# TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

EDITORIAL

1. Opening Remarks
   Yueming Yu

RESEARCH PAPERS

2. Pragmatics in Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language
   Naoko Taguchi

3. It Does Matter with Whom You Chat: Chinese Learners’ Perspectives on NS vs. NNS Chat Partners
   Yanlin Wang, Stefanie Borst, Jing-Lan Feng, and Rong Chang

PEDAGOGICAL REPORT

4. A Concept-Based Instructional Design: Introducing Chinese Color Terms and Their Metaphorical Meanings at the Elementary Level
   Gang Liu and Haixia Wang

FORUM

5. A Preliminary Discussion on Teaching Pronunciation and Pragmatics in Elementary Chinese Class
   Liling Huang

REVIEW

   Kun Nie

STUDENT WORK

7. “Should You Send Your Kid to High School in the U.S. or in China?”
   A Comparison of the High School Education Systems of the United States and China
   Yuyang Guo, Isaac Lim, and Zhongxin Sun (student advisor)

ABSTRACTS

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A Free Forum for Teachers and Learners of Chinese All over the World

As we usher in the Year of 2015, the first issue of our online journal "Studies in Chinese Learning and Teaching (SCLT)" has also come out to meet our fellow colleagues and students in the field of Chinese education.

Along with the ever-increasing number of learners of Chinese language and culture all over the world in the past decades, there is also a growing need for more qualified instructors as well as for a better understanding of the field of teaching Chinese to speakers of other languages. This in turn calls for more theoretical research and deeper exploration of teaching practices targeted at the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture.

Taking advantage of the efficiency of technology, we have launched this open-access journal "Studies in Chinese Learning and Teaching (SCLT)" with the intention to provide a free academic forum for Chinese learners, educators as well as program administrators throughout the world to share their research results, pedagogical experiences, reflections on Chinese teaching and learning as well as their views on the tools used in their classroom practices. We strongly believe that this free forum will offer great opportunities for all those engaged in the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture, be they researchers, teachers or students, to contribute and to learn from each other to become better researchers and practitioners of Chinese education.

We will publish two issues every year. We welcome all kinds of contributions. We uphold high standards for our publications. With a very responsible editorial team, we treat every submission seriously and carefully, and try to provide very detailed comments as well as practical suggestions for improvement to guarantee the quality of our publications. In addition to high-quality research papers, we are especially interested in contributions by our classroom teachers who work at the forefront of our field, and at the same time we also encourage your recommendations of your students' work which will be used as an inspiration to other learners of Chinese. Please send your submissions to:

sclt-submission@lists.andrew.cmu.edu.

We welcome all comments and suggestions by our readers and hope more people will join our team. If you have any comments and suggestions, please send them to:

sclt-info@lists.andrew.cmu.edu.

Thank you!

Yueming Yu

SCLT Editor-in-Chief
面向全世界汉语教师与学生的免费、公开的论坛

在 2015 年到来之际，我们的首期网上期刊《汉语学习与教学研究》也与我们对外汉语教学领域的同事和学生们见面了。

近十几年来在世界各地学习汉语语言及文化人数的不断增长对从事对外汉语教学的教师提出了更高的要求，也需要我们对外汉语教学领域有一个更明确、更深入的了解。这也就要求我们对这一领域进行更多的理论研究，以及对如何更有效地学习与教授汉语语言及文化作更深一步的探索。

借助当今高科技的高效性，我们创办了这一免费的、面向所有人开放的学术期刊《汉语学习与教学研究》，目的即为全世界各国涉足对外汉语领域教学的学生、教师及行政管理人员提供一个免费的、公开的学术论坛，让大家共同分享研究成果、教学经验、学习体会以及对课堂教学中实际运用的一些工具（包括教材、参考书籍及教学软件等）的看法。我们相信这一免费的公开论坛能为我们在对外汉语教学领域工作和学习的所有人，包括研究人员、教师以及学生，提供一个分享经验与教训及相互学习的极好机会，帮助我们成为更好的汉语教学研究者与实践者。

本期刊将每年出版两期。我们欢迎各类投稿。我们坚持刊物的高质量。我们有一支负责任的编辑团队，对每一份稿件都进行极其认真仔细的审阅和评估，并提出尽可能详细的意见与建议，供作者修改时参考，以保证我们出版的文章的质量。除了高质量的科研文章外，我们也特别欢迎来自教学第一线的老师及学生们撰文介绍你们在教学实践中的体会。我们也希望各位老师能积极推荐分享你们学生的学习成果，使我们的其他学生也能从中得到鼓励及继续坚持学习的动力。投稿请发送至 sclt-submission@lists.andrew.cmu.edu。

我们诚恳地欢迎读者的各种批评与建议，并希望有更多的人参加到我们的团队中来。请将你们的批评与建议发送至 sclt-info@lists.andrew.cmu.edu。

谢谢你们的支持！

《汉语学习与教学研究》主编
于月明
二零一五年一月
Pragmatics in Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language

Naoko Taguchi
Carnegie Mellon University

Abstract

This paper reviews the current literature in teaching and learning pragmatics in Chinese as a second language. An exhaustive and inclusive literature search was conducted both electronically and manually to locate data-based studies on Chinese learners’ pragmatic competence and development published until 2015, yielding a total of 14 studies. These studies were grouped into three categories: (a) studies that documented pragmatic development in a study abroad context; (b) studies that examined heritage learner pragmatics; and (c) studies that tested the effectiveness of pragmatic-focused instruction. The paper discusses three generalizations emerged from the findings: (1) Chinese learners develop their pragmatic abilities while abroad, but initial ability, general proficiency, language contact, and social participation affect the development; (2) Heritage language learners have an advantage in pragmatics learning; and (3) Instruction helps pragmatics learning, but the effect varies across modalities of practice.

Keywords: Chinese, pragmatics, second language acquisition

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Socio-economic and political situations in current days have advanced Chinese as a critical language to study in the U.S. and worldwide. According to ACTFL surveys of K-12 public schools in U.S.A. (ACTFL, 2011), Chinese classes recorded the largest growth in enrollment from the year 2004 to 2008, increasing by 195%. In U.S. higher education, Chinese is ranked as the 6th most studied language in 2009, with its enrollment more than doubled in the last decade (MLA, 2010). Open Doors data from 2011-2012 has placed China as the 5th most popular destination for study abroad (IIE, 2013).

The upsurge of Chinese language learners indicates that Chinese is quickly becoming the language for intercultural communication. Competence in Chinese will no doubt help people connect with others over cultural interests, business practices, and political opportunities in the global society. But what makes someone a competent speaker of Chinese? We can think of a variety of knowledge components and skill areas, such as grammar, vocabulary, character knowledge, and pronunciation and tone. In this paper, I will discuss one area that draws on these basic abilities yet is distinct and presents a challenge for second language (L2) learners to master – pragmatic competence.

Pragmatics studies linguistic phenomena in relation to their use in a social context. Learning a language involves more than learning grammar and vocabulary. The rules of communication, such as how to speak with the level of politeness and formality required in a situation, or to understand another person’s intention communicated indirectly, are critical skills in order to become a competent speaker in the target culture. Learners need to have a range of linguistic forms at their disposal to perform a language function (e.g., complaint). At the same time, they need to understand the sociocultural norms and rules that govern the use of these forms (e.g., which forms to use to complain to whom). Lack of this knowledge may lead to not saying things appropriately, consequently causing a cross-cultural miscommunication. Hence, an important aspect of Chinese study involves learning pragmatics of Chinese.

Previous literature has discussed Chinese pragmatics in terms of linguistics behaviors, and cultural norms and values that govern the behaviors. Mao (1994) argues that Chinese politeness closely reflects the concept of ‘face.’ In order to be polite, people need to know ‘how to attend to each other’s li n (脸) and mianzi (面子) and to perform speech acts appropriate to and worthy of such an image’ (p. 19). Mao describes that in the speech act of invitation, the speaker often uses lexical mitigations (e.g., “It is only a casual dinner.”) in order to protect her/his own face and to reduce the imposition on the hearer. On the other hand, when the hearer turns down an invitation, he/she mentions the speaker-side cost or burden as a reason for refusal, again as a way of showing consideration to the speaker’s face. Ma (1996), on the other hand, illustrates the concept of ‘contrary-to-face-value communication’ (p. 259) identified in Chinese culture. She describes the case of saying “yes” for “no” when communication is other-serving and explained that it reflects the Chinese cultural characteristics of avoiding confrontation with others. Pan (2000) also claims that politeness behaviors are shaped by “deep-rooted beliefs concerning the perception of power relations, concept of self and other, and understanding of interpersonal relationships” (p.5). Formality of social contexts influences the use of politeness strategies. Kadar and Pan (2011) revealed that self-deprecating, compliment response behaviors such as “no, no” tend to occur in formal situations rather than daily, informal contacts. These literatures
illustrate how sociocultural concepts and norms such as face, power, and hierarchy are encoded in linguistics behaviors and social interaction in Chinese.

Nearly two decades ago, Kasper (1995) edited a volume *Pragmatics in Chinese as Native and Foreign Language*. It is the first and only book that devotes its entire attention to pragmatics of L1 and L2 speakers of Chinese. However, despite its title, five chapters in the volume were about native Chinese speakers’ realization patterns of different speech acts (requests, refusals, compliments, and complaints). Only one chapter was about L2 Chinese learners, describing their observations and experiences of learning pragmatics during sojourn in China (e.g., invitation-refusal sequences in Chinese, compliment responses, and terms of address). The chapter concluded with a strong call for L2 Chinese pragmatics research that investigates Chinese learners’ interactions in a variety of situations and discourse domains.

Two decades after Kasper’s volume, this paper will present the current landscape of L2 Chinese pragmatics research by reviewing existing empirical findings in this area. I conducted exhaustive electronic bibliographic searches to include all studies in L2 Chinese up to January of 2015. All the refereed journals, books and book chapters, and conference monographs were searched through the databases of LLBA, World Cat, and ERIC using three key words: ‘pragmatics,’ ‘Chinese,’ and ‘second language.’ With the additional results from Google search and expert consultations, this search process uncovered 14 unique data-based studies that examined L2 Chinese learners’ pragmatic ability and pragmatic language use (marked with * in the bibliography).

All studies except one followed traditional practice of L2 pragmatics research and examined typical constructs of speech acts (request, refusal, and compliment response), implicature, and routines (or formulaic expressions). Methods of investigation used in these studies also aligned with the mainstream practice, using common questionnaire-based instruments such as oral/written discourse completion tests (DCT)\(^1\), multiple-choice questions, and judgment tasks. One study conducted a sociolinguistic investigation by analyzing Chinese learners’ use of the particle DE (的) in informal speech. Six studies used a cross-sectional design by comparing pragmatic performance between learners of Chinese and native Chinese speakers, between students in a study abroad and domestic instructional setting, between heritage and non-heritage learner groups, as well as between learners of different proficiency levels. Four other studies used a longitudinal design by tracing development of pragmatic abilities in a study abroad program. One study also examined study abroad as a context for pragmatics learning by analyzing interview data. The remaining three studies were instructional intervention studies that investigated whether explicit teaching leads to the learning of a speech act of request in Chinese. Essentially all 14 studies involved adult learners enrolled in Chinese language courses in U.S. universities or study abroad programs.

My review of these 14 studies is guided by what these studies inform us about L2 Chinese learners’ pragmatic abilities in different learning contexts. I grouped the studies into

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\(^1\) DCT, originally developed by Blum-Kulka (1982), is a data collection instrument that has been used widely in pragmatics research to elicit speech acts. A typical format involves a brief scenario describing the situation, followed by a dialogue which has at least one turn as an open slot to be completed by the participant. Participants are asked to ‘imagine’ the hypothetical situation and produce the response as if they were in the situation performing the role.
three categories: (a) studies that traced pragmatic development in a study abroad setting; (b) studies that examined heritage learner pragmatics; and (c) studies that tested the effectiveness of instruction. After analyzing the findings for commonalities and discrepancies, I have uncovered three general findings:

1. Chinese learners develop their pragmatic abilities while abroad, but initial ability, general proficiency, language contact, and social participation affect the development.
2. Heritage language learners have an advantage in pragmatics learning.
3. Instruction helps pragmatics learning, but the effect varies across modalities of practice (production vs. comprehension).

Given the paucity of the existing studies, these generalizations are certainly not conclusive. Future research is needed to assess their stability and to carefully consider variations in the findings. Below I will discuss these tentative generalizations one by one, as a stepping stone for future investigations of L2 Chinese pragmatics.

