Learners and the Language Learning Strategies Participants Used

The personalities and learning styles of the four participants were different, which affected the strategies they chose to learn Chinese. Betty claimed she was an auditory learner. Cathy claimed she was both a visual and auditory learner. Sandy claimed to be both a visual and auditory learner, while Jenny claimed she preferred visual as well as kinesthetic learning.

Learning Chinese vocabulary is not easy and involves five distinct processes or steps: (1) memorizing the sound, (2) memorizing the Pinyin, (3) memorizing the form of the characters, (4) memorizing the English translation of the Chinese words, and (5) memorizing the usage of the words in sentences. Chinese has been classified as a Group IV language and is considered more difficult to learn than Romance languages. “In Group IV, we can place non-Indo-European languages with non-Roman orthographies and complex grammatical Language-Specific Prediction (MacWhinney, 1997). Since novice learners of Chinese have no ability to pronounce new words in Chinese, they have to associate the characters with the sound and memorize them. In other words, instead of taking the three steps of: 1) memorizing the sounds, 2) spelling the words, and 3) using the words, like the Romance languages, novice Chinese learners have to take five steps to master the same vocabulary. Below, the four participants are described according to the types of learners they claimed to be and the strategies they used to learn Chinese vocabulary. Since the students’ adoption of learning strategies was an internal process, I used the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) to help interpret and classify the strategies that the four participants used. I also used SILL to triangulate the data that I collected through their reflection papers, weekly diaries, and interviews.

Participant #1 - Betty

Betty claimed to be a stronger auditory learner than a visual learner. Betty scored the maximum of 5 points on each of the following questions on SILL, indicating the statements are likely true of the respondent:

- I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using Chinese.
- I encourage myself to speak Chinese even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
- I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
- I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning Chinese.
- If I do not understand something in Chinese, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
- I ask Chinese speakers to correct me when I talk.
- I practice Chinese with other students.
- I try to learn about the culture of Chinese speakers.

Being a strong auditory learner, Betty learned well when information was presented orally. In the classroom, Betty benefited from listening and group-discussions. When trying to remember something, Betty said she could often "hear" the way teachers or someone else in group-discussions pronounced words. She admitted that she learned best while interacting with others in a listening/speaking exchange.

Betty was not a strong visual learner. In the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), she pointed out that she usually could not remember a new Chinese word by making a mental picture of the word. She also did not find flashcards helpful for remembering new Chinese words. These results are consistent with the learning styles reflected in Betty's reflection papers, diary, and interviews. Betty stated in her interview,

“I could learn Spanish or other subjects by listening to the teacher’s lectures and took notes without looking at the teachers because once I heard the sounds I knew how to spell the words. However, I could never learn the Chinese language without looking to the writings on the whiteboard. I had to force myself to pay attention on how you [the teacher] write the Chinese characters on the whiteboard with the right stroke orders” (Interview, 3/23/2005).

Writing Chinese characters requires students to follow a precise ordered sequence of strokes. The process usually takes many steps depending on the complexity of the character. Many American students find the Chinese writing rules very complex and tedious because they were used to writing in their own free styles. However, many students found characters had an artistic quality and they referred to writing Chinese as “drawing” pictures. Betty stated that since she was not a visual person, she found learning Chinese characters exhaustive and draining. The complexity of learning written Chinese frustrated auditory learners like Betty.

Betty did not seek out opportunities to reinforce her language learning by speaking and listening to native Chinese speakers in the community. Instead, she wrote, “I learned Chinese mostly by writing the characters over and over again, and saying the words out loud as I was writing the characters. Going over the sentence structure and giving examples of sentences in class, but unless I have studied before class, it is hard to stay with the class (Reflection Paper, 3/7/2005).” Because there was little reinforcement outside the classroom, Betty was unable to learn Chinese using her auditory learning skills. However, when Betty arrived in China, she learned to speak Chinese more quickly than the visual learners in the group.

The learning strategy that Betty developed to take advantage of her auditory learning strength was to repeatedly write and verbalize each character. By saying the Chinese words over and over again, she could train her ears to memorize the Pinyin. By writing the words repeatedly, Betty could then memorize the form of the Chinese words. She said, “If I don’t do this after class, then everything I learned in class is not reiterated to me (Interview, 3/23/2005).” In her reflection papers, she also wrote, “To learn Chinese vocabulary words, I repeat them in my head and I write them consistently over and over again, including the Pinyin and the character. Unless, I can say the Chinese language in my head, I don’t think I learned the vocabulary. I memorize the Chinese sentences like I am memorizing songs. So when I have a test in class, you might say a sentence structure and I can match it up with the “song” in my ears and I would get it (Reflection Paper, 3/7/2005).” Betty also used a dry erase board to write new Chinese vocabulary. She said by using the dry erase board she could easily repeat writing the words. She tried to remember the stroke order as a technique for writing new characters.

Betty scored high ($M=4.16$) in Part C – “Compensating for missing knowledge” in the SILL, where she guessed intelligently when she did not know the Chinese words and found ways to overcome limitations in speaking and writing Chinese. Betty used several guessing strategies to compensate for missing knowledge. These strategies included: using gestures when she could not think of a word during a conversation in Chinese; and using a word or phrase that meant the same thing if she could not think of a Chinese word. Betty also tried to guess what the other person would say next in Chinese, made up new words if she did not know the right ones in Chinese, and read Chinese without looking up every new word. Given Betty’s well-traveled

history, bubbling personality and personal skills, it was not surprising that she utilized a variety of guessing strategies to compensate for missing knowledge.

Betty scored low (M=2.33) on Part D – “Organizing and evaluating your learning” section of her SILL survey. Betty indicated little or no desire to read Chinese for pleasure or find opportunities to use Chinese such as in written notes, messages, or letters. She had no clear goals for improving her Chinese skills nor did she think about her progress in learning Chinese. She did not capitalize on her mistakes to improve her Chinese skills. In addition, she did not seek out Chinese speakers to practice her skills. Betty’s reflection papers, diary entries, and interviews reveal that Betty did not have confidence in using Chinese. Because Betty was not motivated to use Chinese outside of class, she was unable to reinforce the language and thus remained a novice learner.

Somewhat surprising however was the fact that Betty usually allocated sufficient time to study Chinese. I also observed during the semester that, “Betty is doing well in class. However, she is ONLY concerned about the material that will be covered on the test and she shows little interest or no interest in learning new vocabulary that she can use in her daily life (Observation Note, 4/6/2005)”. My overall assessment of Betty as a student at the end of the semester was that her overarching concern was getting an “A” grade rather than attempting to master the Chinese language.

Betty scored high (M=4.67) in Part E – “Managing your emotions” in SILL, reflected that Betty did very well in managing her emotions in the Chinese language class. I was a little surprised with this result because Betty had always been a “conscientious” learner. She could become very stressed if she did not feel that she was in control of the subject matter. However,

maybe because she was a very experienced traveler, she knew what to expect during the summer trip to China. Thus, it was easier for her to manage her emotions and not be intimidated or show disappointment when she was unable to communicate in China. Furthermore, since Betty was trained to be a social worker, she understood the frustration and was better able to deal with stress.

Betty also scored high (M=4.67) in Part F – “Learning with others” in the SILL. In China, Betty enjoyed learning with other students and native Chinese speakers. She was not shy about asking others to slow down or repeat phrases she did not understand in Chinese. Betty was not embarrassed when her Chinese was corrected, and she always practiced Chinese with other students especially in preparation for tests. However, when Betty was in the United States, she did not actively seek those opportunities to learn and practice her Chinese. Since Chinese culture was the primary attraction for Betty, she always enjoyed learning the culture of Chinese speakers. Betty displayed a pleasant, outgoing personality, so she never had problems working and learning with others.

In summary, Betty was a strong auditory learner (Table 2). The learning strategies that she used to learn Chinese were limited compared with other participants like Cathy. Betty used the following strategies:

Direct Strategies

I. Memory Strategies – She memorized the Chinese characters by

- Writing the characters repeatedly;
- Applying mental images of the characters with their sounds;

- Creating mental linkages; and
- Studying before exams

II. Cognitive Strategies

- Repetition
- Repeatedly verbalizing and writing characters
- Memorizing sentence structure by the way they sound.

III. Compensation Strategies

- Guessing intelligently when she did not know Chinese words.

Indirect Strategies

I. Affective Strategies

- Lowering learning anxiety
- Encouraging herself
- Maintaining emotional control

II. Social Strategies

- Asking questions when she did not understand Chinese;
- Practicing Chinese with other students.

Table 2 An Auditory Learner's Strategies Observed in Learning Written and Spoken Chinese Vocabulary

	Written Vocabulary	Spoken Vocabulary
Auditory Learner (Participant #1 – Betty)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used Indirect Affective Strategy to encourage herself and to lower her anxiety. • Could not remember Chinese word by making a mental picture of the word – Interview, 3/23/2005. (Direct Strategies). • Did not find flashcards helpful. • Found complexity of learning written Chinese frustrating and draining. • Learned Chinese mostly by writing the characters over and over again (Direct Strategies). • Had to study before class, otherwise hard to stay with class. Example: 3/7/2005 Reflection Paper. (Direct Strategies) • Used dry erase board to practice writing Chinese characters repeatedly. (Direct Strategies). • Guessed intelligently when she did not know the Chinese (Direct Strategies). • Did not actively seek opportunities to learn & practice her Chinese. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used Indirect Affective Strategy to encourage herself and to lower her anxiety. • Work with others and asked Chinese to slow down speaking (Indirect Strategies). • Learned well when information was presented orally. • Could often “hear” and remember the pronunciation. • Admitted she learned best while interacting with others in listening & speaking exchanges. Example: Interview 3/23/2005. • Said the words out loud as writing the characters (Direct Strategies). • Improved her spoken Chinese faster than any other visual learners when she studied in China. • Memorized spoken Chinese like memorizing songs. Example: 3/7/2005 Reflection Paper. (Direct Strategies) • Did not actively seek opportunities to learn & practice her Chinese.

Participant #2 – Cathy

Cathy claimed to be both an auditory and visual learner. She was a Psychology major.

Cathy used a mixture of both direct and indirect learning strategies to learn Chinese according to

the SILL. Cathy scored four points on each of the following items of the SILL, indicating the statements reflect her attitudes:

- I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in Chinese.
- I use new Chinese words in a sentence so I can remember them.
- I say or write new Chinese words several times.
- I try to talk like native Chinese speakers.
- I practice the sounds of Chinese.
- I start conversations in Chinese.
- I make summaries of information that I hear or read in Chinese.
- To understand unfamiliar Chinese words, I make guesses.
- If I can't think of a Chinese word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.
- I notice my Chinese mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
- I pay attention when someone is speaking Chinese.
- I have clear goals for improving my Chinese skills.
- I think about my progress in learning Chinese.
- I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using Chinese.
- I encourage myself to speak Chinese even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
- If I do not understand something in Chinese, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
- I ask Chinese speakers to correct me when I talk.

- I practice Chinese with other students.
- I ask for help from Chinese speakers.
- I ask question in Chinese.
- I try to learn about the culture of Chinese speakers.

Being a visual and auditory learner, Cathy found Chinese easy and fun to learn. Cathy said in her interview:

I took Spanish for five and half years in high school. I can speak it fairly well, but it has been a number of years; I do not speak it so well anymore. I thought Chinese would be so much more difficult and I would only have one year. But I found Chinese so much easier than the Western language because of the fact that I learn in a visual and acoustic way. Like when I'm studying I can hear your voice [teacher's voice] and how you pronounce words and I can remember the tones. Visually, I can see the way you explain it in class and incorporate 'picture this' with the characters. I think the language [Chinese language] is so much more artistic and visual than Western language and it is easier for me (Interview, 2/26/2005).

Cathy learned Chinese vocabulary by chunks; she would have a few examples of how to use those words in her notes, but she would still focus on memorizing the words. As she described, "It has been helpful to focus on the individual pieces of vocabulary and having to piece it together on my own because again, then I am creating a new way of saying it, or remembering on my own how to structure the sentence" (Interview, 2/26/2005).

Unlike Betty, Cathy was able to learn, not by memorization, but by thoughtfully organizing conceptual relationships between new concepts in Chinese and her existing knowledge of language. Figure 5 below provides a good illustration of how Cathy connected and associated new words with previous vocabulary and constructed an increasingly complex mental structure, similar to a spider web, in her long-term memory.

Figure 5 Cathy’s drawing of her “spider web of words” for Chinese radicals.

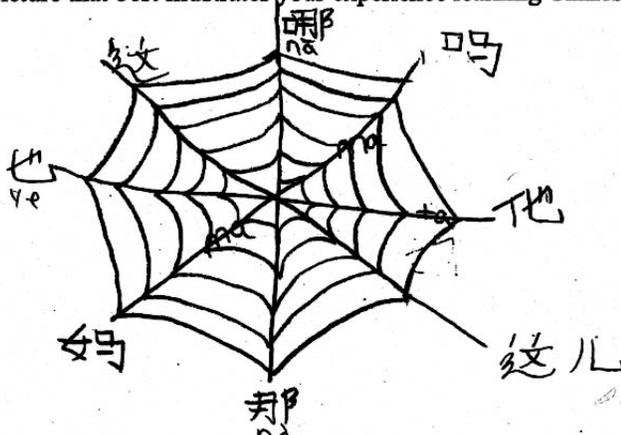
Describe your experience learning Chinese so far using a simile or metaphor:

Learning Chinese is like a web of connected words and symbols.