1. **Chinese learners develop their pragmatic abilities while abroad, but initial ability, general proficiency, amount of language contact, and participation in social activities affect the development.**

   Longitudinal studies conducted in a study abroad context have examined pragmatic development in the areas of speech acts (Jin, 2012; S. Li, 2014; Winke & Teng, 2010) and formulaic expressions (Taguchi, Li, & Xiao, 2013). Essentially all studies revealed significant pragmatic gains while abroad, despite different locations and program types (Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin), different time periods (8 weeks to one semester), and varying proficiency levels (from beginning to advanced). Advantage of study abroad was also found in a cross-sectional study, which showed that the students who studied in Shanghai during the summer were more articulate in explaining appropriate request-making strategies to use than their counterparts with no study abroad experience (Zhang & Yu, 2008).

   Taguchi, Li, & Xiao (2013) examined the development of Chinese learners’ ability to produce formulaic expressions during a 14-week study abroad program in Beijing. Formulaic expressions are fixed or semi-fixed syntactic strings that occur frequently in specific situations and carry certain communicative functions. An example is 便宜点吧 (pián yì di ǎn ba, “A little cheaper.”), a typical expression used to bargain with a street vendor in China. Variants of this phrase may be possible but are not common, which gives it the status of formulae – fixed expressions tied to certain situations and functions. Formulae are syntactically simple but can be notoriously difficult to master for L2 learners because of the exactness required in the forms. Deviant forms with wrong word order or word choice may obscure meaning. For example, changing one character in 便宜点吧 and saying 便宜点儿 or adding extra units as in 你可以便宜吗? (Nǐ kě yì pián yì ma?，“Could you make it a little cheaper?”) makes the expressions non-formulaic, as these are not typical ways of responding in a bargain situation. Hence, ability to select and produce exact strings of preferred forms, which Pawlye and Syder (1983) call “native-like selection,” is an indicator of L2 formulaic competence.

   Taguchi et al.’s study revealed a strong gain in formulaic competence in L2 Chinese. Participants completed a computerized speaking test consisting of 24 formulae-use situations...
at the beginning and end of their study abroad. Each item displayed a scenario in English. Participants responded orally in Chinese with what they would say in that situation. Participants’ expressions were scored for the native-likeness. The pre-post test comparison revealed a significant score increase with a large effect size ($\eta^2=0.71$).

However, there was a large variation among formulaic expressions. While 7 out of 25 formulae approximated target patterns at post-test, 12 showed almost no improvement or even slid backward, changing toward non-target-like formulae. For example, when asking for a cashier, learners used the core unit 在哪儿 (zài nèi r, “in where”) at post-test but combined it with a wrong element as in 付钱在哪儿? (Fù qián zài nèi r?, “spend money in where?”) or 付在哪儿? (Fù zài nèi r?, “spend in where?”), resulting in non-target expressions. Learners also overgeneralized one expression over different situations. In three different leave-taking situations, learners used the same expression 再见 (zàijiàn), but native speakers used different forms. In the situation of leaving a friend’s house or a party, they used the core element of 走了 (zǒu le, “leaving”), whereas in a situation of leaving a phone conversation, they used 《就/先》这样 (《jiù/xiān》 zhè yàng, “that is it”). Learners in this study were not yet quite able to adjust their formulaic expressions to express different nuances across situations, although their formulaic competence as a whole improved during their semester in China.

The positive role of study abroad for formulaic development makes sense, considering that formulaic language permeates our everyday communication, assisting our social participation and daily functioning. As such, formulae are best learned through exposure and participation in real-life communicative events, which study abroad settings are most likely to offer. However, the link between language contact and formulaic development was found to be not so straightforward. Taguchi et al. administered the Formulae Contact Questionnaire, which asked participants to report how often they thought they had encountered each of the 24 formulae-use situations during study abroad. No significant relationship was found between the reported frequency of encounter and gains in formulae scores. However, regression analysis revealed a significant interaction effect of both frequency of encounter and pre-test scores on the gain. The learners who started out with low formulae scores benefited more from (perceived) frequency of encounter with formulae-use situations. These findings suggest that the effect of study abroad on formulaic competence can be understood when other factors, in this case the initial formulaic competence, are considered.

Factors mediating the link between pragmatic development and study abroad experience are also found in other studies, for instance general proficiency in S. Li’s (2014) study. Using a spoken DCT, he compared development in the speech act of request (e.g., asking your classmate to lend you his notes) between intermediate and advanced-level learners during a semester in Beijing. Although both groups showed a significant pre-post change on the appropriateness of request (scored on a five-point scale), effect size was larger for the intermediate group ($r=.86$) than the advanced group ($r=.69$). In contrast, the advanced-group improved on fluency (faster speech rate when producing requests), but the intermediate group showed no change. Because the intermediate group had a lower appropriateness score at pre-test, their larger gain during the semester than the advanced group indicates that they had more room to grow. The advanced group was more advantaged in improving their
fluency, because they had a threshold level of linguistic ability at the start of their sojourn: all they needed was the actual practice and exposure to further improve their fluency.

Jin’s (2012) study charted four learners’ change in their knowledge of compliment response patterns in Chinese in relation to participant agency and affordances in the context. Data involved weekly interviews with the focal participants and their blog entries, as well as the researcher’s observation journals. Analyses revealed how various influences from context helped participants develop *emic* understanding of compliment response over eight weeks in Shanghai. Although textbooks taught that rejecting a compliment by saying 哪里哪里 (“no no”) is the norm in Chinese, learners’ repertoire of response strategies expanded over time to include other expressions (e.g., 谢谢, “thank you”) and strategies (e.g., shifting credit to others). More importantly, these learners developed sophisticated understanding of form-function-context mappings through observation and participation. One learner uncovered that people tend to say 哪里哪里 when they receive a compliment on personal quality (e.g., intelligence or physical appearance), but 谢谢 (“thank you”) is more appropriate when the compliment is directed to tangible things (e.g., clothes). Several learners realized that 哪里哪里 is outdated based on the negative reactions from their interlocutors, while others learned that 哪里哪里 is more accepted with a hand gesture. They also identified the cases of ‘quasi-compliments’ and developed strategies to respond to those insincere compliments. The data indicates that linguistic affordance provided in the study abroad context, together with learners’ agency to invest in their cultural practices, refined their pragmatic knowledge.

To summarize, previous findings are encouraging in showing that Chinese learners register notable improvements with their knowledge of formulaic expressions and speech acts while abroad with a large effect size. Although study abroad context provides ample venues for learning new pragmatic information, which often goes beyond what students learn in textbooks or classroom instruction, context alone is not sufficient to understand what actually leads to development. Available findings indicate that initial-level pragmatic knowledge, general proficiency, agency, and opportunities for practice – be it amount of language contact or linguistic affordances – could explain whether or not learners can take advantage of this unique learning environment to shape their understanding of pragmatic behaviors.

2. Heritage language learners have an advantage in pragmatics learning.

Study abroad has been the most studied context in L2 Chinese pragmatics research, and very few studies have examined heritage language learning context. Valdés (2000) defines heritage language speakers as individuals who grew up in homes where a language other than the societal/dominant language is spoken. They are bilingual, to some extent, in the heritage and dominant language, although the former is in the first order of acquisition (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). Heritage language maintenance is the primary concern in Chinese education in the U.S. because of a recent expansion of Chinese immigration, together with increasing ethnic awareness of minorities in general. Correspondingly, the demand for Chinese heritage language schools has increased, with enrolment increasing from 82,000 in 1996 to 140,000 in 2005 (Chao, 1997; McGinnis, 2005).

Two existing studies in Chinese heritage pragmatics compared heritage and non-
heritage learners on the request speech act (Hong, 1997) and comprehension of implicature (Taguchi, Li, & Liu, 2013). Unfortunately, these studies did not reveal learners’ intricate engagement in heritage learning context in promoting (or not promoting) their pragmatics learning. More studies looking into the construct–context intersect in heritage learner pragmatics is necessary, but with the absence of such studies in the current literature, I will summarize the two existing studies below, with an extension of how these studies can be developed further to include ‘context’ as central investigative concern.

Using a written DCT, Hong (1997) analyzed request strategies produced by second-year learners of Chinese in a U.S. university. Of 20 participants, 12 had prior exposure to Chinese before taking Chinese courses, while 8 had no prior exposure. Although Hong did not use the term “heritage learners” in referring to the former group, they are considered to have heritage background because they had “home exposure to Chinese” (p. 99) and “Chinese language environment when they were brought up” (p. 103). Hong analyzed the request strategies on two aspects: accessibility (clarity of illocutionary force) and acceptability (appropriateness of the request strategies in a given situation). She found that students with and without home language exposure were similar in their production rates of accessible requests (100% vs. 94%), but the percentage of acceptable requests was much higher for the group with home exposure (93%) than their non-exposure counterparts (65%). These findings indicate that heritage learners excelled at the sociopragmatic aspect of speech act production: they were able to convey their intention at the level of politeness, directness, and appropriateness required in a situation, although they were still limited in their use of internal and external modifications, such as 请 (qǐng, “please”), 对不起 (duìbùqǐ, “excuse me”), or 劳驾 (lǎojià, “may I trouble you to”).

Superior pragmatic performance of heritage over non-heritage learners was also found in Taguchi, Li, & Liu’s (2013) study in comprehension of implicature. Conversational implicature (Grice, 1975) refers to the indirect meaning that the listener draws from an utterance by decoding linguistic and contextual cues. This is a challenging task for L2 learners because they have to recognize the gap between the literal and intended meaning, and infer the latter based on contextual information and knowledge of conversation mechanisms.

Using a computer-delivered listening test, the authors compared implicature comprehension between heritage and non-heritage learners enrolled in the same advanced-level Chinese class in a U.S. university. Three types of implicature were included in the test:

1. Conventional refusals
   Refusal intention is expressed indirectly by giving a reason. For example, to refuse an invitation to a party, one can say:
   
   “I am going to watch a movie with my friend tomorrow.”
   
   2. Conventional implicature
   Meaning is expressed indirectly via conventional linguistic devices. For example, to reject someone’s suggestion, one can use an avoidance strategy by saying:
   
   “Let’s talk about it later.”
(3) Non-conventional implicature
Meaning is expressed indirectly without conventional linguistic patterns. For example, to comment positively on someone’s cooking skill, one can say:

他 可以 去 开 一 个 饭馆 了!

*Tā kě yǐ qù kāi yī gè fàn guăn le!*

He can run a restaurant!

Participants listened to a series of short conversations that involved implicature and responded to multiple-choice questions. Heritage learners outperformed non-heritage learners on accurate comprehension of implicature. They also demonstrated uniform performance across implicature types. The non-heritage group, however, had significantly lower comprehension scores for non-conventional implicature (mean=6.72). Lack of linguistic conventions in this item type made comprehension difficult for non-heritage learners, but this characteristic was not particularly challenging for heritage learners because their average score (mean=10.84; 12 point maximum) was very close to that of native speakers (mean=11.67). Different from accuracy results, the heritage group did not excel at comprehension speed: regardless of item type, no significant difference was found between the two groups on the average amount of time taken to respond to items correctly.

A distinct feature of the heritage language context is the exposure and practice of spoken Chinese in their home environment. This contextual characteristic seems to provide an additional edge for heritage learners because they demonstrated the ability to deal with more advanced aspects of pragmatic competence. Although in Hong’s study both heritage and non-heritage learners were able to communicate request intention clearly, heritage learners demonstrated additional layer of competence, i.e., making a request politely and appropriately by incorporating sociopragmatic consideration into their choice of request strategies. Similarly, different levels of indirectness encoded in utterances affected non-heritage learners’ comprehension, as found in their difficulty in comprehending non-conventional implicature. This was not a problem for heritage learners, who comprehended all types of implicature equally well. The advantage of heritage learners, then, can be summarized as follows: they can deal with a wider range of pragmatic functions and dimensions, ranging from pragmalinguistics to sociopragmatics, from conventional to non-conventional implicature.

This benefit of heritage learning context, however, is just an assumption without analysis of the ‘context’ itself. Linguistic exposure, oral/aural practice, rich cultural input, feedback and modeling, and socialization – common labels used to characterize heritage learner environment – need to be scrutinized to reveal type, amount, and nature of pragmatic practice available in this context. For example, DCT scenarios used in Hong’s study involved request situations over different settings and interlocutor relationships, such as asking a mother to buy a bicycle or asking a teacher for an extension of an assignment due. Heritage learners’ performance can be analyzed across different situations to see if situation type affects their speech acts in a way that it favors their home language context. If there is no difference across situations, types of linguistic input at home can be analyzed to see how the home environment can provide linguistic practices that are likely to occur outside the home context (e.g., asking a professor for an extension).

Quantitative and qualitative methods used in the study abroad research, such as language contact survey, interviews, blogs, reflective journals, and observations, can be used...
to gain an understanding of learning opportunities in the heritage environment. Identity is another interesting concept to explore in heritage learner pragmatics because pragmatics learning is often influenced by learners’ desired identity – how they want to be seen and perceived as a L2 speaker. Whether a learner positions him/herself as a speaker of the heritage language who strives to master their ancestral language, or as a speaker of the societal language who wishes to integrate into the mainstream society inevitably affects his/her pragmatic choice and learning (Brown, 2013). Heritage language context serves as a site for a struggle between conflicting identities, which in turn offers valuable implications on how learners’ agency, attitudes, and motivation shape the course of pragmatic development.

3. Instruction helps pragmatics learning, but the effect varies across modalities of practice (production vs. comprehension).

In this last section I will turn to the teaching of Chinese pragmatics. While study abroad and a heritage language environment can serve as sites where pragmatic development occurs naturally, formal classroom is considered poor in opportunities for pragmatics learning. Grammar-based instruction, restricted range of communication situations, and limited authentic language use are some of the features of classroom discourse, which do not favor for pragmatics learning. Several studies revealed learners’ skewed pragmatic knowledge in a classroom setting (Hong, 2011; X. Li, 2010), X. Li showed that the particle DE (的) appears often in classroom instruction and textbooks, which characterizes DE as a marker of formal register. But L2 Chinese learners overuse DE in their informal speech, indicating their lack of the understanding of sociolinguistic variation of this particle. These findings support Bardovi-Harlig’s (2001, p. 29) observation that learners who do not receive instruction in pragmatics have noticeably underdeveloped L2 pragmatics systems.

Importance of teaching pragmatics is evident in a dozen teachers’ guides and resource books with ready-made lesson plans available in pragmatics (e.g., Houck & Tatsuki, 2011; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Empirical studies of pragmatic instruction have also flourished in the last few decades, resulting in a number of instructional intervention studies that have measured the degree of learning from pre- to post-instruction. Taguchi’s (2015) review of 58 instructional studies presents the current landscape of pragmatics teaching, but the review critically points out the paucity of research in L2 Chinese. Only three studies exist to date, all of which were conducted by a single author (S. Li, 2012, 2013; S. Li & Taguchi, 2014).

S. Li investigated whether or not different amounts of practice lead to different levels of learning of a speech act of request. In his 2012 study, college students of Chinese were assigned to three groups: an intensive training group, a regular training group, and a control group. The intensive and regular training groups received explanation of request forms and then practiced them via receptive-skill exercises. The intensive group practiced twice as much as the regular group. A listening appropriateness judgment task and an oral DCT were used to assess learning. Results revealed no group difference on correct judgment of request forms. A difference was found in the response times: the intensive group became faster after practice, while no such effect was found in the regular group. As for the production, there was no significant practice effect on fluency, but there was on accuracy: the intensive group outperformed the regular group after practice. Results support the skill acquisition theory:
declarative knowledge (accuracy) is shared across different skills (listening and speaking) but procedural knowledge (fluency) requires skill-specific practice (DeKeyser, 2007).

In subsequent studies, S. Li used input- and output-based practices to reveal how much practice is needed to promote accurate and fluent production and recognition of requests. The input group practiced the requests via input-based activities, and the output group practiced them via output-based activities. A listening judgment task and an oral DCT assessed learning. Results showed that, regardless of practice modality (input- and output-based), four instances of processing of request strategies were sufficient for learners to accurately judge and produce request forms, but more than eight instances were needed for them to develop fluency in performance (S. Li, 2013). The effects of input- and output-based practice were shared across task modalities on measures of accuracy, but not on measures of fluency: input-based practice led to fluency with the receptive skill task (appropriateness judgment) but not with the productive skill task (oral DCT), and vice versa, which again support the skill acquisition theory (S. Li & Taguchi, 2014).

In short, these findings clearly show that instruction helps learners develop their pragmatic competence in Chinese. A more important insight is that different dimensions of pragmatic competence (accuracy and fluency) are affected differently by different treatment conditions (input vs. output-based), as well as by a different amount of practice. If a treatment task involves the same modality as an assessment task, instructional effects can be found both in accuracy and fluency, and the effect is generally greater with an increased amount of practice. However, in a treatment condition where practice taps on a different modality than the assessment task, the effects appear in accuracy but not in fluency, because practice in that skill area is needed to develop fluency.

**4. Conclusions and implications for future research**

In this paper, I have synthesized empirical findings on the development and learning of pragmatics among Chinese learners in study abroad, heritage language environments, and laboratory-based instructional settings. A body of 14 studies, located through literature searches up to January of 2015, has yielded three generalizations as presented above. At the same time, analyses of the existing research have identified several areas that are subject to future investigations in L2 Chinese pragmatics.

One future direction involves going beyond the traditional units of analysis by examining pragmatic features other than speech acts, implicature, and routines. Related to this, we need methodological innovation by moving beyond typical tasks of DCT and multiple-choice tests. One promising direction is to analyze pragmatic competence in extended interaction. With the surge of discursive pragmatics (Kasper, 2006) and interactional competence (Young, 2002, 2011), the framework of analysis has recently shifted from ‘pragmatics-within-individuals’ to ‘pragmatics-in-interaction-in-context,’ focusing on dynamic and dialogic aspects of pragmatics.

To illustrate this, traditional research in speech acts assumes one-to-one correspondence between an utterance and force. For example, a speech act of request is usually associated with conventional forms of 可以 (kěyǐ . . . ma?, “Would/May I . . .?”) or 能 (néng . . . ma?, “Can I . . .?”). Mainstream practice has been to identify these linguistic
forms that convey illocutionary force, and compare them with those produced by L2 learners. In a real-life interaction, however, a speech act does not occur in isolation from context. It arises in the course of interaction through participants’ reactions to each other’s contributions to the ongoing discourse. Traditional approach disregards this interactive and dynamic nature of a speech act. As a result, learners’ pragmatic competence is in display as isolated linguistic forms used to convey illocution, and their ability to adapt and reciprocate in a changing interaction is discounted. Future research can explore this pragmatics-in-interaction in L2 Chinese to examine how learners of Chinese co-construct a pragmatic act and how such ability can index their Chinese pragmatic competence.

Similarly, by moving away from traditional units of analysis and methods of investigation, we can explore features of pragmatics that are unique to Chinese language. Cross-linguistic pragmatic analysis has been done extensively over the last few decades (e.g., Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Chen, 2010) by comparing pragmatic behaviors across different languages. These studies typically used speech acts as a common unit of analysis and documented, for example, how speakers of Chinese and English differ in the choice of linguistic strategies in refusals or compliment responses (e.g., Cheng, 2011). Although using a common metric like speech acts help us see cross-linguistic variations, the downside is that this approach does not account for unique pragmatic features in individual languages. To give an example, refusals in Japanese are often analyzed by identifying main linguistic strategies such as direct refusals (e.g., “I can’t see you this week.”), reasons for refusals (e.g., “I will be out of town.”), and expressions of alternatives (e.g., “I can see you next weekend instead.”). However, by analyzing refusals on these common strategies, we miss features of refusals that are unique to Japanese. In Japanese, it is crucial to use honorifics when speaking to someone superior, and lack of this polite language is probably more detrimental than using wrong refusal strategies. This important aspect of Japanese refusals is neglected when we analyze the speech act using the universal coding framework.

There is a need to turn our attention from the universality of pragmatics to pragmatics-specific-to-languages. Chinese can certainly play a leading role in this direction with its rich representation of linguistic forms foregrounded in cultural norms of interaction. We can begin by asking a question: what makes someone pragmatically competent in Chinese? Answers to this question will naturally lead to a range of pragmatic devices in the structure and discourse of Chinese language, for instance, how people convey appropriate levels of politeness in Chinese, or what linguistic resources they use to communicate meaning indirectly. We can describe what Chinese pragmatics entails, linguistically and culturally, and how they could be applied to the analysis of L2 Chinese competence. One such example is sentence final particles (e.g., a, la, ba, ma), which usually occur in informal or colloquial speech in Chinese (Lee-Wong, 1998; Sun, 2006). These particles often serve pragmatic functions: they add an affect or stance by softening tone or emphasizing an utterance. Given this unique nature, these particles can be examined as a yardstick of Chinese pragmatic competence.

Finally, heritage language learner context can be explored further as a site for pragmatics learning in future research. Previous studies revealed that heritage learners have advantages in pragmatics learning, but these studies did not explain why and how such advantages arise. Analysis of opportunities for pragmatic practice in this specific environment will certainly enhance our understanding of the context–pragmatics intersect in a way that is different from study abroad research. Heritage learner pragmatics also provides a venue to
explore pragmatic competence in a bilingual model. Heritage learners are bilinguals who
grow up acquiring two languages – home language and societal/school language – and are
concerned about the study and maintenance of their ancestry languages (Valdés, 2005). This
circumstance gives rise to a unique context where pragmatic development occurs concurrently
within two languages and cultures.

More than two decades ago, Bialystok (1993) proposed the ‘two-dimensional model’
that distinguishes pragmatics learning between adults and children. The model specifies that,
for children, pragmatic and linguistic competences develop simultaneously as they are
socialized into the society, but adult learners are already competent in the pragmatics of their
native language. Therefore, adult learners must address the added burden of controlling pre-
existing pragmatic representations while acquiring a new set of representations in L2. Under
this model the position of heritage learners is ambiguous. They are similar to children
acquiring pragmatics through socialization, but they also represent adults’ pragmatics systems
because pragmatic socialization occurs in two separate domains, home language context and
societal language context. In this sense, it is not appropriate to examine heritage learner
pragmatics from the discrete point of L1 vs. L2 pragmatic competence. The focus should be
bilingual pragmatic competence. Expansion of Chinese heritage learners and increasing
demands for heritage language maintenance in the U.S.A. present an optimal condition to
explore such bilingualism in pragmatic development.

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**It Does Matter with Whom You Chat: Chinese Learners’ Perspectives on NS vs. NNS Chat Partners**

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**Abstract**

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) often referred to as “chatting” can provide an ideal platform for language learners to engage in real-time, authentic interactions. Comparing learners’ online chatting with native speakers (NS) vs. non-native speakers (NNS) have been done in the previous studies. However, the research has not yet investigated learners’ attitudes and perceptions about chatting partners. There is also a scarcity of CMC research focusing on Asian languages. This study aimed to investigate Chinese learners’ attitudes towards their chat partners, both cognitively and affectively. Twenty four Chinese learners from the intermediate and advanced Chinese classes at a university participated in a series of CMC activities, text chatting in Chinese characters with NS and NNS. Online questionnaires and the chat transcripts were collected and analyzed. The results showed that Chinese learners preferred to chat with NS partners because they received increased input about language and increased cultural input from NS. The analysis of open-ended questions from the questionnaires and the comparison of instances of negotiation of meaning in the chat transcripts supported the findings. Pedagogical implications, limitations and references to future research directions are discussed.

**Keywords:** Computer-mediated Communication, chat partner, learners’ attitude, negotiation of meaning, Chinese language learners

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Introduction

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is defined as any communicative transaction that occurs through the use of two or more networked computers (McQuail, 2005), such as chats through MSN massager, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, Lync, iMessage, etc. which involve synchronous or asynchronous “conversation” that takes place using desktop, laptop, or tablet.

CMC has become a popular tool in language instruction by providing an ideal platform for language learners to engage in real-time interaction in an authentic manner (Smith, Alvarez-Torres, & Zhao, 2003; Warschauer, 1997; Young, Ducate, & Arnold, 2011). It has been referred to as a “conversation in slow motion” offering affective, linguistic and even cognitive advantages, because it gives language learners more time to process input, plan and modify their output (Beauvois, 1992). CMC also gives language learners a platform to use their second language (L2) to interact with others without geographical limitations (Chen, 2005; Pellettieri, 2000).

Several studies have investigated some aspects of the role of chat partners in CMC. These studies (Chen, 2009; Freiermuth, 2001; Lee, 1997, 2008, 2009; Tudini, 2003) employed a variety of CMC tools (e.g., voice conferencing, blogging, and instant messaging) and found that learners in native speaker–nonnative speaker (NS-NNS) pairs learn more effectively than learners in nonnative speaker–nonnative speaker (NNS-NNS) pairs in a variety of online chat formats. But no studies to date have looked at learners’ preferences towards NS vs. NNS as CMC chat partners in conjunction with the benefits of NS vs. NNS chat partners, by analyzing learners’ perceptions.