Please elaborate it below:

The same words can have different accents that change their meaning, but still have similar strokes with symbols like 妈 ^{ma} and 妈 ^{ma} → making them all connected.

Draw a picture that best illustrates your experience learning Chinese.



I was, however, surprised to discover that Cathy scored a little below average ($M=2.77$) on her Part A – “Remembering more effectively” of the SILL. This score did not match my or her descriptions of language learning. I had no explanation for this low score since the data were collected at the end of the semester and I was unable to follow up with Cathy after her graduation.

Cathy found that learning Chinese radicals helped her organize her vocabulary into a “spider web of words”. She said during the interview:

You do a good job whenever you are teaching us a character you highlight the radical in the word which helps me identify it. Also in the book it tells you what the radical is. I like to look over them because I think it will make it easier, especially when we use the dictionary and stuff. I think you have incorporated them [teaching radicals] enough. It is just a tool, so you don't want to spend too much time on them, since we do have limited time and there is so much that we want to learn it's barely touching the surface. What you have taught us about radicals is so far sufficient. It will help me because if I notice the radical of a mouth, or a wood or something it will help me figure out the word. (Interview, 4/4/2005)

Once students learned the radicals of words, they could begin reading. Cathy used this tool very well. When she encountered new words, she would look for the radicals. If the new character was in a sentence, she would look at the entire sentence first trying to identify one familiar character. Once she found one character she knew, she said, “It would be a good start because it gave me a clue at what I am looking at.” (Interview, 4/4/2005) Then, she would look

at the radicals of other words trying to paste the information together. This was an exciting and challenging task for Cathy, but she found it interesting and fun. She said, “I feel like a little detective myself (with a big smile)!” (Interview, 4/4/2005)

Cathy enjoyed writing Chinese characters because, for her, they were little art forms that were easy to memorize. “When I write the Chinese characters stroke by stroke, over and over again I can just visualize them like pictures. Also, being an auditory learner, I can incorporate the sounds of how you said the words and remember the tones. I like the way you make us repeat back everything to you a few times so I can combine the visual characters with the sounds (Interview, 4/4/2005). The only difficulty that Cathy had in learning Chinese was not having sufficient time to study since she graduated in May 2005.

Cathy scored high (M= 4) on Part F – “Learning with Others” in SILL. She said she had never left the East coast of the United States, but she found traveling very important. “There is so much out there to see and learn. Even though I may have financial and time restrictions, I want to travel more in the future.” (Reflection Paper, 2/23/2005) Cathy had no trouble in asking people to slow down or repeat phrases that she didn’t understand in Chinese. She furthermore enjoyed using Chinese to communicate with other students or native Chinese people in ways that Betty did not.

In summary, Cathy was both a visual and auditory learner (Table 3). She used most of the learning strategies in SILL. The learning strategies Cathy used were:

Direct Strategies

I. Memory Strategies – She created mental linkages by

- Grouping and associating words by radicals;
- Placing new vocabulary words in context;
- Applying images of the characters with their sounds;
- Creating mental linkages; and
- Reviewing and understand the structure of sentences rather than just memorizing words.

II. Cognitive Strategies

- Repeating
- Practicing repeated verbalization and writing of character writing on her own and with others;
- Practicing to use words in various functions and usages;
- Practicing naturalistically;
- Analyzing expressions;
- Translating and transferring across languages;
- Creating structure for input by taking, summarizing and highlighting notes.

III. Compensation Strategies

- Guessing intelligently by using radical or linguistic clues;
- Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing by getting help, using gestures, etc.

Indirect Strategies

I. Metacognitive Strategies

- Centering her learning by paying attention;
- Reviewing and linking with already known material;
- Constantly evaluating her learning and setting realistic goals.

II. Affective Strategies

- Lowering learning anxiety;
- Encouraging herself;

III. Social Strategies

- Asking questions when she did not understand something in Chinese;
- Practicing Chinese with other students;
- Developing cultural understanding.

Table 3 Learning Strategies in Written and Spoken Vocabulary Observed in Visual & Auditory Learner

	Written Vocabulary	Spoken Vocabulary
Visual & Auditory Learner (Participant #2 – Cathy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used mixture of both Direct and Indirect Strategies to learn Chinese. • Learned by visual. Example: Interview, 2/26/2005. • Memorized the Chinese characters by chunks. Example: Interview, 2/26/2005. (Direct Strategies) • Organized the new words in relation to the old words. Example: Figure 5 Drawing. (Direct Strategies) • Found Chinese radicals helped her organize new/old vocabulary. Example: Interview, 4/4/2005. (Direct Strategies) • Used radicals to help her guess unknown Chinese characters. Example: Interview, 4/4/2005. (Direct Strategies) • Enjoyed writing Chinese characters because they were like art, which was easy for her to remember. Example: Interview, 4/4/2005. • Used Indirect Social Strategies by learning with others. Example: Reflection Paper, 2/23/2005. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used mixture of both Direct and Indirect Strategies to learn Chinese. • Learned by auditory. Example: Interview, 2/26/2005 • Were able to hear the sounds and tones → imitate and then connect to the visual characters. Example: Interview, 4/4/2005. (Direct Strategies) • Used Indirect Social Strategies by asking and cooperating with others. Example: Reflection Paper, 2/23/2005. • Actively sought opportunities to practice her Chinese in the United States and China. (Indirect Strategies) • Was not afraid to try even if she did not know how to speak the Chinese words.

Participant #3 - Sandy

Sandy also claimed to be an auditory and visual learner. She was an English major and was the youngest among the four participants. Sandy used the following strategies listed in the SILL:

- I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in Chinese.
- I use new Chinese words in a sentence so I can remember them.
- I use flashcards to remember new Chinese words.
- I say or write new Chinese words several times.
- I try to talk like native Chinese speakers.
- I use the Chinese words I know in different ways.
- I find the meaning of a Chinese word by dividing it into parts that I understand.
- When I can't think of a word during a conversation in Chinese, I use gestures.
- I pay attention when someone is speaking Chinese.
- I try to find out how to be a better learner of Chinese.
- I have clear goals for improving my Chinese skills.
- I think about my progress in learning Chinese.
- If I do not understand something in Chinese, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
- I ask Chinese speakers to correct me when I talk.
- I practice Chinese with other students.
- I ask for help from Chinese speakers.

- I ask questions in Chinese.
- I try to learn about the culture of Chinese speakers.

Sandy said she really enjoyed learning the Chinese language even though she was very nervous about the class in the beginning. In her own words:

I had taken French and Spanish in high school, but I had had some trouble with them with all the verb conjugations and all that. I was first nervous about learning about the Chinese characters because I'm not artistic at all.

But I really like it and I find that I'm better at learning Chinese than I am at French or Spanish." (Interview, 2/28/ 2005).

Sandy thought the reason she liked the Chinese language better was because Chinese grammar was easier, and she could "see" the shapes of the characters.

Sandy admitted that she was never an artistic person. However, because she was a good visual learner, she could memorize the characters by watching what the instructor wrote on the board (Diary, 1/31/2005). "I am a visual learner so if I write it [character] down, I see it and I remember it. When I take notes in other classes in a lecture if I just sit and listen, I usually remember part of it. However, if I take notes like write down points, I will remember them better (Reflection Paper, 2/15/2005)." The hardest part of learning Chinese was remembering the order and appearance of the strokes. She said she did not think she was very consistent, and sometimes she had to go back and to "fix" the characters' appearance. She said, "I feel like I am going back to kindergarten where I still need a few years before my writing [Chinese] is

consistent and looks the same every time. So if I get frustrated with it [writing Chinese characters], I just think like this, ‘I am just a baby and I’m still learning how to write each strokes (Interview, 2/28/2005).’”

Sandy had to write the Chinese characters a lot before she could create sentences. She said if she tried to do the sentences first without knowing the characters, she could not really remember how the sentences were constructed because she became too focused on the characters. “I have to write them [the Chinese characters] a lot. I’d say probably ten times each, I write the characters and the Pinyin. I don’t always write the English meaning every time, but I think about it so I know what it means and I get the stroke order down” (Interview, 3/26/ 2005). Sandy also liked the little stories I composed in class about the way things looked. Figure 6 below illustrates some of the examples given in class.

Figure 6 A Sample Pictography of Chinese Character Evolution.

rì						sun
yuè						moon
shuǐ						water

Another strategy Sandy used to help practice Chinese was to use the language in everyday situations. For example, “I always say ‘xie(4) xie(5)’, when I want to thank someone; or ‘zai(4)jian(4)’, when I say good-bye; or ‘wo(3) yao(4)’, when I want to order food in Chinese.

I try to think of it [Chinese word] in everyday situation so when we go on the trip, it won't be as much of a shock (Diary, 3/7/2005)".

In general, Sandy scored low ($M < 3$) throughout six categories in the SILL, except in Part D – “Organizing and evaluating your learning” ($M = 3.22$) and Part F – “Learning with others” ($M = 4.33$). These results were not completely consistent with data collected through Sandy's diaries, reflection papers, interviews, and my observations as her teacher. I was especially surprised to learn that Sandy only gave two points to the following questions, which meant she agreed that these statements are usually not true for her:

- I connect the sound of a new Chinese word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
- I remember a new Chinese word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
- I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in Chinese.
- I read Chinese without looking up every new word.
- I try to guess what the other person will say next in Chinese.
- I look for people I can talk to in Chinese.
- I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in Chinese.

Because of some inconsistency with the SILL scores, I went back and revisited Sandy's diaries, reflection papers, interviews and my own observation notes hoping to find an answer. In retrospect, I believe that even though Sandy claimed herself to be a visual learner throughout the semester, she was probably more of an auditory and kinesthetic learner than a visual and auditory

learner. This conclusion was also confirmed by the comments Sandy made during her interview early in the spring semester:

The computer program we had last semester; I tried to do it a lot but it only helped me get used to the pronunciation of other native Chinese people speaking in the video clips. It [the computer program] didn't really help me that much in the writing Chinese characters. Mainly, if I can physically write out the Chinese characters [on the paper], they get embedded in my brain; and it [writing on the paper] is a lot easier than just watching the computer writes out the strokes of the Chinese characters on the screen (Interview Notes, 1/31/2005).

Sandy further stated that she was more of a hands-on person. If she could actually write characters with her hand, she could remember it better than watching it [in the computer] do the strokes on the screen. This is the reason she found the Chinese language so different because it had to be more hands on, and there were no other classes she had to write everything so much (Interview Notes, 1/31/2005).

In summary, Sandy claimed to be both a visual and auditory learner but later I concluded that she probably was more of a kinesthetic and audio learner because her SILL scores did not match well with her data. The strategies that Sandy used to learn Chinese included (Table 4):

Direct Strategies

I. Memory Strategies – She created mental linkages by

- Placing new vocabularies into context;
- Creating mental linkages; and

- Reviewing and understand the structure of the sentences rather than just memorizing words.

II. *Cognitive Strategies*

- Repeating
- Repeatedly practicing the sounds and character writing;
- Translating and transferring across languages;
- Creating structure for input by taking, summarizing, and highlighting notes.

III. *Compensation Strategies*

- Guessing intelligently by using radical or linguistic clues;
- Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing by using gestures.

Indirect Strategies

I. *Metacognitive Strategies*

- Centering learning by paying attention;
- Reviewing and linking with already known material;
- Having clear goals for improving Chinese skills.

II. *Social Strategies*

- Asking questions when Chinese is not understand;
- Practicing Chinese with other students;
- Developing cultural understanding.

Table 4 Learning Strategies in Written and Spoken Vocabulary Observed in Auditory & Kinesthetic Learner

	Written Vocabulary	Spoken Vocabulary
Auditory and Kinesthetic Learner (Participant #3- Sandy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing motion helped her remember the Chinese characters. (Direct Strategies). • Seeing the strokes of the characters was not enough; had to write down to remember them. Connected “seeing” the shapes of Chinese character with the motion of writing. - Reflection Paper, 2/15/2005. (Direct Strategies). • Had to practice many times to remember the order and appearance of the stokes – Interview, 2/28/2005. (Direct Strategies). • Had to practice writing at least 10 times and analyze the vocabulary before she could create sentences - Interview, 3/26/2005. (Direct strategies). • Physical writing of the Chinese helped her memorize the characters. She is a hands-on person – Interview, 1/31/2005. (Direct Strategies). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practiced speaking Chinese in everyday situations as much as possible in the United States. Example: Diary 3/7/ 2005. (Direct and Indirect Strategies). • Listened to the video clips in the computer to help her remember the tones and memorize the vocabulary – Interview, 1/31/2005. (Direct Strategies). • Overcame limitation in speaking by using gestures – Reflected in the SILL. (Direct Strategies). • Asked questions when Chinese was not understood – Reflected in the SILL. (Indirect Strategies). • Developed cultural understanding – Reflected in the SILL. (Indirect Strategies).

Participant #4 - Jenny

Jenny claimed to be a strong visual and kinesthetic learner. She was a junior majoring in Interior Design. Jenny was very cautious and did not like feeling awkward. Jenny rated the

following strategies as “4” on the SILL, which meant the statements accurately described her situation:

- I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in Chinese.
- I use new Chinese words in a sentence so I can remember them.
- I connect the sound of a new Chinese word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
- I remember new Chinese words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.
- I say or write new Chinese words several times.
- I try to talk like native Chinese speakers.
- I practice the sounds of Chinese.
- I use the Chinese words I know in different ways.
- I start conversations in Chinese.
- When I can't think of a word during a conversation in Chinese, I use gestures.
- I try to guess what the other person will say next in Chinese.
- I try to find as many ways as I can to use my Chinese.
- I notice my Chinese mistakes and use that information to improve.
- I pay attention when someone is speaking Chinese.
- I try to find out how to be a better learner of Chinese.
- I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study Chinese.
- I have clear goals for improving my Chinese skills.