The current study looks at the advantage and disadvantage of the chat partners: NS or NNS in CMC, through the learners’ perspectives, and addresses this gap in the literature.

Literature Review

Collaborative Learning and Socio-cultural Perspective

Within the framework of socio-cultural theory, Vygotsky (1978) proposed the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is defined as the distance between the actual developmental levels as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Collaborative learning refers to an instructional method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal (Gokhale, 1995) and is rooted in the belief that knowledge is inherently social in nature (Whipple, 1987). The social interaction embodied in the collaborative learning fosters the learners’ performance within the ZPD.

Since the 1920s, a large number of collaborative learning studies have been conducted (Totten, Sills, Digby, & Russ, 1991). Collaborative learning has shown to promote students’ development in the academic, social, and psychological domains (Roberts, 2005). From the cognitive psychology perspective, collaborative learning has a positive effect of boosting the learning effects or academic achievement and the motivation of the learning. Meanwhile, from the socio-cultural perspective, collaborative learning benefits social interaction, such as student attitudes toward school, self-esteem, intergroup relations, and refinement of social skills (Totten, Sills, Digby, & Russ, 1991).
As a branch within the development of collaborative learning, computer-supported collaborative learning appeared about 30 years ago (Olivares, 2007). Computer-supported collaborative learning allows group learning to take place in computer-mediated environments which are different than face-to-face collaborative learning and “can provide an ideal environment in which interaction among students plays a central role in the learning process” (Robert, 2005, p. 2).

Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) in a language teaching and learning setting allows the language learners to increase their linguistic and cognitive skills by engaging in problem-solving situations in a computer-mediated environment (Lee, 2004). The social interaction with partners in CMC boosts the language learners to gain language competence (Lee, 2002). Many studies on L2 learning have demonstrated L2 development in the ZPD through the scaffolding in the online social interaction (Blake, 2009; Chen, 2005; Cheon, 2003; Chun, 1994; Lapadat, 2002; Liang, 2010; Pellettieri, 2000; Varonis & Gass, 1985). These include increasing both input and output of the target language, stimulating the production of more negotiations and interactions (Pellettieri, 2000; Doughty & Long, 2003) and increasing motivation and more positive attitudes towards language practice (Abrams, 2011, Chen, 2005).

Among the previous studies of collaborative learning, several dimensions of the collaborative situation have been explored, such as gender, group size, and time span (Dillenbourg, 1999). For the current study, we wanted to investigate whether certain kinds of collaborative configurations could benefit L2 learners in a CMC activity. Specifically, what would be the effects of chatting with NS vs. NNS chat partners? This current study looks at learners’ perspectives towards their chat partners (NS vs. NNS) in CMC online collaborative learning activities. The next section focuses on a review of previous research on chat partners in CMC.

**Studies of the Chat partners in CMC**

Generally, CMC research in L2 learning has typically focused on interactions among students within either pairs or groups (three or more learners). One way of characterizing partners in CMC in these settings is by their level of language proficiency. For example, a partner may be either a native speaker (NS) or a non-native speaker (NNS; includes most L2 learners/peers) of the target language. Using this characterization, pairs and groups can be either NNS–NNS at the same or different levels, or NS–NNS.

The primary concern with groups of NNS students working together in activities such as CMC is that students tend to learn incorrect language from their inexperienced peers (Satar & Özdener, 2008). Liang (2010) shared this concern by stating that “synchronous online peer response groups might be fun, but not very effective” (p. 57). A study by Varonis and Gass (1985) suggested that the advantages of NNS-NNS groups may offset, to a degree, the disadvantages discussed above.

Other studies have shown that NNS-NNS groups in CMC tend to exhibit less productive learning patterns than NS-NNS groups. For example, when chatting with NNS, NSs tended to provide “more elaboration, more repetition, slower speech, more questions, more of what may be considered linguistic correction and greater willingness to allow a topic shift than do native speaker responses to other native speakers” (Varonis and Gass, 1985, p. 72). Lee (2009) concluded that text-based chat in NS-NNS groups was a powerful mediating tool for the enrichment of language learning that goes beyond a traditional classroom setting. Apparently, the gap in language proficiency between NS and NNS students can push the NNS’s language
performance in reading, writing and speaking skills (Chen, 2009; Grosbois, 2011; Kitade, 2000; Lee, 1997; Mahfouz & Ihmeideh, 2009; Tudini, 2003) as well as cultural understanding (Lee, 1997). Lee (2004, 2008) also found that the online collaboration within NS-NNS groups resulted in NSs providing the scaffolding needed by NNSs to compose meaning (ideas) and form (grammar) and also focusing learners’ attention on their linguistic errors. Blake and Zyzik (2003) also noticed between heritage Spanish students (HS) and intermediate Spanish students (NNS), HS whose language proficiency was higher than NNS assisted NNS much more often.

A few studies have reported negative effects from NS-NNS interactions. Freiermuth (2001), for example, compared NS-NNS online groups with NS-NNS face-to-face groups in terms of their chat turns and word production and found that NSs tended to dominate the group discussion, leaving the NNSs with insufficient opportunities to practice the target language.

In the current study we intend to look at the attitudes of the students towards chatting with different partners (NS vs. NNS) during CMC in order to better understand how to set up successful online interactions.

**Chinese Language and CMC**

Abrams (2011) pointed out that “most current CMC studies look at German, Spanish or ESL/EDL contexts, and the dearth of studies available in other languages…remains unsatisfying” (p. 71). She recognized the lack of empirical studies in other languages and identified research on “different chat partners” with “non-Latin-based orthographies” as one of the nine most promising areas of CMC research. As Abrams said, given the popularity of CMC in L2 instruction, there is still a lack of research that looks specifically at Chinese chat partners in CMC. Therefore, in this section of the literature review, we focus on CMC studies in Chinese language teaching and learning.

In the limited literature, few studies have looked at CMC in Chinese language teaching and learning (Xie, 2002; Xie & Yao, 2008). These few studies have examined: the students’ attitudes toward online chat (Lai, Zhao, & Wang, 2011; Xie, 2002), Chinese learners’ oral performance (Yuan & Liu, 2010), the interactive learning in Chinese writing (Liao, 2010; Zhang, 2009) as well as hybrid course designs (Lai, Zhao, & Wang, 2011; Xie, 2002; Zhang & Mu, 2003). We are aware of no research thus far that examines learners’ perception of their chat partners (NS vs. NNS) in CMC in Chinese language.

There is no conclusive evidence to date about the kinds of chat partners that can indeed best scaffold non-Latin-based language learning, such as Chinese, Japanese, etc. While previous evidence with other languages suggests that this would be interesting to look at, no study has methodologically compared NS/NNS Chinese chat partners with the specific goal of measuring learners’ perspectives.

Consequently, this study proposed the main research question: How do Chinese L2 learners perceive their CMC chat partners (NS vs. NNS) both cognitively and affectively?
Methodology

Participants and Materials

Eighteen native English speakers who were enrolled in intermediate Chinese courses and six in the advanced Chinese course at a large public university in the southwest USA participated in this study. Seventeen Chinese native speakers participated in as volunteers to chat online in text with the Chinese learners. The Chinese native speakers were doctoral or master students from mainland China and studying various subjects at the American university. Their majors included biology, chemistry, engineering, education and agriculture. The average age of the Chinese native speakers was less than 30, and all of these volunteers were familiar with social networks and Chinese character typing. None of the Chinese native speakers had any experience teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The researchers didn’t give any training to these Chinese native speakers about teaching Chinese language learners. Other than the fact that the topics were assigned by the researchers, all conversations between the Chinese learners and the Chinese native speakers occurred without any intervention from the researchers. As defined above, the Chinese volunteers were categorized as NSs and the Chinese language learners as NNSs.

As for the materials for the current study, we decided that the topics for CMC activities should be selected in consultation with the learners, because this can help increase motivation, resulting in higher task-completion (Abrams, 2011). At the beginning of the fall semester in 2012, a “favorite topics” survey was administered to the Chinese learners. In the survey (see Appendix A), Chinese learners were asked to circle from fifteen options all the topics in which they were interested for online chat, and also write down any other topics which were not included. The researchers ranked the topics based on the frequency chosen by the Chinese learners and picked the four top topics. The four topics that emerged were Hobbies, Entertainment, Food and Culture.

Platform

We chose Facebook for the chat activities because of its vast popularity and user-friendly accessibility. Facebook is a global social networking system, which members use to post information, photos, news, and to stay connected with others. According to the Facebook website official statistics (Facebook, 2014), by June, 2014, the monthly active users reached 1.32 billion, the daily active users were 829 million on average, and approximately 81.7% of the monthly active users were outside the U.S. and Canada. College students spent about 101.09 minutes per day on Facebook and checked Facebook 5.75 times per day (Junco, 2012). In order to join Facebook, users do not need to download software to computers but can simply log directly into the website and begin “facebooking”, which can include initiating a chat with a "friend". This chat looks and functions much like an instant message in Outlook, Lync, and other communication programs.

Procedure

The twenty-four Chinese learners were randomly divided into two groups of twelve students each (Group A & Group B). All the students were assigned the same tasks of chatting
with different Chinese native speakers (NSs) and peers (NNSs). While the Chinese learners in group A were chatting with NSs, the learners in group B were chatting with NNSs, and vice versa. The sequence of the two groups chatting with NSs and NNSs was counter-balanced. All the Chinese learners were randomly assigned to their partners: NSs or NNSs, but no chat partner was assigned more than once.

All the Chinese learners were assigned to do the four chat activities during two weeks in a computer lab in the university’s library, where technology support staff were available. All the Chinese native speakers (NSs) who chatted with the Chinese learners logged into Facebook from anywhere they preferred. The first chat of the four chat assignments started one month after the beginning of the semester. Each chat lasted about fifty minutes.

The researchers created a group page on Facebook and added all the participants as group members before the start of the study. On the day of a chat activity, students logged in on Facebook, clicked on the chat list, and looked for their assigned chat partners.

After chatting with each type of chat partners (once each with NSs and NNSs), each Chinese learner completed an online survey aimed at examining their attitudes towards their two chat partners (NSs vs. NNSs). All Chinese learners chatted twice with different NSs and twice with different NNSs, and ultimately completed two total online surveys about the two types of chat partners.

During each chat activity, the participants chatted in Chinese character via Microsoft Pinyin input method.

**Data Collection**

The data were collected via two instruments: first, questionnaires were administered after the 2nd and 4th chat activities, and second, the actual transcripts of the chats were collected. The questionnaires were administered via Qualtrics, and they included five-point Likert-scale questions and open-ended questions. Ultimately, thirty-six questionnaires and seventy-two chat transcripts from the eighteen students who completed all four chats were analyzed.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections (see Appendix B). The first section asked for demographic information, such as gender, ethnicity, major, academic classification, course, L2 background, etc. The second section was a Chat Partners’ Attitude Scale, developed by the researchers. The Attitude Scale had fourteen five-point Likert questions (from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree), and consisted of two subscales, cognitive and affective. The cognitive subscale included six of the fourteen statements. These statements asked participants to rate how the NS or NNS chat partners assisted them in learning Chinese character, vocabulary, grammar, culture, error correction, and language improvement. The Cronbach \( \alpha \) was .85, which showed a satisfactory reliability of the scale. The eight statements in the affective subscale focused on the perceptions and feelings of the Chinese learners towards their chat partner, and Cronbach \( \alpha = .75 \).

The final section of the questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions which asked participants the reasons for their general like/dislike of the chat partners, and the reasons of their anxiety/non-anxiety when they chatted with NS vs. NNS.

In sum, data was collected via questionnaires and chat transcripts. The questionnaires included the Chat Partners’ Attitude Scale. Our goal was to investigate the Chinese L2 learner’s attitudes towards different chat partners (NSs vs NNSs), and to look at perceived benefits of
chatting with NS or NNS, both cognitively and affectively. We employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze data.

Data Analysis

The data of online questionnaire was transferred into SPSS to analyze. As described above, there was an Attitude Scale with two subscales—cognitive and affective. Paired-sample t tests were conducted on the data gleaned from the two scales.

Results

Results from Chat Partners Attitude Scale: as a Whole and the Two Subscales

Overall Results.