- I think about my progress in learning Chinese.
- I notice I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using Chinese.
- I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
- I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning Chinese.
- If I do not understand something in Chinese, I ask the other person to slow down or repeat.
- I ask Chinese speakers to correct me when I talk.
- I practice Chinese with other students.

When Jenny studied Chinese, she wrote sentences and said them out loud. She thought she did better on paper than actually speaking. She usually got really nervous when she spoke Chinese. She tried to pronounce new words or hear them in her head first, but she felt words did not come out right when she spoke. She was also very self-conscious and afraid of what other people thought of her. Jenny really liked Chinese characters because they were like pictures. She claimed that she could pick them up very easily. “I just am very visual. If I see it [the Chinese character], I can remember it. I have a pretty good memory like that” (Interview, 3/21/2005).

Jenny also enjoyed using her hands to do things. She claimed herself a kinesthetic learner, too. She said:

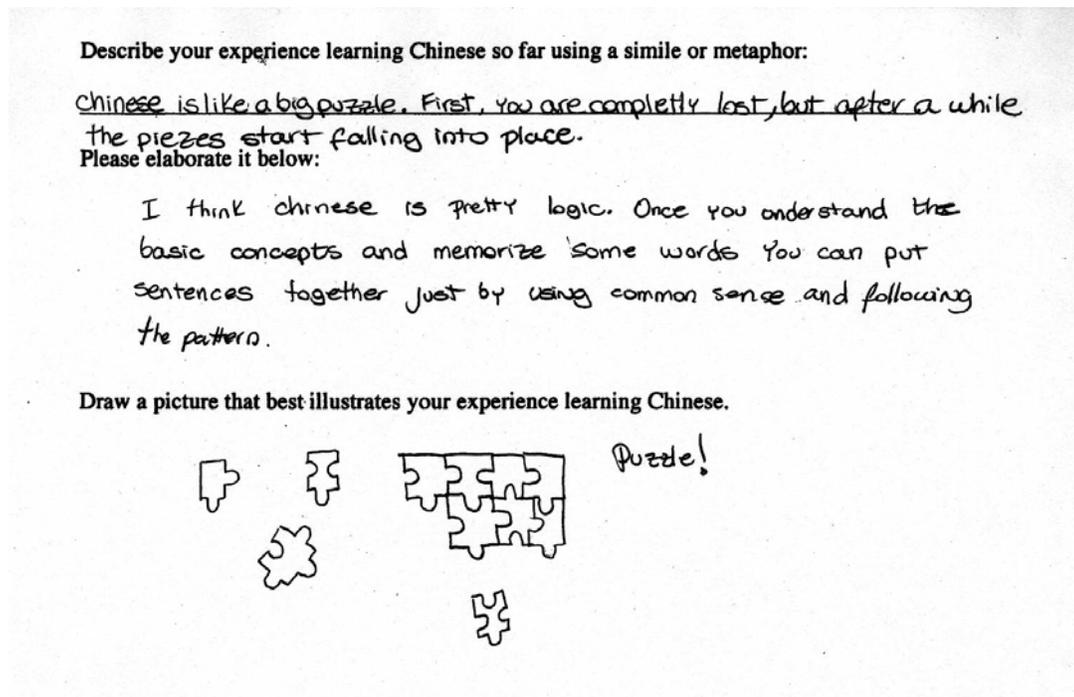
I am always using my hands, like when I do drafting in design classes. I just put down what is going on in my head onto the paper. I don't have to talk about it or say anything but things are always running through my head. When I put the images down on papers things just happen. However, when I learn the Chinese

language, I feel like I can go faster and I can say it [Chinese] in my head and when I say it in my head I say it right, but when I say it out loud I feel like I do it wrong (Interview, 3/21/2005).

Being a visual and kinesthetic learner, Jenny could memorize the Chinese characters by writing the strokes repeatedly by hand and visualizing images in her mind. She said she could feel the motion in her hand and image in her head whenever she wanted to speak Chinese (Reflection Paper, 3/7/2005). Nevertheless, she was often disappointed her pronunciation did not come out as she always wanted.

Throughout the six categories in the SILL, Jenny scored around average ($M=3.32$) with the highest score in Part D - "Organizing and evaluating your learning" ($M=3.78$), which indicated that she had strong organizational skills. In general, Jenny thought the Chinese language is logical. She wrote in Figure 7 below, "I think Chinese is pretty logic. Once you understand the basic concepts and memorize some words, you can put sentences together just by using common sense and following the pattern." Being a strong visual and kinesthetic learner, Jenny enjoyed using her hands and eyes to play the Chinese "puzzles" even though she often got frustrated for not being able to speak Chinese orally.

Figure 7 Jenny's Drawing of Putting Puzzles Together



In summary, Jenny was a visual and kinesthetic learner. She scored average ($3 < M < 4$) across all six categories in the SILL, which demonstrated that she tried to use both direct and indirect strategies when she learned Chinese (Table 5). Below is the summary of Jenny's language learning strategies according to the SILL:

Direct Strategies

I. Memory Strategies – She created mental linkages by

- Placing new vocabularies into context;
- Applying images of characters by writing them repeatedly on a dry-eraser board;
- Creating mental linkages; and
- Repeatedly practicing character writing independently

II. *Cognitive Strategies*

- Reviewing and understand the structure of sentences rather than just memorizing words
- Practice using words in various contexts and passages;
- Practicing naturalistically;
- Analyzing expressions;
- Translating and transferring across languages;
- Creating structure for input by taking, summarizing and highlighting notes.

III. Compensation Strategies

- Guessing intelligently by using radical or linguistic clues;
- Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing by getting help, gesturing, etc.

Indirect Strategies

I. Metacognitive Strategies

- Centering learning by paying attention;
- Reviewing and linking with already known material;
- Constantly evaluating learning and setting realistic goals.

II Affective Strategies

- Lowering learning anxiety;
- Self Encouragement;

III. Social Strategies

- Repeatedly practicing character writing with others;
- Asking questions when Chinese is not understood;
- Practicing Chinese with others;
- Developing cultural understanding.

Table 5 Learning Strategies in Written and Spoken Vocabulary Observed in Visual & Kinesthetic Learner

	Written Vocabulary	Spoken Vocabulary
Visual and Kinesthetic Learner (Participant #4- Jenny)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could memorize the Chinese characters by seeing – Interview 3/21/2005. (Direct Strategies). • Writing motion helped her remember the Chinese characters – Interview 3/21/2005. (Direct Strategy). • Created mental linkages by placing new vocabularies into context – Reflected in the SILL. (Direct Strategies). • Used the Chinese words she knew in different ways – Reflected in the SILL. (Direct Strategies). • Planned her schedule so she had enough time to study Chinese – Reflected in the SILL. (Direct Strategies). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got really nervous when she spoke Chinese – Interview 3/21/2005. • Wrote sentences and said them out loud – Interview 3/21/2005. (Direct Strategies). • Felt the motion in hand and image in her head whenever she wanted to speak Chinese – Reflection Paper, 3/7/2005. (Director Strategies). • Practiced the sounds of Chinese – Reflected in the SILL. • Used gestures when she could not think of a word during in a conversation in Chinese.

Theme #2 – *Language Learning Motivation*

Motivation is an important element of learning. However, when I originally began this study, I had no intention of making motivation a primary focus of this research; instead, I planned to focus on the learning strategies of the participants. To my surprise, a variety of motivation for learning Chinese appeared again and again throughout the participants' reflection papers and interviews. Thus, I have concluded that motivation and learning strategies are simply inseparable. Therefore, I would be remiss if I did not include both participants' strategies and motivation for learning Chinese in this study.

From the Demographic Survey, students' motivation for studying Chinese could be summarized as follows:

- China is one of the fastest growing countries with a fascinating history and culture that has stood the test of time. China's economy is growing rapidly and the country is modernizing and developing at an amazing rate.
- Traveling to China, and having the ability to understand the language provides one with a new outlook on life. The trip to China would be a special experience to be treasured forever.
- My roommate and my art history class motivated me to learn Chinese. I really want to learn and see another part of the world.
- I wanted to learn Chinese in order to gain a greater understanding of a different culture; for a personal growth and experience through both course work and study abroad. Hopefully I will be able to use Chinese language skills in the future (career, community, etc.).
- Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world, with over 840 million people speaking it as their primary language. I am fascinated specifically with China because it is one of the world's oldest cultures.

- With more than one billion and two hundred million people, China is a major country on our planet. China possesses a wonderful workforce, which is increasingly used to produce local items and reinforce China's economy.

The motivations for the four participants to learn the Chinese language are summarized in Table 6 as follow:

Table 6 Summary of Motivational Factors for the Four Participants in this Study

	Betty	Cathy	Sandy	Jenny
Sex	F	F	F	F
Year of School	Sophomore (19 years old)	Senior (20 years old)	Sophomore (18 years old)	Junior (20 years)
Major	Social Work	Psychology	English	Interior Design
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * was always interested in Asian culture * was aware of China's economic & political power in the world * enjoyed seeing life through other people's eyes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * grew up with two adopted Korean siblings * wanted to gain understanding of different cultures * wanted to gain personal growth & experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * wanted to take Chinese class * was admitted to the Chinese scholarship program * was curious about the Chinese language & culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * was motivated by roommate & Art History class * wanted to learn & see another part of the world

Most of the students in the Elementary Chinese class mentioned that China's growing political and economic influence in the world made the study abroad in China even more attractive than the course alone. In recent years, the Chinese language training has experienced a boom related to the rise in economic and political influence of the Pacific Rim countries of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore (Ruethling, 2005). From the perspective of language planning, this booming phenomenon parallels the political, economic, and social goals of the United States to invest in the study of Chinese (Wiley, 1996). As a result, the American education system is subsequently pressured to respond to this new surge of interest and provide the means for learning the Chinese language and culture. Some research has been done on students' motivation in learning foreign language that could explain these phenomena.

In second language learning as in every other field of human learning, motivation is the crucial factor that determines whether learners embark on a task at all, how much energy, they devote to it, and how long they persevere. It is a complex phenomenon and includes many components: the individual's drive, need for achievement and success, curiosity, desire for stimulation and new experience, and so on. Shrum and Glisan (2005) summarized it well, "Other variables that may influence the degree of success in learning another language are those pertaining to affect, such as motivation, anxiety, personality, and attitude (p. 28). Oxford and Nyikos (1989) also discovered that language learning motivations, often conditioned by culture, were influential in strategy choices. Here I will focus on only two aspects, namely communicative need and attitudes towards the second language community. Then, I will briefly relate these to the distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation.

Language Learning Motivation has Important Impact on Communication

According to the data in this study, a communicative approach to language teaching fueled students' motivation. The primary motive for learning a language is that it provides a means of communication. Students are most likely to be drawn toward learning a second language if they perceive a clear communicative need for it. The extent of this communicative need depends, to a considerable degree, on the nature of the social community in which they live. "I know I will need the knowledge of Mandarin Chinese to communicate and function in China, I look for every possible opportunity to practice my spoken Chinese in the United States. I use Mandarin when I am eating at a Chinese restaurant or with any Chinese friends I know," stated Cathy (Diary 1/30/2005).

When a foreign language such as Chinese is not required in order to survive in the US, not all students, like Cathy, actively search for opportunities to practice it because they don't see a need. This is why foreign language instructors in the US must constantly create activities in and outside of the classroom. Bringing members of the Chinese community into the classroom is one way to reinforce classroom learning. For example, in my Chinese class I also invite students to participate in the Chinese New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival celebrations with the local Chinese community. Students are required to practice their Chinese language with the native Chinese speaker during these celebrations or other organized cultural activities. Students are also required to perform skits or sing songs in Chinese. Students who have participated in such activities responded positively. For example, Jenny wrote, "The Chinese New Year Festival, in short, was far more culturally consuming than I anticipated it would be. In some ways, it was difficult to imagine such authenticity on an American college campus, but I was more than

impressed with the outcome.” (Diary, 2/19/2005) As Jenny continued to reflect on how the Night in China [part of the week long Chinese New Year celebration at the university] was amazing, “I was so proud to be a part of the festivities seeing so many students, friends, and families attend. Those few hours of being immersed in Chinese culture made me so impatient to get to China!” (Diary, 2/19/2005) As Jenny’s comments indicated when learners are favorably disposed toward the speakers of the language they are learning, their motivation is likely to increase. The learners with more favorable attitudes will wish for more intensive contact with the second language community. In this respect, favorable attitudes reinforce the learning.

Attitudes toward the Foreign Language Culture Also Influence Motivation to Learn

Language defines both people and cultures. When people learn new languages, they are to some extent giving up a piece of their own identity in order to adapt to another cultural group. In some respects, too, people are accepting another culture’s ways of perceiving the world, which can be a positive and enriching experience (Littlewood, 1984). Cathy expressed her feeling about this during her interview, “I am proud to tell people that I am learning Chinese because it is different from any other languages that I had learned in the past. I had five and half years of Spanish language learning experience in high school, but Spanish is nothing like Chinese. It [Chinese] is a beautiful language with a rich cultural past, which has liberated me in ways of looking at this world and my perception of life” (Interview, 3/14/2005). In one of her class activities, Cathy shared this picture (See Figure 8 below) with her classmates:

Figure 8 Cathy's Description of "Putting on Someone Else's Glasses"

Describe your experience learning Chinese so far using a simile or metaphor:

Learning Chinese is like putting on someone else's glasses.

Please elaborate it below:

You get a chance to see things a different way, like why people act a certain way, or how language is constructed and used. It's also eye-opening to see how hard it is to try and understand the construction of a language that doesn't match your own. A lot of things are just taken on faith.

Draw a picture that best illustrates your experience learning Chinese.



One of the factors influencing how students experience language learning is their attitude towards the foreign culture itself. Gardner (2000) presented a socio-educational model of second language acquisition in which he proposed attitudes influence motivation, which in turn influences achievement. These feelings are very subjective, but influence how successful students' are at learning foreign language. For example, Cathy had a unique family background: she grew up with a Korean brother and sister. As a result, Cathy was very interested in learning and understanding other cultures. She wrote in her diary, "This Chinese language class is different from other general education courses because I came in with a personal interest. I had already made up my mind that I want to learn the language and want to do this, rather than going

into a Math class or something (Reflection Paper, 1/25/2005).” Cathy came to my class with a stronger motivation to learn Chinese compared to other students in the class.

Integrative and instrumental motivation

The effects of attitudes on motivation and language learning proficiency have been investigated in several studies. Two kinds of motivation, “integrative” and “instrumental” have been identified and described (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

- (1) A learner with integrative motivation has a genuine interest in the second language community. The learner wishes to communicate with others more satisfactorily to gain closer contact with community members.
- (2) A learner with instrumental motivation is more interested in how the second language can be a useful instrument towards furthering other goals, such as economic or other personal gain.

These two kinds of motivation are not mutually exclusive. A mixture of integrative and instrumental reasons motivates most learners. Furthermore, Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Gardner (1980, 1985, 1988, 2000) proposed a socio-educational model of motivation that emphasized the influence of cultural beliefs on the development of the integrative motive and suggested the presence of a positive causal link between integrative motivation and second language achievement, as opposed to learning a second language for instrumental purposes only.

Reflection from the Students

Students in this study mentioned both integrative and instrumental motivation. For example, Sandy, being an English major stated in her reflection paper that “Chinese is a challenging language to learn and that gives me a great amount of motivation. I love the language, and I love learning more of it so I can communicate with the Chinese people and in turn understand their culture. I found it exciting to communicate in Chinese restaurants as well as with the people in China. For me, the biggest constraint on learning Chinese is time” (Reflection Paper, 1/23/2005). Sandy found much joy in the challenge of learning Chinese for integrative reasons besides visiting China or for career advancement alone. Sandy did extremely well in both Elementary Chinese classes in fall and spring semesters.

Besides the integrative and instrumental motivation, I also discovered there were other factors that motivated participants like Cathy, Betty, Sandy, and Jenny to study hard in Chinese classes. Betty, who was majoring in Social Work, studied hard primarily to receive an “A” grade in the class and a trip to China rather than communicate with Chinese speakers. Because of the level of difficulties in learning Chinese language, Betty became more interested in learning Chinese culture instead. She knew if she could better understand Chinese culture, she could better relate to the Chinese American population to enhance her career objectives. Betty’s “perfectionist” personality often made her too frustrated to learn. On at least two occasions during the semester, Betty was admitted to the hospital because of learning anxiety. Betty drew this picture in Figure 9 illustrating her fears and worries about learning Chinese.

Figure 9 Betty's Description of Facing a Tiger.

Describe your experience learning Chinese so far using a simile or metaphor:

Learning Chinese is like understanding the crouching tiger

Please elaborate it below:

Chinese a very mysterious, well known, and has a rich background, like the tiger. Learning Chinese requires diligence, hard work and determination, or it can be dangerous; like the tiger in crouching position.

Draw a picture that best illustrates your experience learning Chinese.

Shrum and Glisan (2005) summarized, “Motivation and attitudes are often related to anxiety, apprehension, or fear about the language learning experience (p. 29). Thus, after one year of studying Chinese, Betty indicated that she would not pursue language learning in the future but she would still be interested in cultural education. In general, Betty did not feel comfortable in the class when she had to speak or write Chinese. Thus, in order to do well in class, she worked extra hard outside of class. She wrote in her reflection paper, “I had to force myself to write the characters over and over again and say the pinyin [the Chinese pronunciation]

out loud as I write them. If I do not do this in the times I am not in class, then everything I learn in class is not reiterated to me as well.” (Reflection Paper, 2/6/ 2005)

Betty was also a “conscientious” learner; she felt stressed if she was not in control of her studies. However, because she was an experienced traveler, she knew what to expect in a foreign land. Thus, she presumed it would be easier for her to manage her emotions while on the China trip. Betty had traveled to countries like Spain, Hungary, Austria, Italy and Canada previously. Betty said in her interview, “I think when I am in China I won’t be intimidated to talk to them [Chinese people] because I have been in foreign countries where I don’t speak the language. So I just want to take a calm attitude towards everything. I don’t have any expectations, so if I go [to China] and it is intimidating I won’t be disappointed.” (Interview, 3/23/2005) Furthermore, since Betty was studying to be a social worker, she understood the nature of frustration and stress and how to deal with it. It would be interesting to know how this attitude may have changed after her China trip.

Cathy, on the other hand, was passionate about learning Chinese language and culture. She attributed this passion to her family influence. In Cathy’s reflection paper she wrote, “There are many reasons I felt drawn to this opportunity [learning the Chinese language and going to China]. Culture has always been a very significant influence and aspect in the development of my adult self and character. In my family life alone, with two of my siblings being adopted from South Korea, I learned the importance of hosting unbiased and open-minded appreciations for other cultures and all they may offer to my own”. (Reflection Paper, 1/29/2005) Because of this unique background, Cathy was interested in social interaction among diverse people of all races. Thus, she pursued a Psychology degree in college. She further stated in her reflection paper,

“On a college level, I felt learning a foreign language was not only preparation for the working world of America – as our nation becomes more and more diversified in its ethnicities – but it was also the novel challenge of a course that involved more than just verb conjugations. The benefit of a foreign language course is the introduction to historical, culinary, or even religious elements of a different civilization, to name a few (Reflection Paper, 1/29/2005).”

In summary, all four participants were aware of China’s growing economic and political power in the world. They were initially attracted to apply for the study abroad program in China after their first year of studies because they felt a strong attraction to the arts and history of Chinese culture. I classified their motivation as primarily integrative. However, Betty, who later had instrumental job-related motivation, lost interest in learning Chinese. Instead she was satisfied to learn only about the culture after taking the course and was satisfied with her limited Chinese language skills.

During the first semester of Elementary Chinese, students are usually highly motivated to learn. However, during the second semester, motivations often change due to a variety of factors. Factors such as family influence, personality, course expectations, and learning anxiety may each affect the students’ motivation to learn (Table 7). For example, Cathy found the challenge of learning Chinese coincided with her family’s culture and values, and still satisfied her personal growth and satisfaction. Cathy’s self esteem and the challenge of learning Chinese made her less anxious and intimidated by the difficulties of learning the language. She learned because she remained motivated to learn and maintained her strong desire to connect with Chinese culture and communicate in Chinese.

Table 7 Summary of Student's Reflection on Their Motivation for Taking Chinese

	Betty	Cathy	Sandy	Jenny
Initial Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nervous but positive * Was always interested in Asian culture * Was aware of China's economic & political power in the world * Enjoyed seeing life through other people's eyes * Obtain integrative Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Very strong & positive * Wanted to gain understanding of different culture * Wanted to gain personal growth experiences * Grew up with two adopted Korean siblings * Obtain integrative motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nervous but positive * Wanted to take Chinese class * Was admitted to the Chinese scholarship program * Was curious about the Chinese language & culture * Obtain integrative motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nervous but positive * Motivated by roommate & Art History class * Wanted to learn & see another part of the world * Obtain integrative Motivation
Later Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Study hard to receive "A" grade in class * Cared about her class grade the most * Had high learning anxiety * Had lack of confidence in listening and speaking Chinese * Later became more interested in learning the Chinese culture for prospective job reasons than learning the language * Obtain more instrumental than integrative motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Study hard to master the language so she could communicate with native Chinese people and receive good grade in class * Had low learning anxiety and strong positive family influence * Had positive self-image and strong confidence in all four skills of learning Chinese * Maintain high integrative and instrumental motivations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Study hard to master the language so she could communicate with native Chinese people and receive good grade in class * Became less intimidated by the Chinese language as the semester progressed and had less learning anxiety later * Had positive self-image and strong confidence in learning all four skills in Chinese * Maintain high integrative and instrumental motivations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Study hard to master the language so she could communicate with native Chinese people and receive good grade in class * Enjoyed writing the Chinese characters * Had low learning anxiety in reading and writing, but higher anxiety in listening and speaking * Had positive self-image, but less confidence in listening & speaking Chinese than reading & writing Chinese language * Maintain high integrative and instrumental motivations

Motivational factors affected student expectations and learning during the course. Participants, like Betty, who were more concerned about receiving good grades, tended to limit their attention to learning possible exams questions rather than simply improving their language proficiency. As a result, such students experienced higher stress and did not enjoy their learning experience. At the end of the semester, even though the participants received “A” grades in both semester classes, they eventually lost their motivation for learning Chinese and were not confident using the language. Betty confessed this in her diary entry dated March 18, 2005, and I confirmed this during our interview on March 23, 2005. She wrote:

“I think I am more interested in the [Chinese] culture. Chinese written characters are too hard for me to comprehend and remember. If I do get my international studies minor, I will probably take a class in Asian culture and geography instead of taking more [Chinese] language classes. I know I will never master the Chinese language, and I have lost my confidence in trying to (Betty’s Diary, 3/18/2005).”

Betty’s loss of both confidence and motivation confirm the findings of Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) and Scarcella and Oxford (1992) that motivation is an essential element of learning.

Theme #3 - *Learning Difficulties*

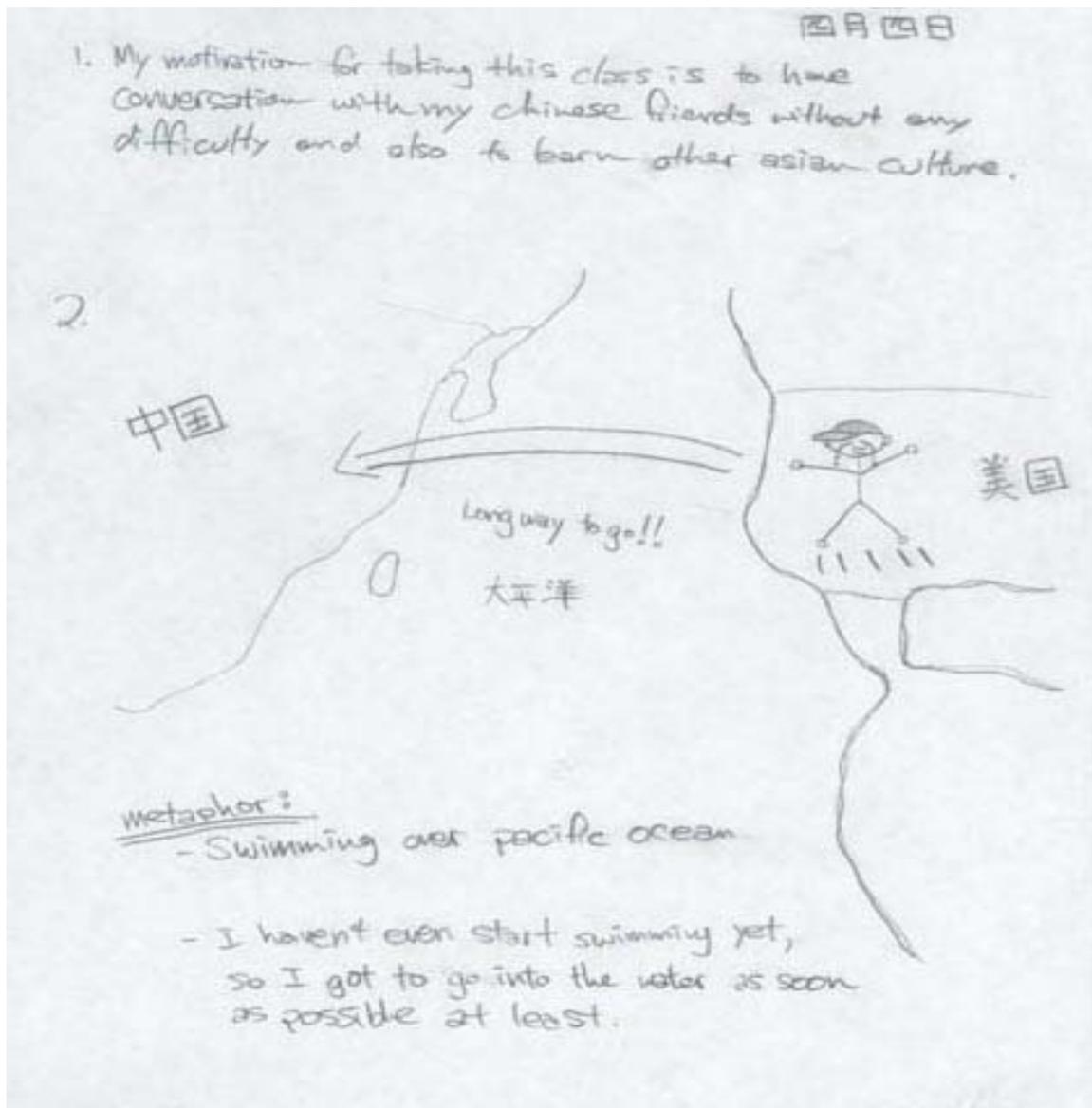
The novice Chinese-speaking students reported the following learning difficulties:

- Chinese is totally different from Romance languages

- Little or very little previous knowledge or experience could be related
- No concept of the tones and they find it difficult to distinguish or produce them
- Chinese character writing and pronunciation are unrelated
- Had to memorize Chinese characters, Pinyin, tones, and English translation separately in order to master the vocabulary
- Found it difficult to comprehend and speak Chinese
- Find it too time consuming to study and to memorize Chinese

“Learning Chinese is like nothing I have done before. Everything I learn, I have no previous knowledge or experience that can help me. I not only have to learn characters, but Pinyin [the pronunciation of the Chinese words] and their tones, as well as the English translations,” wrote Jenny (Diary 1/25/2005). I received many similar comments like Jenny’s from other students taking Elementary Chinese. Novice students get frustrated and discouraged if they aren’t motivated, don’t have the time, or lack the discipline necessary to learn Chinese. When I asked participants to reflect upon their Chinese language learning experience, they expressed joy but also deep frustration. To Betty, learning the Chinese language was like “swimming over the Pacific Ocean [from the United States].” She drew herself crying on the West Coast of the US and looking toward China (Figure 10). She stated that Chinese was so different from Romance languages; she had no previous experience or knowledge to base on. “I haven’t even started swimming yet, but I have to go into the water as soon as possible (Reflection Paper, 2/6/2005).”