A paired-sample t test was conducted on the Chinese learners’ responses to the Chat Partners’ Attitude Scale as a whole. The learners’ attitude towards chatting with NSs ($M= 3.76, SD= .47$) didn’t show a significant result when compared to chatting with NNSs ($M= 3.63, SD= .39$), $t (17) = 1.04, ns$. This result from the Chat Partners’ Attitude Scale did not allow us to draw conclusions about the learners’ preferences towards their chat partners overall. Nonetheless, analysis of the two subscales (cognitive and affective) of the Chat Partners’ Attitude Scale could still reveal how the Chinese L2 learners perceived their chat partners from the cognitive or affective perspective. Therefore, in the next step, we analyzed the two subscales separately. The following section presented the results of the analyses of the two subscales.

Cognitive subscale.

A paired-sample t test from the cognitive subscale was conducted. The results indicated that the mean chatting with NSs ($M= 3.57, SD = .47$) was significantly greater than the mean chatting with NNSs ($M= 3.11, SD = .45$), $t (17) = 3.31, p < .01$, two-tailed. The standardized effect size index, $d$, was .80. This result revealed that the Chinese learners preferred to chat with NSs from the cognitive perspective.

The cognitive subscale was intended to provide insight about whether learners perceive that chatting with a specific type of partner could facilitate their Chinese language learning. The six statements in the subscale evaluated the Chinese L2 learners’ attitudes towards the chat partners from the dimensions: the Chinese characters, vocabulary expression, grammar, language improvement, culture input and error correction, etc. In order to uncover specific preferences in each dimension, we conducted the paired sample t tests on each individual item (Table 1). The data for statement 4 were reversed before the analysis.

Significant results were found for statement 5 (culture input) and statement 6 (error correction). In other words, chatting online with Chinese native speakers (NSs) ($M= 3.67, SD = 1.03$) inputs more culture items to the Chinese learners than chatting with peers (NNSs) ($M= 2.83, SD = .93$), $t (17) = .73, p < .05$, two-tailed. In addition, chatting with Chinese native speakers (NSs) ($M= 3.56, SD = .92$) gave Chinese L2 learners more chances to notice their errors and correct them than chatting with peers ($M= 2.78, SD = .94$), $t (17) = .44, p < .05$, two-tailed. In sum, our group of Chinese L2 learners thought that NSs taught them more Chinese culture and corrected their mistakes more than NNS.
Table 1
The Results of Sample t Tests on Each Statement in Cognitive Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My chat partner taught me some new Chinese characters during my chatting.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I learned some new phrases/expressions from my chat partner</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My chat partner didn’t help me much in my Chinese language improvement.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reversed)</td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I didn’t learn some new grammar items during my chatting.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reversed)</td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My chat partners showed me some Chinese culture items in our chatting</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My chat partner corrected mistakes in my Chinese sentences.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05 two-tailed.

To illustrate students’ perceptions qualitatively, we compared the conversational transcripts. On average, in the transcripts chatting with NSs, at least 1 time both partners of the chat discussed culture, and most reached 3 times. As demonstrated in the sample of a Chinese learner’s conversation with NS in Figure 1, this learner was exposed to more Chinese culture input with NS. At first, the NS offered the chance to talk about Chinese movies, but the student refused to discuss any specific Chinese movie and only responded that he enjoyed funny movies. When the turn was switched to food by the learner, the NS continued trying to initiate more conversation on Chinese food by offering names of the Chinese dishes, such as dumplings,
tomatoes fried with eggs, fried potato slices and fried pork dressed in soy sauce. However, the learner also didn’t discuss about Chinese dishes. When the student showed confusion about the word “怕胖” (scared of being fat), the NS provided the information that current Chinese fashion preferred the thin figure for the girls. In this conversation, NS offered three possibilities to initiate deeper conversation on Chinese culture, Chinese movies, Chinese food, and current Chinese fashion. Finally, the Chinese learner discussed with NS a new vocabulary “怕胖” (scared of being fat), which he didn’t understand. Conversely, in conversations between the students and NNSs, there was little sharing of any information about Chinese culture, and they even used English words to facilitate their dialogue. (See Figure 2)

Figure 1. Conversational sample of a Chinese learner with a NS

| NS: 你好！我是你今天的聊天对象。你喜欢看电影、看小说还是其它娱乐？   |
| Chinese Learner: 你好！我也喜欢看电影！                           |
| NS: 你看过中文的电影吗？                                       |
| Chinese Learner: 我喜欢好笑的电影。你呢？                        |
| NS: 我也喜欢，我不喜欢恐怖片。看了晚上不敢睡觉。你呢？        |
| Chinese Learner: 你喜不喜欢做吃饭？                             |
| NS: 喜欢。我会包饺子。会炒菜，例如西红柿炒蛋，土豆丝，红烧牛肉。我很喜欢吃鱼。这边鱼很少啊！你喜欢吃鱼吗？ |
| Chinese Learner: 这很有意思！我喜欢吃鱼。我也喜欢做蛋糕。你喜欢蛋糕？ |
| NS: 你会做蛋糕？太厉害了！我喜欢吃蛋糕！                        |
| NS: 不过我怕胖。不敢多吃。你呢？你平时健身吗？我喜欢瑜伽，网球和爬山。你呢？ |
| Chinese Learner: 怕胖？对不起，我看不懂。我喜欢打球。你喜不喜欢打球？ |
| NS: 你头像里有四位美女，你是哪位呢？                           |
| 蛋糕糖分高，中国女孩子害怕吃多了会体重增加，所以不敢多吃。 |
| 我喜欢打网球啊！不过我没办学校的健身卡。                      |
Students also believed that NSs tended to correct their mistakes in their Chinese sentences more than NNS. Overall, there was a marked higher amount of correction in the transcripts with NS than NNS. We found three kinds of ways that NSs correct the Chinese learners’ mistakes or misunderstanding in the transcripts.

First, the NSs indicated the mistakes directly and gave the Chinese learners corrected sentences or words (see Figure 3). In this conversation, the NS asked the Chinese learner “Do you speak English or Chinese at home?” The Chinese learner answered the question but his answer was grammatically wrong. By reminding the Chinese learner by three question marks, the NS rephrased the Chinese learner’s wrong sentence to be a correct by asking “did you say you speak both languages at home?” Then, the Chinese learner corrected his sentence by elaborating that he spoke English and Chinese at home. This same case also found the conversation in Figure 4, where we found two such mistakes corrected by the NS.
Figure 4. Conversational sample of a Chinese learner with a NS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese learner: 对中国是哪里都钱 哈哈</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NS: 是啊，在中国很好赚钱</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下一次你什么时候去中国呢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese learner: 要后大学</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS: 你大学毕业以后就去中国，对不对？</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the NSs tended to correct the Chinese learners’ mistakes or misunderstanding by the negotiation of meaning. (See Figure 5)

Figure 5. Conversational sample of a Chinese learner with a NS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NS:   我看天气预报，周哥周末超冷！</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>很有可能我会“猫”在家里~~周日会去教会，每周都去</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>周哥-＞“这个”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>错别字，不好意思。。。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我喜欢看电影，包括宫崎骏的动画片，还有真人秀，比如“中国好声音”，还有户外活动，比如徒步</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Learner: “猫”看不懂。什么意思？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS:   对了，呵呵，我刚想说你要是又不认识的词可以问我。“猫”原来的意思是动物那个猫，这里是说“藏起来”，比如有个小时候的游戏就叫“躲猫猫”或是“藏猫猫”就是 hide and seek。我是东北人，东北话里有个词叫“猫冬”就是说东北的冬天特别冷，然后大家都在屋子里不出去，就是“冬天在家里躲避寒冷”的意思</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Learner: 所以，因为会是很冷，你不想待在家？</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS:   相反，是呆在家里</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Learner: 哦！懂了！对不起，我的中文不好</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure 5, the NS adopted the verb meaning of the character “猫” in her sentence. Chinese learner indicated that he didn't understand this character. Then the NS responded by explaining meaning of this character. First the NS pointed out the original meaning of “猫” was the animal cat and here the meaning was to hide. Then the NS gave two more words with the character “猫” presenting the verb meaning, such as the Chinese children game “躲猫猫” or “藏
猫猫” (Hide and seek) and the word “猫冬” (winter-cat) in the Northeast dialect. Next, the Chinese learner confirmed his understanding to this character by asking “so, because it’s cold, you don’t want to stay at home.” The NS responded to the learner’s confirmation by correcting him: “conversely, I will stay at home.” Finally, the Chinese learner confirmed that he acquired the verb meaning of the character “猫”. In this negotiation routine, the Chinese learner and NS not only negotiated the meaning of the character “猫”, but also discussed culture, including the Northeast dialect and the Chinese children’s game.

As described in the methodology, all Chinese NSs were doctoral and masters students at the university, majoring in biology, chemistry, engineering, agriculture and education. None of them had experience teaching Chinese and the researchers also didn’t give any training on teaching Chinese. All conversations were conducted without intervention. Interestingly, the gap in language proficiency between the Chinese learners and the NSs turned to be a scaffold, that is, in the CMC activity the NSs scaffold the Chinese learners to solve problems which caused misunderstandings in their conversation. Ultimately, the Chinese learners acquired both cultural and language knowledge. The findings in the transcripts analysis further confirmed the results from the Cognitive Subscale analysis that the Chinese learners preferred to chat with NSs.

**Affective subscale.**

When running the data in the SPSS software, the data for statement 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 were reversed, so that 1 indicates “strongly agree” and 5 indicates “strongly disagree”. The analysis of the responses to the eight statements of the affective subscale did not reveal significant results. The difference in the means ($M = 3.57; M = 3.74$) at first does seem to indicate that Chinese learners were more nervous chatting with NS than with NNS peers. But the difference between the means was not statistically significant ($M = 3.57, SD = .62$) and with NNSs ($M = 3.74, SD = .46$), $t (17) = -.77, ns$.

When we analyzed each statement in the affective subscale individually (Table 2), we found one significant result for Statement 1: the fast typing speed of my chat partner made me nervous (reversed). The Chinese learners’ agreed that comparing with NNSs ($M = 3.83, SD = .92$), when chatting with NSs ($M = 3.06, SD =1.11$), the NSs’ fast typing speed made them more nervous, $t = -2.30, p =.04$, two-tailed.
Table 2
The Results of Sample t Tests on Each Statements in Affective Subscale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The fast typing speed of my chat partner made me nervous. (Reversed)</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>-2.30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I felt anxious when I thought my chat partner’ Chinese proficiency</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was much higher than mine. (Reversed)</td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I was confused by most of the sentences made by my chat partner.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>-1.97</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reversed)</td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I was very relaxed and comfortable to chat with my chat partner.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Chatting with my chat partner was an amazing experience to me.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sometimes, I felt it was boring to chat with my chat partner. (Reversed)</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I would like to continue chatting with my chat partner in the future.</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reversed)</td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Several times, during my chatting, I felt like to quit. (Reversed)</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * p < .05 two-tailed.

In the consistence, we also found students also reported they were more anxious when they interacted with NSs in the open-ended questions. The open-ended question asked learners to explain the reason(s) that they did or did not feel anxiety in their chat activities. Most of them talked about the issue of the fluent and language proficiency. The participants worried about more their language proficiency when chatting with NSs than with NNSs. Comments from learners stated that “I was a little anxious when I took too long to find the correct way to say a sentence”, “… my second partner expected me to be much more fluent”.

Then we counted the Chinese characters in the transcripts chatting with NS, we deleted the sentences made by the chatting partners and only counted the number of Chinese characters in the Chinese sentences made by the Chinese learners. We found that the number of Chinese characters made by the Chinese learners in the transcripts chatting with NSs ($M = 196.28$, $SD = 
64.78) was significantly more than chatting with NNSs (M= 117.61, SD = 44.42), t (17) = 5.19, p < .00, two-tailed. The effect size index r is .78 and Cohen’s d is 2.52. The result showed that in the same time period, chatting with NSs resulted in production of more Chinese characters than with non-native speakers. On average, the rate of the Chinese characters that the Chinese learners typed when chatting with NSs vs NNSs was almost 2:1 which meant that as Chinese learner typed twice as many characters when they chatted with NSs. This illustrated that chatting with NSs required learners to type more and faster than with NNSs. All the NSs in this study were graduate students at the university whose average age was less than 30. This generation lives in an electronic age. Most of the NSs in this study were active in social networks and were familiar with the Chinese keyboard input. The conversations in Figure 1 and 5 were good examples of their fast typing speed. In Figure 1, the rate of Chinese characters made by NS and the Chinese learner was 3:1 and in Figure 5, it even reached 6:1. That is, the NSs typed 6 times more characters than the Chinese learners.