Figure 10 Betty's Metaphor for Her Own Chinese Learning Experience.



In general, students regarded pronunciation of tones and vocabulary retention as more difficult than character writing. “Our Chinese class is like an art class; there is a meaning to every part of the Chinese character,” wrote Jenny (Reflection Paper, 2/21/2005). Maybe this was the reason that most of the students in the Chinese class referred to writing Chinese characters as

“drawing” the characters. In my observation notes, I wrote, “It seems that as a student’s vocabulary grows, the ability to recognize radicals grows as well. More advanced students can better use radicals to guess or memorize new vocabulary. During the second semester, students feel more comfortable writing character strokes and use the strokes in their routine for learning Chinese. Better language learners like Cathy are constantly using radicals to help them organize new and old vocabulary. They also break complex characters into smaller parts as a way of memorizing new vocabulary (Observation Note, 3/16/2005). Cathy wrote about her newly discovered process of learning Chinese in her reflection paper, too. She stated that “as my base of vocabulary grows, characters and repeated components in Chinese characters become more easily recognized and therefore, I found it easier it to memorize characters when I recognize their radicals and break them into smaller meaning pieces (Reflection Paper, 2/23/2005)”. Other students also confirmed this strategy worked well for them.

However, speaking in different tones (distinctive pitch patterns) continued to be a struggle for most students. “Tones are a totally new concept for me. I could never distinguish them, and I found it hard to produce them orally if I could not even tell them apart,” explained Betty (Interview, 2/23/2005). One example Betty used in our interview was the Chinese word for “father”. In Mandarin Chinese this word should be pronounced in fourth tone. If not careful, students can easily turn father into a “target” by pronouncing the word, “ba” in the third tone instead of the fourth tone.

Unlike European words, Chinese characters cannot be spelled out alphabetically. Therefore, novice students do not know how to pronounce Chinese characters when they see them without the Pinyin (the Mandarin Chinese pronunciation of the word using the American

alphabets sounds). For example, the word for “*awake*” in Chinese is “清醒”, which in Pinyin is spelled out as “*qing(1)xing(3)*”. Students may look up the Chinese characters in the Chinese dictionary and try to pronounce the word using Pinyin. However, it would be wrong to assume that students automatically know how to pronounce the Chinese characters with their tones when they see the Pinyin spelling because many of them did not learn phonics when they were growing up. It is also wrong to assume all English speakers would know how to use phonetics to pronounce Chinese Characters correctly. Especially, since there are many differences in the way the Chinese Pinyin is pronounced compared to the English alphabet. For example, “Q” in English pronounces as “kuo”, but in Pinyin, “Q” pronounces as “ch”. Another example, “X” in English pronounces as “ks”, but in Pinyin, “X” pronounces as “sh”. Betty remarked “pronunciation did not become easier in the second semester because the Chinese tones are hard to remember (Interview, 2/23/2005).” She further stated in her interview that, “I think it’s just the way our brains work. She [Sandy, another student in the class] always remembers the tones; I can’t remember the tone for the life of me. I can only remember it if I write it over and over with the tone or say it out loud to myself like 50 times.” (Interview, 2/23/2005) Betty claimed to have strong English language skills. She told me that she could spell anything in English and she could pick up the spelling very quickly and easily because she has good hearing. However, when Betty encountered Chinese, she said, “I can actually feel my left and right brain trying to meet in order to remember what sound goes with what symbol. But it’s a totally foreign concept to me. I am 19 years old and I’ve never had to think this way (Interview, 3/23/2005).” Over time, Betty’s feeling of discomfort and frustration became her biggest stumbling block in learning Chinese.

Cathy was one of a few students who did very well in terms of speaking Chinese and writing characters on exams. However, she also admitted “The biggest problem I have learning Chinese is to distinguish the tones especially when [native Chinese] people speak so fast. My mind cannot work fast enough,” (Reflection Paper, 3/4/2005). Like many others, she stumbled over some particular tone combinations; and she could not memorize and pay attention to tones when speaking. However, she saw written and oral quizzes as ways to prepare for speaking Chinese in the “real world”. She said in her interview “the oral quizzes were a little difficult for me, but I knew that they would help me in the long run such as preparation for interactions in China (Interview, 3/28/2005)”. Instead of feeling depressed, Cathy turned the learning difficulties into healthy challenges. She cheerfully expressed in her interview that, “The oral parts of the Chinese class challenged me to study and be more proficient in what I was learning besides just writing the characters over and over (Interview, 3/28/2005).”

The comments on tonal acquisition that participants stated earlier were in accord with Jon and Chiang’s remarks on tonal acquisition (Jon & Chiang, 1999). When analyzing recorded student conversations from the classroom, it was evident that producing correct tones is not easy for most Elementary Chinese students. Speaking tonally requires correctly perceiving the tones, distinguishing the tones, memorizing the tones, producing the tones in isolation, and finally producing the correct tones for every word in natural speech. When teaching a tonal language, instructors should be familiar with what students and researchers have recently said on the subject. Primarily researchers have noted that tones are inherently difficult for English-speaking students because in spoken English students are used to using pitch patterns and variations (intonation) to convey emotion, not to differentiate words and meaning.

Sandy was another student who did very well in the Elementary Chinese class. In her interview, she told me:

Pinyin seems to be a little easier for me to grasp because I am an English major and I have a strong background in phonetics because I grew up with them. That was how I was taught to read when I was little. I was really nervous before we [students in the Elementary class] first started the class in fall 2004. I had taken French and Spanish in high school, but I had had some trouble with them with all the verb conjugations and all that. I was nervous about just learning it [the Chinese language] and I was nervous about the characters because I'm not artistic at all. But I really like it and I find that I'm better at learning Chinese than I am at French or Spanish. I believe it is due to my firm grasp of my learning in the first semester (Interview, 3/26/2005).

Sandy attributed her success in Chinese Pinyin to her solid background of English phonic training. She said she had to train herself in the first semester to learn the tones, but once she was accustomed to the Chinese pronunciation, she could easily transfer her first language skills into her second language learning.

In summary, writing Chinese character strokes became easier as semesters went on and students' gained experience. However, students found tones more difficult to master. Since tones were new concept, students needed more time to train their ears and to distinguish tonal differences. Once the students could recognize different tones, then they could improve their

speaking ability. In other words, students' mastering of tones is an extremely important component in determining the success Elementary Chinese students.

Theme #4 – *Beneficial Activities for Learning Chinese*

The beneficial activities students identified for learning Chinese were:

- Repeating the pronunciation in class
- Doing role-plays
- Singing Chinese songs
- Holding conversation hours with native Chinese TAs outside the classroom
- Working on review exercises for each chapters
- Taking oral exams

Throughout the two consecutive semesters, I tried many different activities to help students learn Chinese. I alternated between activities such as singing, reading texts and stories, games, worksheets, cultural activities, movie and conversation hours. Since the Radford students knew they were going to visit China in the summer after one year of Chinese studies, some students preferred to acquire more practical skills such as speaking and listening rather than reading and writing. Betty expressed her wishes honestly on her reflection paper, "I think we should spend more time on our conversation activities because that is going to help us the MOST when we are in China. After all, when we get to China, we will be less likely to write anyway." (Diary, 4/15/2005). Betty, Cathy, Sandy, and Jenny all found it helpful when they had to repeat Chinese words or sentences several times in class. "You [the teacher] always ask us to repeat

after you several times and help us to pronounce the right tones in class so even if I am studying on my own outside of the classroom I am still remember how you pronounce the words or sentences,” wrote Cathy (Reflection Paper, 2/21/2005).

Jenny, on the other hand, found the role-play exercises very helpful. “Even though I usually get very nervous and uneasy about speaking Chinese, and I don’t like to do the role-plays, I know role-plays help me to speak and think on my feet and not rely too much on writing everything down on paper. I know I have to train myself to do it [speaking Chinese] to function when I am in China (Reflection Paper 3/4/2005).” Jenny was always very proud of her beautiful Chinese writing. Being a strong visual and kinesthetic learner, Jenny knew writing Chinese characters had become her “safety blanket” because she preferred to write than to speak. However, writing could not replace normal oral communication with other native Chinese people. Role-plays were one possible step to force her to throw away her “safety blanket” and practice her speaking skills in Chinese.

“Music makes me happy! Singing Chinese songs make the class atmosphere very relaxing and pleasant,” wrote Sandy (Diary, 2/21/2005). Sandy confirmed this feeling during her later interview. She said because of the selection of the songs always reinforced the oral usage that I introduced in class; by singing the songs she not only remember the right usage, she enjoyed the happy tunes that came with the songs (Interview, 2/26/2005).

While other students used their conversation hours with the native Chinese speaking TAs to review for exams and class material, Cathy enjoyed asking more questions related to Chinese culture and learning additional vocabulary. She wrote: “I am glad we have conversational hours with our TAs. This is a good time for us [students] to practice our speaking as well as our

writing with them. I feel my learning was enriched or satisfied during my time with the TAs” (Diary, 2/18/2005). I also found students’ conversation hours with the TAs very beneficial because every Friday afternoon TAs and I held meetings to discuss possible problems that students encountered in that week. The TAs provided me with feedback and their assessment of the students. I then used such information to develop my lesson plan for the following week. I also used my meetings with TAs to update and highlight the material that I want my TAs to emphasize during their conversation hours with the students. I helped TAs to better prepare my students for the material covered in class. Furthermore, because of the conversation hours, closer friendship and better understanding of the Eastern and Western cultures grew among the students and the native Chinese TAs they were partnered with. With the TAs, students also had an opportunity to experience Chinese accents that differed from their teacher’s.

Summary

Four major themes emerged from my research: (1) types of learners and the strategies they used to learn Chinese; (2) language learning motivations; (3) learning difficulties; and (4) beneficial activities for learning Chinese.

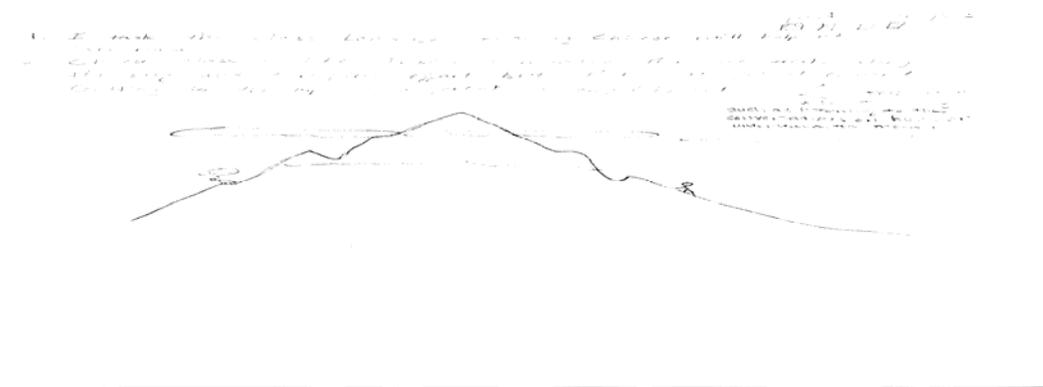
From an educational perspective, in order to deal with language teaching, we also have to deal with language learning. To deal with learning, we must deal with human cognition and human memory. Learning Chinese does not require that students remember word inflections that change the form of a word to indicate differences of tense, number, gender, case, and so forth like many other foreign languages. Learning Chinese does, however, require a unique memorizing effort: remembering thousands of new words, along with their tones and characters.

Unlike students learning an alphabetically-based language, students learning Chinese have to remember whole words aurally as well as graphically. How do we as teachers reduce students' memorizing load? I suggest that teachers integrate previously learned words and patterns not only into everyday classroom exercises but also into homework, oral and written tests.