Discussion

Advantages of Chatting with NS vs. NNS

The results of the Chat Partners’ Attitude Scale overall, when taken as a whole, did not show that the Chinese learners preferred one kind of chat partner – NS or NNS. However, the statistically significant results in the cognitive subscale revealed that the participants did perceive more benefits from chatting with NS. Analyses of answers to each statement of the cognitive subscale showed that learners especially appreciated the culture input and the error correction by the NSs.

Additionally, the Chinese learners who highly valued chatting with NS also noted the increased cultural context and higher level of interaction with NS. The transcripts of their chats confirmed that NSs gave more feedback on culture to the Chinese language learners, including during instances when they negotiated the meaning of words. The learners viewed the chatting with NS as a chance to “practice Chinese”, increase their vocabulary, and learn more, because the NS were very “supportive” and “good at explaining what they meant if I didn’t understand what they said”.

In the Affective Subscale, comparing NNSs with NSs, the analysis for the statement “the fast typing speed of my chat partner made me nervous” showed that NSs’ typing speed, indeed, made the Chinese language learners nervous. But if we view this result in a different way, it could actually corroborate our finding that chatting with NS facilitates Chinese character learning, because the fast typing speed pushed the Chinese learners to read more Chinese characters, and to try to answer and type faster themselves. This was confirmed by the chat transcripts where we found the Chinese learners typed 78.67 more Chinese characters when chatting with NSs comparing with NNSs, on average.

Tudini (2003) claimed that chatting with NS is “a valuable connection to the target language and culture which can provide learners with the opportunity to develop colloquial interactive language which is rarely found in textbooks” (p. 155). In addition, Long (1996) described that CMC “triggers interactional adjustments by the NS facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways” (pp. 451-452). Our findings were consistent with previous studies (Chen,
2009; Grosbois, 2011; Kitade, 2000; Lee, 1997, 2004; Mahfouz & Ihmeideh, 2009; Tudini, 2003), and further supported their results from an empirical perspective.

The current study shed light on another advantage of chatting with NSs: that text-based CMC activity with Chinese NSs facilitates Chinese character acquisition. This has been rarely discussed in the literature due to the limited CMC studies in Chinese language. Learning Chinese is difficult compared to other Latin-based languages. English speakers require 2200 hours of intensive instruction in Chinese to reach the same level of proficiency as acquired in 650 hours of Spanish (Xiong & Garndin, 2010). A difficult part of learning Chinese language is Chinese characters (Lu, Hallman Jr., & Black, 2013, Shen, 2010), due to the complexity of the graphic configuration of Chinese characters, and the lack of the obvious sound-script correspondence (Shen, 2003). Learning Chinese character includes memorizing the combination of pronunciation, shape, and meaning. A Chinese character cannot be spelled out like the English word, and the only way to read a Chinese character is to recall the combination of the pronunciation, shape and meaning from one’s long-term memory.

In the CMC activity, when chatting in Chinese characters with NSs, the Chinese learners are forced to read Chinese characters, retrieve their long-term memories of Chinese characters, and then try to understand the sentences made by the NSs. When the Chinese learners negotiate the meaning of the character, like the character “猫” in Figure 5, based on their previous knowledge, they create a new combination of pronunciation, shape and meaning, and then store it in their memory. Chatting with NSs ensures that Chinese learners receive the correct input in Chinese characters and it assists them in Chinese character acquisition.

In light of these results, we strongly recommend chatting with NSs during CMC activities. We found that it provided the L2 learners with better error correction, impelled them to output more Chinese characters, and motivated them to think more about context and culture.

From the answers to the open-ended questions, CMC activities were considered a “fun” experience for the participants no matter who their chat partner was, and the participants described both NSs and NNSs as having nice personalities and good communication skills. Although we found that NSs’ fast typing speed made the Chinese learners more nervous than with NNS, a relationship between self-perceived proficiency and anxiety revealed in the open-ended questions diluted also such nervousness in the Chinese learners. When students felt higher self-confidence in their language ability, they tended to feel less anxiety when chatting. In other words, it was not the chat partner who caused anxiety, but rather, the learners’ self-perceived language proficiency. One learner who felt anxiety explained further: “I felt anxious but I think that it helped me understand where I truly am with my Chinese knowledge”.

Conclusion

Based on our findings, we encourage language instructors, especially for Chinese and other non-Latin-based languages, to choose native speakers as partners in the CMC activities whenever possible. Furthermore, when choosing NS chat partners for these activities, instructors should look for characteristics such as patience, pleasant attitude, and helpfulness. In addition, as with all class activities, instructors must be very clear with their learners about the expectations, objectives, and assessment of each activity.

Finally, we admitted some limitations of the current study and proposed the future research in Chinese CMC. Due simply to the numbers of student enrolled in Chinese at our university, we combined the intermediate and advanced Chinese learners into the sample. In a
future study, with a larger sample size, adding the Chinese learners’ language proficiency, even their self-efficacy as covariates or variables could reveal additional correlations. Additional analyses could focus on deeper analysis of the discourse of the transcripts, closely looking at various features of the negotiation when chatting with different partners. More studies to explore the benefit of Chinese NSs facilitating Chinese characters’ acquisition could be conducted. Further studies with other languages are also needed.

Acknowledgements
The authors greatly appreciate the two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.
References


Appendix A: Topic Survey

Dear Students:

This is a survey to investigate topics which you are interesting in discussing in Chinese with your classmates, friends or Chinese native speakers. The result of this survey will give your instructor input on the topics for the classroom conversation activities and the online chat activities. Thank you!

Please choose all the topics which you are interesting in discussing in Chinese.

1. If you are chatting with your classmates in Chinese, you would like to talk on the topics of ________.
   - Food
   - Friends
   - Hobbies
   - Entertainment
   - Festivals
   - Travel
   - Sports
   - Dreams
   - Economy
   - History
   - Family
   - Weather
   - Childhood
   - Politics
   - Others:__________________

2. If you are chatting with Chinese native speakers who you are not familiar with, you would like to talk on the topics of ________________.
   - Food
   - Friends
   - Hobbies
   - Entertainment
   - Festivals
   - Travel
   - Sports
   - Dreams
   - Economy
   - History
   - Family
   - Weather
   - Childhood
   - Politics
   - Others:__________________
Appendix B: Questionnaire

Dear Students:

We are conducting a study to investigate students’ attitude to online chat and Chinese character learning strategies. Your response will be very useful in developing the curriculum and integrating the technology, and designing the teaching strategies.

In order to ensure your confidentiality, the questionnaire is anonymous, and the completed questionnaires can be accessed only by authorized research personnel.

Thank you for your responses!

QA: Who did you chat with online in the recent two chat activities?
   Peers ( )  Chinese native speakers ( )

Q B: Please enter your code_________

Section One: Demographics

1. Your gender:  Male ( )  Female ( )
2. Race/Ethnicity:  Asian ( )  Hispanic ( )  Pacific Islander ( )  White/Caucasian ( )  Black ( )  Other ( )
3. Your Major and Minor:
   Major 1 ____________________  Major 2 ____________________  Minor ____________________
4. Your academic classification:
   Freshman ( )  Sophomore ( )  Junior ( )  Senior ( )  Graduate ( )
5. Which Chinese class are you taking now?  Intermediate ( )  Advanced ( )
6. What was the primary language spoken in your home during your childhood?________
7. What is the primary language spoken in your home today?________________________
8. Can anyone else speak Chinese in your family? __________________________

Section two: Attitude to online chat partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My chat partner taught me some new Chinese characters during my chatting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I learned some new Chinese phrases/expressions from my chat partner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I did not get much help from my chat partner to improve my Chinese language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My chat partner taught me some Chinese grammar rules that I didn’t know.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My chat partners taught me something about Chinese culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. The fast typing speed of my chat partner made me nervous. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I felt anxious when I thought my chat partner’s Chinese proficiency was much higher than mine. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I was confused by most of the sentences made by my chat partner. 1 2 3 4 5

10. I was very relaxed and comfortable to chat with my chat partner. 1 2 3 4 5

11. Chatting with my chat partner was an amazing experience to me. 1 2 3 4 5

12. Sometimes, I felt it was boring to chat with my chat partner. 1 2 3 4 5

13. I would like to continue chatting with my chat partner in the future. 1 2 3 4 5

14. Several times, during my chatting, I felt like to quit. 1 2 3 4 5

Section three: Open-ended Questions
1. Please explain the reason that you like/dislike to chat with the two partners in the recent two online chat activities.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Please explain the reason that you felt/didn’t feel anxious in your recent two online chat activities.

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________________________________________________________________________
A Concept-Based Instructional Design: Introducing Chinese Color Terms and Their Metaphorical Meanings at the Elementary Level

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Abstract

Metaphor is an indispensable part of human life. Scholars have argued that not only do we use metaphors to talk about abstract concepts that are hard to explain in concrete terms, but how we perceive and interact with our cultural reality is also influenced by a conceptual structure that is fundamentally metaphorical. As a sub-category of conceptual metaphors, color metaphors play an important role in human life and daily communication. Understanding the metaphorical implications behind the color terms will not only help us understand the rationale behind the choice and use of them, but also enable us to look into the conceptual structure of the language and culture in which these terms are rooted. The purpose of this instructional design is to investigate if classroom instruction inspired by the concept-based instructional approach could raise students’ conceptual awareness of the cultural implications behind certain Chinese color words and affect their metaphorical interpretation of certain Chinese color terms. Since few pedagogical reports have focused on the instruction of Chinese color terms as conceptual metaphors, this study will help us understand students’ learning process and provide useful pedagogical information and strategies for language teachers on this subject.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, Chinese color terms, Concept-based instruction, Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

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Introduction

Metaphorical concepts and expressions are indispensable parts of human life. According to Lakoff & Johnson, not only do we use metaphors to talk about abstract concepts that are hard to explain in concrete terms, but how we perceive and interact with our cultural reality is also affected or even shaped by a conceptual structure that is fundamentally metaphorical (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993). As a sub-category of conceptual metaphors, color metaphors play an important role in human life and daily communication. Some scholars believe that the metaphorical use of color terms can reflect the cultural identity of language users (Rasekh & Ghafel, 2011). Hence, helping students understand the metaphorical implications behind the color terms will not only enable them to understand the rationale behind the choice and use of these terms, but also encourage them to look into the conceptual structure of the language and culture in which these terms are rooted.

The purpose of this instructional design is to investigate if classroom instruction inspired by the concept-based instructional approach could raise students’ awareness of the cultural implications behind certain Chinese color words (e.g. red 红色, white 白色, black 黑色) and affect their interpretation of the metaphorical meanings of certain Chinese color terms (e.g. “red person” 红人, “white eyes” 白眼, “black words” 黑话). Since few pedagogical reports have focused on the instruction of Chinese color terms as conceptual metaphors, this study will contribute to our understanding of students’ learning process of the cultural implications behind certain Chinese color words and color metaphors, and provide useful pedagogical information and strategies for language teachers on these subjects.

Literature Review

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (p.5). Understood in this way, metaphor is in fact a cross-domain mapping between the source and target domains (Bobrova & Lantolf, 2012). In this definition, the “source domain” can be viewed as a phenomenon, in terms of which another phenomenon is conceived and understood. The “target domain” is a phenomenon that is conceived and understood in terms of the source domain. “Mapping” is the basic, essential, and systematic conceptual correspondence between the source and target domains, the function of which is to project “specific properties of the source domain onto the target domain” (Bobrova & Lantolf, 2012, p. 33, 34). For instance, in the following sentence “他是学校里的红人” (Lit. He is the red person in the school), the person’s role/status in the school is understood metaphorically in terms of a Chinese color term 红人. In this color metaphor, the source domain is the cultural implications associated with the color of red in Chinese culture, and the target domain is the specific properties of “him” as a member of the school. Once we understand that the color red often signifies prosperity and popularity in Chinese culture, we will be able to project (mapping) these properties to the target domain and figure out the true meaning of the sentence, namely, “he is a popular person/rising star in the school.”
Conceptual Metaphor

Cognitive linguistics argue that metaphor exists not only in language but also in concept. The basic assumption of the conceptual metaphor theory is that human cognition process is structured and defined largely in a metaphorical way. In this theory, metaphor is no longer considered as “a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language,” or a rhetorical/ornamental device used only in literature and poetry (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3), but is regarded as an essential way of thinking, “a process by which we understand and structure one domain of experience in terms of another domain of a different kind (Johnson, 1987, p. 15). The reason we use metaphors in speech is not only because we want to make our expression more descriptive or accessible, but is because our “concept is metaphorically structured, our activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, our language is metaphorically structured” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.5). In other words, what makes metaphors pervasive in language is its pervasiveness in human cognition. Metaphor is a figure of thought just as much as it is a figure of speech (Yu, 1995).