Approximately five percent of the Elementary Chinese students at this university ranked grammar as a comparatively easier aspect of learning Chinese. Sandy expressed her view, "I took one year of Spanish, and two years of French in high school. Chinese grammar in comparison to French, or Spanish was much easier. However, tones and characters are much harder (Reflection Paper, 2/8/2005)."

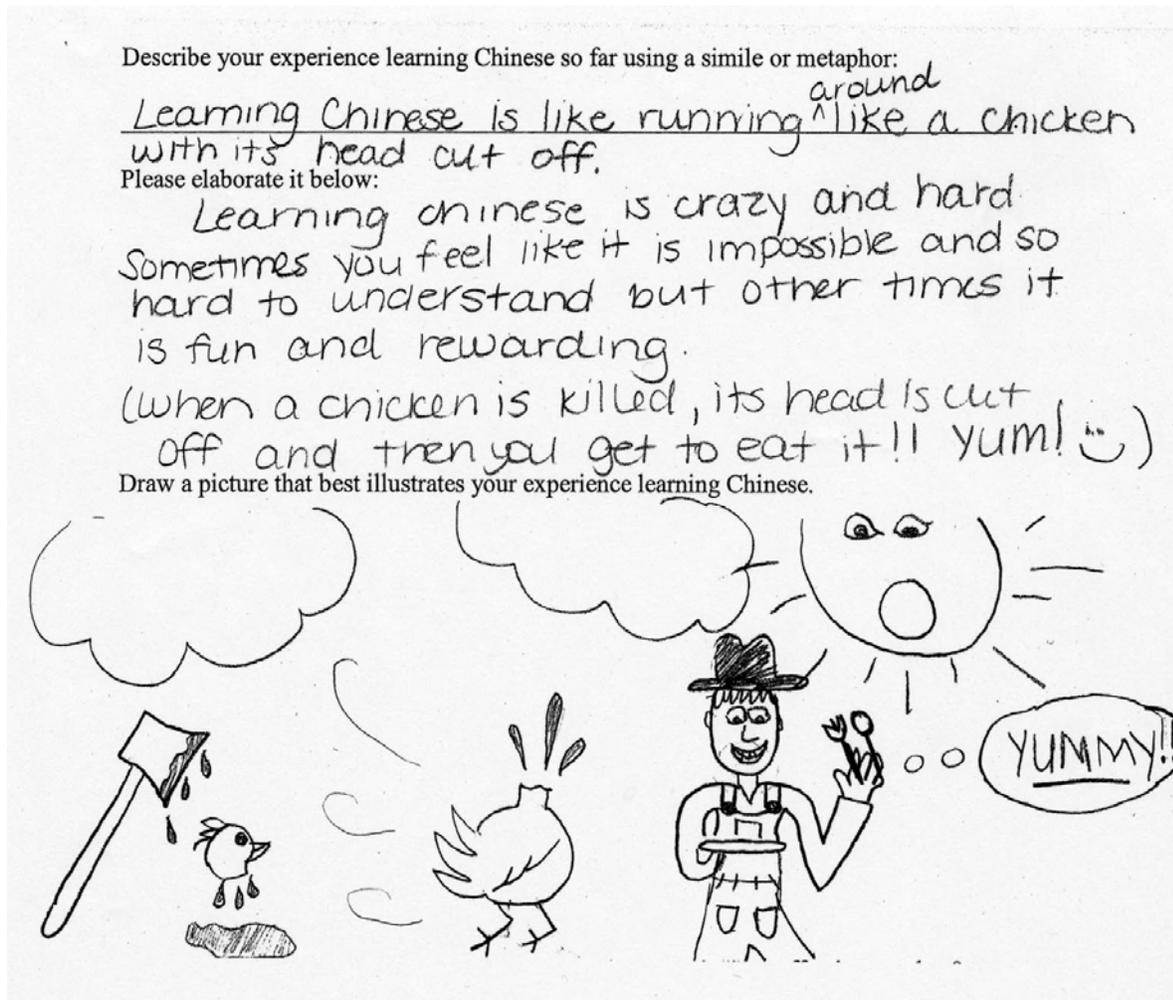
Sandy further described, "Chinese class is like climbing a mountain (Figure 11). There are trials along the way and it requires effort but there are great rewards such as enjoying the view along the trial. Whenever I listened and understand a conversation in Chinese on the bus or in a movie, I ALWAYS rejoiced! Getting to the top is a great accomplishment." (Interview, 4/8/2005)

Figure 11 Sandy's Drawing of Climbing a Big Mountain



Jenny, on the other hand, had mixed feelings. Sometimes, she pictured herself as a headless chicken; and sometimes like a farmer enjoying his delicious chicken. She drew the following picture to illustrate her feelings about learning Chinese (Figure 12):

Figure 12 Jenny's Drawing of a Chicken without a Head and as a Happy Farmer



Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research focused on the strategies that native English speakers used to learn to speak and write Chinese vocabulary while studying in two consecutive semesters of elementary Chinese classes. The main research question was: what strategies do native English-speaking beginning learners of Chinese use to learn to write and speak Chinese? The study was conducted in a medium-sized comprehensive university in Southwest Virginia. The study drew upon concepts and theories in second language acquisition and psycholinguistic learning.

Four students were randomly selected from an introductory Elementary Chinese course for qualitative analyses. Data were collected from demographic student surveys, reflection papers, interviews, observation notes, weekly diaries of the students, and Strategies Inventory for Language Studies Learning (SILL).

The four students randomly selected for qualitative analysis were single Caucasian females, who ranged in age from 18 to 20, were in their second, third, or fourth year of college, and were all from different majors. Although none of the four students were foreign language majors, all had taken Spanish and/or French language classes in high school. The students were all part of a scholarship program and classified as outstanding students and achievers that were competitively selected for the program.

The conclusions from this study provide insight as to how students from this demographic background approach the challenge of learning Chinese. However, students with different backgrounds may use different approaches to learning Chinese. For example, male students may have different motivations and approaches to learning Chinese that were not

revealed in this study. Similarly, younger or older students may use different strategies as well. A study of underachieving students, as opposed to the outstanding students in this study, may reveal strategies other than those described here.

The following are the conclusions of my research:

- (1) Second language learning strategies are very important because the use of strategies is related to language achievement and proficiency.
- (2) Motivation and learning strategies are also interrelated. They affect what strategies students use and how they achieve language proficiency.
- (3) Chinese tones are the most difficult task to overcome and they require time and practice in listening and speaking activities in order to achieve proficiency in communication.
- (4) Most beneficial learning activities were also interrelated to types of learners student reported.

Discussion

Conclusion #1 - Second language learning strategies are very important because the use of strategies is related to language achievement and proficiency.

Effective learners such as Cathy actively associated new information with existing information in long-term memory and built increasingly intricate and differentiated mental structures. She understood the importance of the Chinese radicals and utilized them to help her organize and learn new Chinese characters in association with the old Chinese vocabulary.

Cathy used “metacognitive” strategies such as organizing, evaluating, and planning her learning, which were beyond the cognitive to study and learn Chinese. These strategies could be viewed as learner’s personal control over her learning. Because Cathy was able to use “metacognitive” strategies along with “cognitive” strategies such as analyzing, reasoning, transferring information, and creating structure of input and output, she was able to achieve better language proficiency than Betty.

Betty, on the other hand, showed little interest in using “metacognitive” strategies to organize, evaluate, and plan her learning in Chinese to improve her proficiency in the language. Compared to Cathy, Betty’s understanding of the Chinese characters was more superficial and limited to receiving good test scores in the classroom. Chinese tones and their non-phonetic characters presented a great challenge for an auditory learner like Betty, who may not have time or motivation to seek opportunities outside of classroom to practice her Chinese. This attitude in turn affected her language achievement and proficiency in the United States. Betty’s proficiency in Chinese was dramatically different when she went on a study abroad program to China as I describe in the Afterword.

In this research, I further observed the strategies that each participant adopted were closely related to the type of learners they described themselves to be. For example: Betty, a self-claimed auditory learner, would get frustrated and discouraged in learning the Chinese language because the lack of connection between the spoken and written words. Nevertheless, the Chinese language requires both visual and auditory skills to achieve proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Jenny, on the other hand, described herself as a visual and

kinesthetic learner, excelled in character recognition and writing while suffered deficiency in listening and speaking skills.

Since Chinese is a logographic language in which words are represented by distinct symbols instead of sound, some researchers believe it is learned through rote memorization. Rote memorization is a holistic approach that requires not only memorization of the visual stimuli, but also the auditory stimuli (Cheung, 2003). The number of strokes used to create each character and their relative positions are helpful in reading comprehension. Furthermore, specific positions and arrangements of strokes are more influential to meaning than others when reading. (Fieldman & Siok, 1999). Some research indicates that the number of strokes and the relative position of the strokes helps form a mental representation of the character's meaning and aides in its analysis (Shu & Anderson, 1999). In addition to rote memorization, research now provides evidence that other processes, such as visual- orthographic and phonological processes, are used to learn Mandarin Chinese (Chan, 2003).

Conclusion #2 - Motivation and learning strategies are also interrelated. It affects what strategies students use and how they achieve language proficiency.

As I described in Theme One, motivation and learning strategies are also interrelated. Knowing they were expected to take oral exams in class and they had to use the Chinese language to communicate with the native Chinese people in China, the four participants in this research reported that they adopted different learning strategies when studied. They had to force themselves to speak out loud and practice in natural conversation besides simply writing the Chinese characters over and over again for homework and written exam. The study abroad

program to China also made students realize the urgency to communicate, which in turn motivated and challenged the students to expand their oral proficiency. As Cathy summarized in her interview, “[the oral performance exam] prepared for my interactions in China and it challenges me to study and be more proficient in what we are learning besides just writing the characters over and over. So it is a new challenge but is helpful in really learning the material at a higher level.” (Interview, 4/20/2005). This theme finding also confirmed Gardner’s schematic model (2000) that attitudes influence motivation, which in turn influences achievement.

Conclusion #3 - Chinese tones are the most difficult task to overcome and they require time and practice in listening and speaking activities in order to achieve proficiency in communication.

Among all the challenges that the Chinese language presented to the first year native English learners, Chinese tones are the most difficult to overcome. Even at its phonetic form of pinyin, students needed time and effort to acquire their listening and speaking proficiencies. This result confirmed Chiang’s research on tonal acquisition (Chiang, 1998). Participants such as Sandy who had a strong background in phonetics also reported that it took her at least one semester to be familiar with the Chinese tones. (Interview, 3/26/2005).

Conclusion #4 - Most beneficial learning activities were also interrelated to types of learners student reported.

The following activities were reported to be most beneficial to the Elementary Chinese students:

- Repeating the pronunciation in class
- Doing role-plays
- Singing Chinese songs
- Holding conversation hours with native Chinese TAs outside the classroom
- Working on review exercises for each chapters
- Taking oral exams

When designing class exercises and activities, I believe it is the teachers' responsibility to help their students to discover and understand what types of learners they are. Once the students have a better understanding of their own weakness and strength, they could possibly improve their study strategies. Most foreign language teachers already use some kinds of activities in their classes that can be considered "strategies-based". Teachers need to encourage students in their classes to explore and expand their own learning strategies in order to achieve full proficiency. Effective strategy use is often associated with higher student achievement and in turn better motivated students.

Recommendations

As language teaching becoming more learner-focused and interactive (Tarone & Yule, 1989, p. 20), more emphasis is put on helping students take more responsibility for meeting their own language needs. However, what may well stand in the way of learners' genuine success at language learning is an insufficient awareness of what types of learners they really are and how

various strategies may help them learn the foreign language effectively. Since the Chinese language is different from Romance languages, students may have to expand and try new ways to learn the language. Chinese language teachers may explore in helping students to be more aware of the language learning process. For example, foreign language students could be encouraged to keep their own language diaries. This would give them an opportunity to reflect on their own experience and monitor their own reactions to the language and culture. The language diary can serve as a vehicle to vent frustration, and it could also motivate students to continue studying if they are aware of their struggles and successes through the diary. Foreign language teachers could design exercises and class activities to expose students to different learning strategies available for foreign language learners. Discovery and experimentation with various strategies could help students determine which strategies work best for them.

Foreign language teachers should allocate time early in each semester to help students assess their learning strengths and weaknesses. Only when students and teachers better understand their learning strengths and weaknesses, can they select the right strategies to maximize their own language learning experience. Below are my recommendations for students and teachers after a learning skills assessment is conducted.

The Visual Learner

Students who are visual learners often have an artistic side and enjoy activities involving graphic arts and design. In general visual learners learn best when information is presented as an image or graphic form. In a classroom setting, visual learners benefit from teachers who use some kind of visual aid such as the black/white board, overhead projector, or computer-based

presentations. Teachers can help these students learn by simply writing information on the board because visual learners can recall images in their minds as a way of remembering things. Visual learners benefit from information obtained from textbooks and class notes as well.

Strategies for Visual Learners:

In this study, students indicated that tones were difficult to memorize. To aid recall, teachers and students can:

- Make use of "color coding" when introducing new vocabulary. For example, teachers can introduce five colors to represent each tone pronounced in Chinese and keep the color coding system consistent throughout the first semesters of an Elementary Chinese class:

Green = 1st tone (pronounce flat, like green grass);

Yellow = 2nd tone (the pitch is going up, like rising sun);

Pink = 3rd tone (the pitch is going down then rising, like fireworks);

Red = 4th tone (the pitch is going down, harsh like fire)

White = 5th tone (pronounce short and brief; usually no accent mark)

- Highlight different characters and their pinyin in textbooks, handouts, and worksheets with a pen in contrasting colors. Teachers can also do this when new vocabulary is introduced.
- Write out sentences and phrases that summarize key information obtained from textbooks and lectures.

- Make flashcards of vocabulary words to be memorized. Use different colors of highlighter pens to reinforce tones. Limit the amount of information per card so students can take a mental "picture" of the information. Provide at least one sample sentence illustrating how the word can be used.
- Make use of computer software and watch how computers write each character stroke by stroke on the monitor.
- Also, make use of a computer word processor. Copy key information from notes and textbooks into a computer. Use the print-outs for visual review.
- Before an exam, students may make visual reminders of information that must be memorized. Use self-adhesive notes containing key words and concepts and place them in highly visible places, such as on the mirror, notebook, car dashboard, etc.
- Teachers can also use visual aids such as film, video, maps and charts in class.
- When introducing new Chinese characters, teachers can draw symbols or pictures and make a story about them on the board to facilitate students' recall. Teachers can also encourage students to do the same on their own.

The Auditory Learners

Auditory learners learn best when information is presented in an oral language format. In a classroom setting, students can benefit from listening to lectures and participating in group discussions. They also benefit from obtaining information from audio recordings. Auditory learners can often hear the information in their mind after it is presented. Auditory learners learn

most effectively while interacting in listening/speaking exchanges. An immersion program or study abroad program would probably benefit auditory learners the most.

Strategies for the Auditory Learners:

- When studying, students should speak aloud to aid recall.
- Students should record the lectures and review audio recordings outside the classroom.
- Use audio recordings of the textbook to aid recall. Students can also create their own audio recordings by reading notes and textbook information into an audio recorder.

The Kinesthetic Learners

The kinesthetic learners learn best when physically engaged in a hands-on activity. In the classroom, students can follow a teacher's writing on the board with their own hands. The kinesthetic learners learn best when they can be physically active in the learning environment. They benefit from instructors who encourage in-class demonstrations and "hands-on" learning experiences.

Strategies for the Kinesthetic Learners:

In this research, students indicated that tones were difficult to memorize. To aid recall, teachers and students can:

- Sit near the front of the room to help stay focused on class lecture and take notes throughout the class period.
- Use their hands to gesture the tones in the air. For example, for first tone, move flat across in the air like “—”, second tone as “/”, third tone as “√” and fourth tone as “\”.
- Use their hands to write Chinese characters in the air. Then they copy the new vocabulary several times onto paper to remember the motion for writing Chinese characters.
- Make flashcards to learn a sequence of steps. Arrange the cards on a table top to represent the correct sequence. Put Chinese characters, pinyin, or pictures on the flashcards -- anything that students may find helpful to remember the information.
- Copy key points onto a chalkboard, white board, or other large writing surface when reviewing new information.
- Learn Chinese calligraphy with brushes to practice the strokes.

Even though digital technology and the use of computers are becoming more popular in foreign language teacher education, this technology does not help all students equally. Students who are visual and auditory learners benefit from the use of computers, yet it is not as useful for kinesthetic learners. The experience of Jenny proved this point. Jenny was a visual and kinesthetic learner. She said watching the computer writing the Chinese strokes on the screen helped her to remember the image of the Chinese characters in her brain. However, she still needed to practice writing those characters many times outside of the class and language lab.

Other learners such as Sandy, who was actually an audio and kinesthetic learner, found that watching the computer write the Chinese strokes *silently* did not improve the ability to remember the Chinese characters. Sandy shared her frustration in one of her interviews, “Besides writing the Chinese characters over and over again on my own and listening to the dialogs in the movie clips I did not find the computer program helpful to my learning. I know we use it [the Chinese software] every week during our language lab, and I tried to do it a lot but it didn’t really help me that much. However, if I can write it [the Chinese character] on the paper, it gets embedded in my brain and it’s a lot easier. Also, the little stories you [the teacher] told us in the class helped me to remember the Chinese characters, too” (Interview, 3/26/2005).

It has been important for me to keep these findings in mind both when I plan my lessons for the Chinese language classes and when I teach. Computer learning is not the solution for every type of learner. Teachers need to know their student’s learning strengths and to use computer software wisely and effectively. To aid students in learning the Chinese characters, it might be that simply asking each student to practice writing the characters on a small whiteboard in class for five minutes or trace the stroke with their fingers as the computer demonstrates the strokes on the screen.

Future Research

Many language teachers have observed different learning styles among their students. However, the way these different learning styles affect student acquisition of the Chinese language has not been thoroughly investigated. Sternberg (2005), on the other hand, proposed the styles of thinking as a basis of differentiated instruction. Some important questions need to

be investigated that were not addressed in the current study. For example: How do learners from a broader range of backgrounds and learning styles describe their experience in learning the Chinese language? What is the relationship between strong visual and kinesthetic learning preferences to the ease of learning Chinese characters? What is the relationship between teachers' assessment of students' learning styles and the strategy they use to present material and engage their students in learning? Furthermore, investigation of cross cultural studies of Chinese language acquisition would be valuable.

Lastly, I would like to close my research with a student's comments and drawing. "Learning Chinese is like peeling layers off an onion where each layer inside is larger than the one before. The more we [students] learn about Chinese language, we realize there is much more culture, nuance, and usage we do not understand. No matter how far we get, there is always more to learn and understand." (Figure 13) The role of teachers is noble and exciting. I hope this research enhances the knowledge base of foreign language instruction and stimulates additional research on student language acquisition of Chinese.

Figure 13 Jenny's Metaphor for Her Chinese Learning Experience

Describe your experience learning Chinese so far using a simile or metaphor:

Learning Chinese is like peeling layers off an onion where each layer insider is larger than the one before.

Please elaborate it below:

The more we learn about the Chinese language, the more culture, nuance, and usage go along with it. No matter how far we get, there is always more to learn and understand.

Draw a picture that best illustrates your experience learning Chinese.



Sometimes I have to draw the characters in the air to remember how to say them.

AFTERWORD

I included this section to satisfy the readers' curiosity and to provide a complete picture of my four participants. In May 18, 2005, I led a group of 15 students (including the four participants) and two faculty members on a 21-day study abroad program in China. Students were required to take four language classes from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM, and were obligated to participate in six Chinese calligraphy and Tai Chi classes in the afternoon.

Below, I included participants' own words to describe what happen to them after they arrived in China. The outcome-descriptions of the participants were based on my own observations and their diary entries written during their three-weeks of studies in China.

Participant #1 – Betty Described herself as a strong audio learner. She wrote in her diary while she studied in China:

I found myself emotionally happier in China than in the United States because I could finally rely on my audio ability to learn the language. I think here in China, I learn more based on listening because that's how the class is taught. In some ways it made me a better speaker and in other ways it was really hard to follow the characters and improve writing. (Diary, 5/28/2005)

My Comments regarding Betty's Language Learning in China:

Because of Betty's outgoing personality, she was not afraid of making mistakes and to communicate in the Chinese language with native Chinese people when she was in China. She

excelled in speaking more than many of her classmates and performed exceptionally well in the language classes in China, which I found a little surprising. I know Betty was struggling to master the Chinese language when she studied in the United States, but now in China she had been transformed into a “new” person! (Observation Note, 6/7/2005).

Participant #2 - Cathy Described herself as both an audio and a visual learner. She wrote in her diary while she studied in China:

My learning strategies haven't necessarily changed – I just have more practical opportunities to use the language, and so I feel that my knowledge has strengthened and I am much more able to communicate effectively in Chinese – though my vocabulary is limited (Diary, 5/29/2005).

My Comments regarding Cathy's Language Learning in China:

Cathy had always been an excellent language learner in the United States. Since she just graduated from the university before our departure to China in May, 2005 and she knew that she would have to resume her graduate studies in August, 2005, she no longer was content to stay in the class and learn the Chinese language when we were in China. She preferred to go out to the public and talk to native Chinese people in Chinese and visited places on her own. She believed that she could learn more this way. Cathy was determined to see and do as much in China as she could dream and plan for. Her performance in the classroom in China was considered average compared to her performance in the classroom in the United States. (Observation Note, 6/7/2005).

After my return from China, and based on this experience, I recommended to the university administrators that they select our potential students from sophomores and juniors to avoid the “post-graduation” syndrome in the future.

Participant #3 - Sandy Described herself as both an audio and a visual learner. She wrote in her diary while she studied in China:

My learning strategies have changed because using the language now is more about getting around & getting the things you need instead of just learning it for a test. I like that we learned how to say new things in class and then were able to go out and use them in real conversations that day. I feel that being immersed in the language and culture, in the city & the classroom, has greatly broadened and improved my language skills, and I think this will help when we return to the U.S. and I continue my studies. The only bad thing was that I could no longer keep up my ability to write Chinese characters. (Diary, 5/31/2005).

My Comments regarding Sandy's Language Learning in China:

Sandy was the youngest student in this class. Because of her gentle personality, she tended to feel more comfortable staying with her American classmates as much as possible and traveling with them. She was able to rely more on her audio skills than the visual skills in China and functioned well both in and outside of the classroom. Because of the immersion study abroad experience, Sandy picked up the listening skills quickly, but she claimed that her writing skills had been "suffering". (Observation Note, 6/7/2005)

Participant #4 – Jenny Described herself as a strong visual and kinesthetic learner. She wrote in her diary while she studied in China:

Yes, learning here [China] has made me use more conversation rather than memorization to study Chinese. I enjoy bargaining & talking with natives as well as my 中国朋友 [my Chinese friends], but I was very frustrated in class because my ears could not follow the words teachers said. And, my eyes could not see the characters that we were learning. I had to see the words to remember!”

My Comments regarding Jenny’s Language Learning in China:

Jenny was a good, devoted and hardworking student in the United States. In China, I was surprised to discover that her performance in the classes dropped dramatically! She became very frustrated in most of her classes because she could hardly catch or understand what the Chinese teachers said since they did not have the habit of writing words on the board like I did in the United States. Luckily, anyone who saw Jenny’s beautiful Chinese handwriting would give her highest praise! I know she was proud of that, too. (Observation Note, 6/7/2005)

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APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Scholarship Program Application for 2004-05
- Appendix B: Demographic Student Survey
- Appendix C: Informed Consent Form
- Appendix D: Reflection Paper
- Appendix E: Interview Guide
- Appendix F: IRB Protocol
- Appendix G: Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

Appendix A

Scholarship Program Application for 2004-05

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Local Address _____

Local Phone Number _____ Permanent Phone Number _____

Permanent Address _____

Student ID Number _____ Email Address _____

Major(s) _____ Minor(s) (if any) _____

Cumulative GPA at RU (Minimum 3.0) _____

Class Level (Fr., So., Jr., Sr., GR) (Must be a Full Time Student) _____

Names of staff, faculty member, PI, RA, RD, club advisor or president who will write letters of recommendation**

(1) _____

(2) _____

****At least two letters of recommendation are required for application. One recommendation must be from someone who is familiar with your campus leadership roles and extracurricular activities.**

****Please attach a separate sheet detailing extracurricular activities and involvements on campus, community activities, and any previous study abroad or international travel experiences.**

****An essay of 1-2 typed pages is required, explaining why you want to apply for this scholarship. In the essay, you should discuss how your participation in this program would**

enrich your education and enhance your ultimate career goals. Among questions that may prompt your thinking are the following:

1. How can the study of Mandarin Chinese culture complement a) your major area of study; b) your long-range education and c) your career plans?
2. Why is it so important for you in particular- and college graduates in general- to develop knowledge of the Chinese language, history, and culture?
3. How will you benefit educationally and personally from the opportunity to travel to China to experience the culture, to meet the people, and to see first-hand a nation that will play an increasingly important role in the 21st Century economic, political, and social arenas?
3. Why do you want to participate in this program, and how do you hope it will impact your life?
4. What previous event or experience has prompted you to apply for this program?
5. Briefly describe any previous language and travel experiences, courses taken with international emphasis, and your study/work ethics for language learning.

- I authorize release of information from my academic, financial, and judicial records to support this application.

-I understand that if I am selected as a finalist, I will be contacted via phone or email to **come in for an interview.**

-If I am named to participate in the program, I will agree to meet with the other scholarship recipients on Feb. 25, 2004 at 6 p.m., so that I can be registered for the Fall Semester Mandarin course.

Student's Signature

Appendix B

Demographic Student Survey

Name: _____ Semester: _____

Student's Phone #: _____ Email: _____

1. Please circle your class standing: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior Graduate

2. Your major program: _____ 2nd major or minor: _____

3. Your degree program: B.A. _____ B.S. _____ Undecided _____ Other _____

4. Do you have or have you had an opportunity to speak Chinese language outside of class?

Yes _____ No _____ If yes, where? _____

5. Is the Chinese language you are studying now spoken at home or in your family?

Yes _____ No _____ Please explain _____

6. In what language do your mother _____, father _____,

grandparents _____ speak to you?

7. In what language do you speak to your mother _____, father _____,

grandparents _____?

8. What foreign languages have you previously studied (including Chinese language you are

studying now and all foreign language studied in high school or at other university)?

Languages	Number of Years	Last Year Taken	Where Studied?	