Color Metaphors

In different languages, color words play an important role not only in describing the color appearance of different objects, but also in metaphorically expressing, through their extended and/or abstract meanings, people’s experience, thought and emotion towards the perceived reality. For example, the expression “he is in red” in English is a metaphorical expression used to mean “he is angry”, whereas the expression “他是红人” (lit. He is a red person) in Chinese employs the metaphorical implications of the color “red” to describe the person’s popularity.

As mentioned before, all metaphors are fundamentally conceptual, because it represents an essential way of thinking, by which we understand and structure our perceived reality. Color metaphors are no exception of it. Scholars have argued that most of the extended and abstract meanings of the color terms develop from their original meanings by way of metaphoricalization or metonymerization (Xing, 2008). Once these meanings become established, they function just like other conceptual metaphors, in the sense that they have become an important aid to help people perceive, understand their cultural reality, and convey their perception and understanding in a by and large metaphorical way. Hence, in order to figure out the true implications behind a color metaphor, we will need to know not only the concepts usually associated with that color in a particular culture, but also how some or all of these concepts come into play when that color metaphor is employed in speech or communication.

How people in different languages utilize color metaphors to convey their perception and understanding of their cultural reality demonstrates both similarities and differences. Rasekh & Ghafele (2011) compare basic colors and their metaphorical connotations in English and Persian, and find that while there are overlaps to some extent, most of the color metaphorical expressions are culture-bound and specific to each language. On the contrary, Xing, in her comparative study of the basic color terms in English and Chinese, argues that an in-depth analysis and comparison of these terms in fact reveals more similarities than differences in terms of their metaphorical functions (Xing, 2008). In spite of their different findings, however, both studies have founded their arguments on the assumption that color metaphors reflect the close relationship between language and culture. They argue that color metaphors provide us with an invaluable source to
investigate and compare the cultural perceptions and beliefs in different languages and cultures. It is only when we gain a basic understanding of these perceptions and beliefs that we will be able to understand the rationales behind the linguistic choice of certain color metaphors in a given language and culture, and acquire the basic knowledge and skills to use these color metaphors in a more creative and accurate way.

Concept-based Instruction

In this study, the instructors design the instructional intervention primarily in light of the concept-based instruction (CBI) approach promoted by Bobrova & Lantolf (2012). Grounded in sociocultural theory, CBI is a pedagogical approach that proposes to use well-planned and well-organized instructional methods to introduce concepts to students, provide them with the cognitive tools, and help them develop their own understanding of the concepts through step-by-step guidance (Gal’perin, 1989). The ultimate goal of CBI is to help students internalize the concepts they have learned (Vygotsky, 1986). That is to say, students will not only just memorize and understand the definitions of the concepts, but will also be able to use their memory and understanding as a conceptual framework to transfer their knowledge and apply their comprehension skills to future learning tasks of other concepts in the same domain. In this particular study, the “concepts” that needed to be instructed were the cultural and metaphorical implications, which were not immediately perceptible if not explained by the instructor implicitly and/or explicitly, behind certain Chinese color words. The expected learning outcome was that the students could gradually build up a conceptual awareness of these implications, and could use this awareness to better interpret the metaphorical meaning of certain Chinese color terms in the future.

Gal’perin, one of the major figures in the sociocultural school of thought, proposed to use a four-step teaching procedure to help students achieve this goal of concept internalization (Haenen, 2001; Arievitch & Haenen, 2005). The four steps are: 1. Orientation, where the learning goal is explained and the learning contents are presented as a meaningful whole to students; 2. Materialization/Visualization, where students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the concepts by hands-on manipulations with material objects or their symbolic representations; 3. Verbalization, where students are instructed to separate the concepts from their materialized props and start to talk about the concepts or apply them to their communicative activities. 4. Internalization, where students begin to internalize the concepts as a result of subsequent levels of abstraction (materialized–verbal–mental), and become more capable of using those internalized concepts to find solutions for future learning tasks without any material or verbal aids (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

In designing this instructional intervention, the instructors took inspiration from Gal’perin’s four-step teaching procedure. But since the nature of this study is more pedagogical than research oriented, the instructors also made necessary modifications to the procedure to make the intervention more suitable for the students’ language level and the original teaching plan. In particular, the instructors decided to replace the “Orientation” part in Gal’perin’s model with a pre-survey questionnaire, which was used to introduce certain Chinese color metaphors to the students and to gauge their initial awareness and knowledge of the cultural concepts behind these metaphors. Because the instruction of the color words constituted only a small part of the original teaching plan and the color terms were not even on the teaching agenda, the instructors
adopted this alternative orientational approach in order to minimize its interference with the original teaching plan. The instructors also combined some activities suggested in the Materialization/Visualization and Verbalization stages in Gal’perin’s model. In the Materialization/Visualization stage, for example, the instructors helped the students gain a better understanding of the cultural concepts/functions of some Chinese color words not only with the help of materialized props (pictures and videos), but also through teacher-student interactions and student-student communications. In the Verbalization stage, the students were asked to conduct, with visual prompts or aids, a series of in-class speaking activities and group performance tasks, in order to test if they were able to apply the conceptual knowledge that they had learned before to their daily communication. Towards the Internalization stage, a post-survey questionnaire was used to evaluate if the students had established basic conceptual awareness of the cultural and metaphorical implications behind certain Chinese color words and if this conceptual awareness could positively affect their interpretation of certain Chinese color metaphors. It is worth pointing out here that although a basic awareness of the metaphorical concepts behind certain Chinese color terms could be established after only one instructional intervention, a true “internationalization” of these color metaphors demands more time and effort from both the students and the instructors. The discussion of that kind of “internationalization” is beyond the limited scope of this paper and shall wait for a future study.

While this instructional intervention by no means interfered with, but rather served as an integral part of, the traditional instruction that the instructors used in teaching the Chinese color words in the past, it differed from the traditional approach in at least the following two ways: (1) In teaching the simple Chinese color words, the instructors’ traditional approach would focus on drills and rote learning, and the primary goal was to help students memorize the words and their linguistic usage. While this instructional intervention by no means abandoned drills and rote learning, it added implicit and explicit instructions in order to gradually raise the students’ conceptual awareness of the metaphorical implications behind the color words, thereby encouraged them to learn and understand the words’ cultural functions in addition to their linguistic meanings and usage. (2) In the instructors’ traditional approach, even when the metaphorical implications of the color words were explained, the explanation depended largely on the instructors’ spontaneous reaction, which was contingent on the questions or the learning tasks at hand. This instructional intervention aimed to provide a comparatively more systematic explanation of the metaphorical implications behind some of the Chinese color words. The purpose of doing this was to help the students establish a very basic conceptual framework that could enable them to better understand the Chinese color concepts, which hopefully could enable them to transfer their knowledge and comprehension skills to the study of other Chinese color metaphors in the future.

**Methodology**

This section describes the pedagogical and research methods used for this study, including participants and settings, instructional design, instruments, data collection and data analysis plans. It is worth noting that since this study is intended to be a report on pedagogical designs rather than on research findings, (1) it will focus more on the details of the instructional activities that were designed to be an integral part of the original teaching plan; (2) its data
collection and analysis might not be as thorough and rigorous as one would expect in a formal research paper.

Participants and settings

This instructional design was implemented at a private university in Pittsburgh area. Most of the students have science and technology backgrounds. The small student-teacher ratio provides a good opportunity for close interaction between students and the faculty. The Chinese program in the university offers a full range of courses from Elementary Chinese (1st year) to Advanced Chinese (4th year). Both Chinese major and minor are offered in the program. 23 students from Elementary II Chinese (1st year, second semester) have participated in the study. There are 19 students who have completed the instructional hours, and the pre- and post-surveys. Those students who have not completed the instructional hours are excluded from this study.

Instructional Design

This instruction on the Chinese color words and their metaphorical implications was designed to last for four days, roughly 10-20 minutes each day. Since the original teaching plan for those four days was on the Chinese words for colors and clothes, and their linguistic use and cultural significance in China, this instructional design was suitable for the teaching plan and could be seamlessly incorporated into the regular classroom instruction. The instructors used different pedagogical methods to implicitly and explicitly inform students of the metaphorical implications behind some of the colors in Chinese culture. Pictures, lecture notes, videos, and a variety of classroom activities were used to raise the students’ awareness of the cultural concepts behind certain Chinese color words and improve their skills in interpreting the metaphorical meanings of certain Chinese color terms.

Instruments and Data Collection

Evaluations of the instructional intervention include in-class assessment, a pre-survey and a post-survey. In-class assessments were carried out as an integral part of the regular classroom instruction, and evaluated afterward by the instructors based on their observation and reflections. The findings will be presented in the In-class Assessment Findings section of this paper. The pre-survey was conducted right before and the post-survey immediately after the instructional intervention.

The pre-survey included a number of questions on certain Chinese color terms, which the students had not learned before. The sentence included in the questions were in proper English, but the Chinese color terms were presented only in their literal English translations. The English sentences were designed as such so that they could only provide minimal, if any, clues for the students’ interpretation of the color terms, and the students were specifically instructed to interpret the color terms only from their reading of the terms, not from the context of the sentences. The purpose of the pre-survey was to gauge the students’ initial understanding of the metaphorical meanings of these color terms. The absence of the Chinese original words gave the students the freedom to interpret these color terms based on their previous knowledge about the terms, or, if they had no previous knowledge, their first impression of the English literal
translations of them. In other words, what the pre-survey wanted to find out was not so much the correct interpretations of these color terms, but rather the primary conceptual framework that dominated the students’ initial interpretations of them.

The post-survey utilized the same questions in the pre-survey, but added the Chinese characters and pinyin to the English literal translations of the color terms. The presence of the Chinese characters and pinyin served to remind the students that they should use what they had learned in class to interpret the metaphorical meanings of these color terms within Chinese cultural context. The post-survey result was then collected and compared with that of the pre-survey to see how effectively the instructional intervention had changed the students’ dominant conceptual framework used in interpreting the Chinese color terms in both surveys.

Survey Data Analysis

The instructors used a 5-point scale to rate all the answers given by students in the interpretation tasks in the pre- and post-surveys, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. The major criteria that we used to evaluate the accuracy of students’ answers included, but were not limited to: 1) whether the students could correctly determine the positive or negative undertone of the color term; 2) how close the students’ interpretation was to the accurate meaning of the term. For example, if a student interpreted the "red person" as "angry person" in the survey, he/she would only receive 1 point, because of the incorrect understanding of both the term’s undertone and its meaning. If the interpretation was “lucky person,” then the student would receive 3 points because he/she correctly understood the term’s positive undertone but the interpretation of the meaning was off. 4 points would be given to an answer like “prosperous person,” because the interpretation of the meaning is very close to the correct one. 2 points would be given to an answer like “nice person,” because though the positive undertone was understood correctly, the interpretation of the meaning was too vague for us to tell if the student truly understood the term or not (see Table 1 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Interpretations of “red person” (红人) and grading criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample Answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosperous person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular/beloved person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
The instructors read, discussed and agreed on the points assigned to each answer, then calculated the average point for each color term, and compared the changes of the average points in the pre- and post-surveys. The preliminary results of this comparison will be shown in the Survey Findings section of this paper, which focuses primarily on 5 sample color terms selected from the surveys (please refer to the Appendix for sample color terms and survey questions).

**Instructional Intervention**

The instructional intervention was designed to last for four days. The instructors used both implicit and explicit pedagogical methods to inform the students of the metaphorical implications of the chosen Chinese colors. Pictures, lecture notes, videos, and a variety of classroom activities were used to inform, enhance, challenge, shape or reshape the students’ awareness and knowledge of the metaphorical implications behind certain Chinese color words. Different strategies were adopted in the teaching of different color words. Sometimes the instructional invention was purposefully designed to see if conflicting or lack of instruction would cause adverse impact on the students’ understanding of the metaphorical meanings of certain color terms.