9. What are your motivations for taking this Chinese language course? Please explain.
10. How much do you know about the Chinese language and culture prior to taking this course?
11. Have you ever visited Asia or other countries? Where and when?
12. Will this course fulfill any requirement? Which one(s)? e.g. B.A., major or minor (please specify).
13. Who recommended this course to you? Fellow student ____ self ____ faculty member or advisor (give name) _____ other _____

Appendix C

Informed Consent for Participants

Project Title: Student Approaches to Learning Chinese Vocabulary

Principal Investigator: I-Ping Fu, Mandarin Chinese Instructor

The Purpose of This Research

This research study is focus on the strategies that native English speakers use as they learn to speak and write Chinese vocabulary words in the first year of the Elementary Chinese class. A random sampling of four students will be selected in their first year of Chinese study for this qualitative analysis. Data will be collected in demographic student surveys, reflection papers, in-depth interviews, observations, field notes and Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

Procedures

You will be asked to share your language and culture learning experiences outside the classroom with the investigator. You will be asked to be participating in interviews in connection with the project described above, and to allow the investigator to observe and tape-record the interviews. You will also be asked to actively join in the practices of collecting data, such as collecting artifacts related to your vocabulary learning strategies, keeping weekly diary, writing journal entries, taking the Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), and interviews.

Interviews: You will be asked to participate in three interviews in a year, which will take about 60-90 minutes each session. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed for the purpose

of the study. In the interview, you will be identified by a pseudonym so that you may remain anonymous in any transcripts, tapes, and references to any information contained in the interview. The principal investigator, Ms. Fu will also collect your writing artifacts such as survey and questionnaires, diary and journal throughout the year as part of her study and analyses. You will also give Ms. Fu permission to take photos of your work during this period as part of her analyses.

Observations: Ms. Fu will observe you in nature classroom settings and during the language labs throughout the year. You do not have to perform any differently. Your participation is voluntary and it will not affect your grade in the class. There will be time, you will be asked to share your learning strategies with the investigator outside of the class.

Risks

There are no known risks to participating in this project, though it may be difficult at times to discuss embarrassing experiences such as receiving low grades on the exam. Nevertheless, your performance and your discussion of your learning strategies will not affect your grade in the class or be judged by Ms. Fu

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you as an individual, but the study may be of use to learners of Chinese and educators of Chinese as a second language.

Anonymity

In the interview, you will be identified by a pseudonym. Pseudonym will be used throughout the transcripts, tapes, references, journals, and field note. This practice will also be applied to ALL my artifacts.

Freedom to Withdraw

You may withdraw from the project and the interview at any time without penalty of any kind. In the event that I withdraw from the interview or project, any tape made of the interview will be either given to you or destroyed, and no transcript will be made of the interview. If you feel that you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or that your rights as a participant in the research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact the Chair of IRB, Research Division.

Approval of Research

This project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at the university.

Subject's Responsibilities and Permission

I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this study and agree to be interviewed according to the terms outlined above. I also voluntarily agree to submit any artifacts that are going to be useful for the study. I understand that I will receive no compensation for my participation in this project, though I will be given a copy of the transcript for my own records.

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

Signature _____ Date _____

Name & Pseudonym _____

Telephone Number _____ Email _____

Should I have any questions about the research project or procedures, I may contact:

Primary Investigator: I-Ping Fu, Phone: (540) 998-0155, Doctoral Candidate,

Department of Teaching and Learning at Virginia Tech

cc. the participant, I-Ping P. Fu

**PARTICIPANTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OR DUPLICATE ORIGINAL OF THIS
CONSENT FORM**

Appendix D
Reflection Paper

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

1. What were your motivations of taking this Chinese Language course?
2. What kinds of opportunity do you have to practice your Chinese vocabulary words outside of the classroom?
3. Do you find Chinese vocabulary words hard or easy to learn? Please explain.
4. From your points of view, what make the Chinese vocabulary words easy or hard to learn?
5. Describe the problems you have in learning Chinese vocabulary words. What did you do to overcome the problems?
6. How do you study the Chinese vocabulary words outside of the class? Do you find it more helpful or less helpful to study alone or with your classmates? Please explain in detail.
7. What strategy or strategies do you use to learn Chinese vocabulary words? What works and what does not work? Please explain in detail.
8. What activities or exercises do you find helpful or not helpful for you to learn the Chinese vocabulary words?
9. In what ways were you able to improve your Chinese vocabulary words? Please describe them in detail.
10. How do you describe your learning strength? Would you describe yourself as _____ visual or audio learner? Why?
11. What did the instructor do to help you learn or not learn Chinese vocabulary words?

12. After learning the Chinese language, have you found your knowledge of your first language changed or changes in your thinking process or studying habit? How so? Please explain.
13. Do you find quizzes, exams, and class activities a good assessment of what you know? How do you like to see them change?
14. What are the segments of the Elementary Chinese course that you especially found difficult to learn?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share that is related to your learning of the Chinese vocabulary words?
16. Would you recommend or encourage your friends and colleagues to learn the Chinese language? If yes, why? If not, why not?
17. Will you continue to take Intermediate Chinese course in the future? Yes _____ No _____ Maybe _____ why or why not? Please explain.

Appendix E

Interview Guide for Students' Approaches to learning Chinese Vocabulary

I. Demographic

- Where and when were you born?
- How would you describe your racial/ethnic background?
- How many members are there in your immediate family and who do they include?
- Are you currently employed? If so, what is the title of your work?

School Academics

- How long have you been attending college?
- What is your major? What is your minor?
- When do you anticipate finishing your program?
- What is your favor subject? Why?
- What is your least favor subject? Why?
- What is your career goal?
- Where do you see yourself in five years? What would you like to be doing?

Taking Chinese as a Foreign Language

- What was your original motivation for taking the Chinese Language course?
- What are the principle difficulties you have encountered when you learn the Chinese vocabulary words?
- How do you study Chinese vocabulary words? Please walk through the process with me.
- Do you study alone or with your classmates? Why? How do you find it helpful to study alone or with other people?

- What strategies do you use to study the Chinese vocabulary words? Please go over each step with me.
- What strategies do you find them effective? What strategies do you find them not effective? Please demonstrate your point.
- What teaching methods and outside activities do you find valuable to assist you in learning Chinese vocabulary words?
- How does learning the Chinese language affect your outlook in life?
- How would you describe your learning strength? Would you classify yourself as _____ (audio or visual) learner?

Appendix F

IRB Request for Exemption Protocol

Student Approaches to learning Chinese Vocabulary

Justification of the Study

This research study is focus on the strategies that native English speaker who are beginning learners of Chinese use as they learn to speak and write Chinese vocabulary words in the first year of the Elementary Chinese class. The result of this research will benefit educators in the field of teaching Chinese as a second language as well as English speaking beginning learners of Chinese.

Procedures

Participants will be English speaking beginning learners of Chinese. A random sampling of four students will be selected in their first year of Chinese study for this qualitative analysis. Data will be collected in demographic student survey, reflection paper, weekly exit slip, interviews, observations, field notes and Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Participants will be asked to share their language and culture learning experiences outside the classroom with the researcher, and the investigator will observe and tape-record the interviews. The researcher will also encourage the key participants to actively join in the practices of collecting data, such as collecting artifacts related to their vocabulary learning strategies and keeping journal entries.

Interviews: The participants will have three interviews at end of January, February, and March. Each interview will take about 60-90 minutes each session. The interview will be audio-taped

and transcribed for the purpose of the study. In the interview, the participants will be identified by a pseudonym so that they may remain anonymous in any transcripts, tapes, and references to any information contained in the interview. Each interview will be related to the four-page students' questionnaires, and it will be open-ended and semi-structured. The interviews will be conducted either in researcher's office or at the Department of Foreign Language Lab in Cook Hall. Throughout spring semester, the researcher will collect samples of participants' learning strategies, demographic student survey, reflection paper, and weekly exit slip. With participants' permission, the researcher will also take photos of their work during this period as part of her analyses. All the transcribed interviews will be stored in the researcher's house or secured in her office.

Observations: The researcher will observe her participants in nature classroom settings and during the language labs. The participants do not have to perform any differently, and all participations are voluntary. The researcher will insure the participants that their involvements of this study will not affect their grades in the class. There will be time, the participants will be asked to share their learning strategies with the researcher outside of the class.

Risks and Benefits

This research has the potential to benefit educators in the field of teaching Chinese as a second language as well as English speaking beginning learners of Chinese. There are no known risks to participating in this project, though it may be possible that as the participants reflect on their learning experiences they may remember painful grades or embarrassing incidence in the past. Furthermore, the process of interviewing often proves more cathartic than painful. Participants will be aware that their input will ultimately help to improve the teaching of Chinese as a second language and their learning process.

Confidentiality/Anonymity

In the interview, participants will be identified by a pseudonym. Pseudonym will be used throughout the transcripts, tapes, references, journals, and field note. This practice will also be applied to ALL the artifacts. The researcher will transcribe the recorded tapes in private. Transcriptions and the tapes will be stored in a box containing all the materials for this study. The researcher will destroy or erase them after the study. If any participants need to listen to their conversation on the tape, the researcher will always bring it to them if the tapes are not yet destroyed. When the researcher transcribes the tape, the researcher will either do at her private home or wear a headset when other people are present to protect the participants' privacy.

The participants may withdraw from the project and the interview at any time without penalty of any kind. In the event that they decide to withdraw from the interview or project, any tape made of the interview will be either given to them or destroyed, and no transcript will be made of the interview.

Informed Consent

Before the first interview, the researcher will provide an informed consent form to the participants. They will be asked to read the form thoroughly and sign it. The form is included in this file.

Appendix G
Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)
Version 7.0 (Modified for the Chinese Language)
© R. Oxford, 1989

This form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) is adapted and modified from Oxford (1989), which was used for students of English as a second or foreign language. Fu Laoshi replaced all the statements about learning English with the statement of learning Chinese. Please read each statement and write the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) in the bracket provided that tells HOW TRUE OF YOU THE STATEMENT IS.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE OF ME means that the statement is very rarely true of you.

USUALLY NOT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true less than half the time.

SOMEWHAT TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you about half the time.

USUALLY TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true more than half the time.

ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE OF ME means that the statement is true of you almost always.

Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements.

Put your answers in the brackets provided. Work as quickly as you can without being careless.

This usually takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, let instructor know immediately.

EXAMPLE

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost always true of me

Read the item, and choose a response (1 through 5 as above), and write it in the space after the item.

() I actively seek out opportunities to talk with native speakers of Chinese.

You have just completed the example item. Answer the rest of the items and put your answer in the brackets.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

Version 7.0
© R. Oxford, 1989

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost true of me

(Write answers in the bracket provided)

Part A

1. () I think of relationships between what I already know and new things I learn in Chinese.
2. () I use new Chinese words in a sentence so I can remember them.
3. () I connect the sound of a new Chinese word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word.
4. () I remember a new Chinese by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used.
5. () I use rhymes to remember new Chinese words.
6. () I use flashcards to remember new Chinese words.
7. () I physically act out new Chinese words.
8. () I review Chinese lessons often.
9. () I remember new Chinese words or phrases by remembering their location on the page, on the board, or on a street sign.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost true of me

(Write answers in the bracket provided)

Part B

10. () I say or write new Chinese words several times.
6. () I try to talk like native Chinese speakers.
7. () I practice the sounds of Chinese.
8. () I use the Chinese words I know in different ways.
9. () I start conversation in Chinese.
10. () I watch Chinese language TV shows spoken in Chinese or go to movies spoken in Chinese.
11. () I read for pleasure in Chinese.
12. () I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in Chinese.
13. () I first skim a Chinese passage (read over the passage quickly) then go back and read carefully.
14. () I look for words in my own language that are similar to new words in Chinese.
15. () I try to find patterns in Chinese.
16. () I find the meaning of a Chinese word by dividing it into parts that I understand.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost true of me

(Write answers in the bracket provided)

17. () I try not to translate word-for-word.
18. () I make summaries of information that I hear or read in Chinese.

Part C

19. () To understand unfamiliar Chinese words, I make guesses.
20. () When I can't think of a word during a conversation in Chinese, I use gestures.
21. () I make up new words if I do not know the right ones in Chinese.
22. () I read Chinese without looking up every new word.
23. () I try to guess what the other person will say next in Chinese.
24. () If I can't think of a Chinese word, I use a word or phrase that means the same thing.

Part D

25. () I try to find as many ways as I can to use my Chinese.
26. () I notice my Chinese mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
27. () I pay attention when someone is speaking Chinese.
28. () I try to find out how to be a better learner of Chinese.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost true of me

(Write answers in the bracket provided)

29. () I plan my schedule so I will have enough time to study Chinese.
30. () I look for people I can talk to in Chinese.
31. () I look for opportunities to read as much as possible in Chinese.
32. () I have clear goals for improving my Chinese skills.
33. () I think about my progress in learning Chinese.

Part E

34. () I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using Chinese.
35. () I encourage myself to speak Chinese even when I am afraid of making a mistake.
36. () I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in Chinese.
37. () I notice I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using Chinese.
38. () I write down my feelings in a language learning diary.
39. () I talk to someone else about how I feel when I am learning Chinese.

1. Never or almost never true of me
2. Usually not true of me
3. Somewhat true of me
4. Usually true of me
5. Always or almost true of me

(Write answers in the bracket provided)

Part F

40. () If I do not understand something in Chinese, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
41. () I ask Chinese speakers to correct me when I talk.
42. () I practice Chinese with other students.
43. () I ask for help from Chinese speakers.
44. () I ask questions in Chinese.
45. () I try to learn about the culture of Chinese speakers.