**Day 1**

A series of color words, with primary focus on the five ones listed below, were introduced to the students along with other new vocabulary such as the Chinese words for clothes. A group of deliberately chosen and designed pictures and sentence patterns were used to implicitly affect students’ understanding of the metaphorical implications of these color words (See Table 2 for the details in the instruction).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Instructional Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Red   | 1. A picture of a good-looking young man wearing a red shirt was selected to represent this color. The purpose was to give the students an overall positive impression of this color.  
2. This positive impression was further enhanced with the practice of the following sentence pattern:  
他今天穿了红色的衬衫，我觉得很好看。 Today he wears a red shirt, I think it looks good.  
The word “好看 looks good” was purposefully highlighted in red, to encourage the students to transfer the positive connotation associated with the word to the color of red. |
| White | 1. A picture of a beautiful young lady wearing a white skirt was selected to represent this color, which was again used to give the students an overall positive impression of this color.  
2. This positive impression was further enhanced with the practice of the following sentence pattern: |
Table 2

Day 2

The five color words were reviewed and practiced with the grammatical instruction on Chinese measure words for clothes. Two instructional strategies were used to implicitly or explicitly reinforce, change or challenge the metaphorical understanding that the students had built up towards the five color words during the first day of class.

Strategy 1.

Three pictures of a U.S. dollar bill (US$20), a Chinese yuan (¥100), and a Hong Kong dollar bill (HK$1,000) were selected to represent the color of green, red, and yellow. The Chinese words for the U.S. dollar, Chinese yuan, and Hong Kong dollar were also new words
that the students needed to learn. The students were asked to say the color of the currencies and choose whether they like it or not, using the following sentence patterns.

美金是绿色的，我很喜欢 or 不喜欢  (The U.S. dollar is green, and I like or dislike it.)
人民币是红色的，我很喜欢 or 不喜欢。 (The Chinese yuan is red, and I like or dislike it.)
港币是黄色的，我很喜欢 or 不喜欢。 (The Hong Kong dollar is yellow, and I like or dislike it.)

As expected, all students chose to “like” the three currencies. This had fulfilled our primary purpose of asking students to make this choice, namely, to encourage them to transfer their “fondness” of money to the colors of green, red and yellow, thus to reinforce the positive impressions that they have established towards these three colors.

But it was also understood that the introduction of the concept of money might also adversely change students’ original “positive” perception of the three colors, if they held a negative attitude towards money. In that case, students would be made aware that the metaphorical implications of the color words were not always fixed or stable. How a color is metaphorically perceived and interpreted in a society is closely connected to the items, things, and notions that it has been regularly associated with, as well as how those items, things, and notions have been perceived and understood in that society.

**Strategy 2.**

A similar teaching strategy, like the one used on the first day of class, was used to reinforce or challenge the students’ metaphorical interpretations of the five colors. But this time, *explicit* instructions were given on how these colors were generally perceived and understood metaphorically in Chinese society and culture (See Table 3 for the details in the instruction).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Instructional Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Red    | 1. A picture of a good-looking Chinese young lady wearing a red wedding dress was selected to represent this color, to reinforce the positive impression that the students had built up toward this color on the first day of class. 
2. This positive impression was further enhanced with the expected affirmative answer that the students would make for the following choice: 她穿了一条红色的裙子，我很喜欢 or 不喜欢。 She wears a red dress, which I like or dislike very much. 
3. After the students, as expected, chose to like the picture, the instructors explicitly explained that the color of red usually carried a positive connotation in Chinese society and culture, because it was often associated with prosperity and celebration. This association has given the color of red an overall positive metaphorical implication. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| White | 1. A picture of a ghost-like woman with a very pale face was selected to represent this color, in order to challenge the positive impression that the students had built up toward this color on the first day of class.  
2. This negative impression was reinforced with the expected negative answer that the students would make for the following choice:  
   她有一张白色的脸，我很喜欢 or 不喜欢。 She has a white face, which I like or dislike very much.  
3. After the students chose to dislike the picture, the instructors explicitly explained that the color of white sometimes could carry a negative connotation in Chinese society and culture, especially when it was associated with body parts like the face or eyes. This has given the color of white a rather mixed metaphorical implication, because while it is often associated with cleanness and purity, it could also be used to represent death or unhealthy looking. |
| Black | 1. A picture of a scary witch wearing a black hat was selected to represent this color, to reinforce the negative impression that the students had built up toward this color on the first day of class.  
2. This negative impression was further enhanced with the expected negative answer that the students would make for the following choice:  
   她戴了一顶黑色的帽子，我很喜欢 or 不喜欢。 She wears a black hat, which I like or dislike very much.  
3. After the students chose to dislike the picture, the instructors explicitly explained that the color of black usually carried a negative connotation in Chinese society and culture, because it was often associated with death and evil. This has imbued the color of black with an overall negative metaphorical implication. |
| Green | 1. A picture of a green Angry Bird was selected to represent this color, to encourage the students to perceive this color positively, as they did in the first class.  
2. This positive impression was further enhanced with the expected affirmative answer that the students would make for the following choice:  
   今天我看见一只绿色的小鸟，我很喜欢 or 不喜欢。 Today I saw a green bird, which I like or dislike very much.  
3. After the students chose to like the picture, the instructors explicitly explained that the color of green usually carried a positive connotation in Chinese society and culture, because it was often associated with nature or unpolluted environment. This association has given the color of green an overall positive metaphorical implication. |
| Yellow | 1. A picture of a beautiful young lady wearing a yellow jacket was selected to represent this color, to reinforce the positive impression that the students had built up toward this color on the first day of class.  
2. This positive impression was further enhanced with the expected affirmative answer that the students would make for the following choice:  
   她穿了一件黄色的毛衣，我很喜欢 or 不喜欢。 She wears a yellow jacket, which I like or dislike very much. |
3. After the students chose to like the picture, the instructors explicitly explained that the color of yellow usually carried a positive connotation in Chinese society and culture, because it was often associated with imperial wealth and dignity. This has imbued the color of yellow with an overall positive metaphorical implication.

Table 3

Day 3

A teacher-student communicative activity was used to test the students’ linguistic gains from the instructional intervention conducted in the first two days of class. Four pictures, each with a Chinese person wearing a dress in a specific color (black, white, red, and yellow), were presented to the students. The students were asked to answer the following questions.
1. 你喜欢/不喜欢什么颜色？为什么？ (What color(s) do you like/dislike? Why?)
2. 你觉得他/她喜欢/不喜欢什么颜色？为什么？ (What color(s) do you think he/she [the person in the picture] may like/dislike? Why?)

Day 4

A short animated video was used to summarize the instructions that the students had received in the past three classes about the metaphorical implications behind certain Chinese color words. Some new information was introduced for the first time in the video. Through the video, students were informed that:
1) Colors have positive or negative implications, which vary from culture to culture.
2) In Chinese culture, red gains its meaning from fire, and it is often used as a symbol for prosperity and happiness. Black has a hint of formality and solemnness, and it has symbolic implications that include evil, morbid, illegal, corrupted and/or greedy. White has a mixed connotation in China. It is a symbol of purity and clarity, but it is also the color used in funerals and is often associated with death. Yellow/gold was associated with emperors in the past, thus is often used to symbolize nobility and wealth. But yellow/gold can mean “pornographic” when used in connection with publication or media. Green is associated with plants or vegetables, which represent clean, thriving and free of contamination. It is usually a good choice of color, except for hats.
3) People may become really happy if you play the color right, or really mad if you play it wrong.

The new information regarding the negative metaphorical implications of yellow and green were particularly emphasized in this video. The words about the “pornographic” connotation associated with the color of yellow were put in larger fonts and placed in a very obvious position in the video. The negative connotation associated with “green hat” in Chinese culture (meaning one’s wife has committed adultery) was explicitly explained to the students. These emphases aimed to help the students gain a better understanding of some color terms included in the pre- and post-surveys, whose metaphorical meanings were very difficult to figure out because of their association with particular Chinese historical events or anecdotes.

The video was followed by an oral assessment, which asked the students to decide whether a color had good, bad or mixed metaphorical implications in Chinese society and culture.
After that, the students were asked to pick the appropriate colors for four different social occasions: a Chinese wedding ceremony, a funeral, a meeting with the mafia boss, and a Chinese New Year Gala. The four scenarios were purposely selected to test if the students had established basic conceptual awareness of the metaphorical implications associated with the colors of red, white, black, green and yellow in Chinese culture, and if they were able to apply their conceptual knowledge and interpretive skills to a real life situation.

Survey Findings

As mentioned before, the purpose of this instructional design is to raise the students’ conceptual awareness of and improve their interpretive skills of the metaphorical implications of certain Chinese color terms. The effectiveness of the instructional design was measured primarily through the comparison and analysis of the test results in the pre- and post-surveys. The chart below shows a side-by-side comparison of the average scores that the students have received for their answers on the metaphorical meanings of the five color terms that represent the five color words covered in the instructional intervention (See Figure 1).

Figure 1

1. Red Person 紅人: The color of red was presented as a “positive” color throughout the instructional intervention. The term “red person” in the pre- and post-surveys also possesses a positive implication in accordance with the instruction given in class. The students’ interpretations of the metaphorical meaning of this color term were expected to become more accurate after the instructional intervention. As shown in Figure 1, the average score that the students had received for their interpretations of this term in the pre-survey was a relatively high score of 3.2, which indicated that many student might already know that red is a good “color” in Chinese culture and therefore could roughly guess the meaning of the term. In the post-survey,
the score increased to 4.3, which indicated that the students could interpret the term more accurately after the instructional intervention.

2. **Black Word** 黑话: The color of black was presented as a “negative” color throughout the instruction. The color term “black word” also has negative connotations, which conform to the instruction that the students have received in class. Since the color of black also carried a general negative connotation in English, the average score that the students had received for their interpretations of this term in the pre-survey was also relatively high (3.1). Interestingly, from the pre-survey to the post-survey, the average scores increased very insignificantly from 3.1 to 3.4. Judging from the two scores, it is possible that the students had correctly grasped the negative undertone of the term but failed to accurately interpret its meaning.

3. **White Eyes** 白眼: The students were informed, implicitly and explicitly, that the color of white had both positive and negative metaphorical implications in Chinese society and culture. However, the negative connotation of the term 白眼 (supercilious look), as well as the historical anecdote associated with it, was not explicitly explained to the students in class. The purpose was to see whether the students would generate mixed interpretations of this color metaphor due to inadequate instructions. The survey results showed that the average scores increased from a low score of 1.6 to another low one of 2.5, which indicated that though the accuracy of the students’ interpretations of this term improved from the pre-survey to the post-survey, many students still could not figure out the exact meaning of this term.

4. **Yellow Joke** 黄色笑话: The color of yellow was presented as a “positive” color in most parts of the instruction. The color term “yellow joke,” however, has a very negative connotation associated with pornography. This negative connotation was emphasized in the short video shown on Day 4, but was not explicitly explained by the instructors. The purpose was to see how the conflicting messages given in the instruction and the video would affect the students’ interpretation of this color metaphor. As shown in Figure 1, the students’ average scores for this color term increased from 1.8 to 3.3. This increase indicated the effectiveness of the video emphasis, but the mediocre scores that the students received in the post-survey suggested that an explicit instruction by the instructors might still be necessary for the students to accurately interpret the metaphorical meaning of this term.

5. **Green Hat** 绿帽子: Like the color of yellow, the color of green was presented as a “positive” color throughout the instruction, except in the short video shown on Day 4, in which the students were informed that the term “green hat” had a negative connotation in Chinese culture. But unlike the case with the color term “yellow joke,” this time the instructors explicitly reiterated the importance of this negative connotation and explained its historical origin. With this double emphasis, the students were expected to make correct interpretations about the negative meaning of this term in the post-survey, in spite of the overall “positive” impression that they might have gained about the color green during the first three days of instruction. As shown in Figure 1, the average scores for this term increased significantly from 1.3 in the pre-survey to 4.9 in the post-survey. It is evident from this result, as well as from its comparison with the survey results about the “white eyes” and “yellow jokes,” that the most efficient way to teach a color metaphor that has specific historical or cultural references is through clear and emphasized classroom instruction.
In-Class Assessment Findings

In addition to the pre- and post-surveys, an in-class assessment was also used as an important measure to test the effectiveness of the instructional design.

The in-class assessment was conducted in the forms of teacher-student interaction and group activity on Day 4. As mentioned before, after watching the short video on the Chinese color metaphors, the students were asked to decide whether a color had good, bad or mixed metaphorical implications in Chinese society and culture. The result of this oral assessment showed that all students had correctly grasped the information provided in the video. In the following group activities that required the students to pick the appropriate color(s) to wear for different Chinese social occasions, 90% of the students picked the right color(s) based on what they had learned in class. For instance, when asked to choose the wedding gown, the students would choose the right color of red (happiness) or white (purity), and when asked to meet with their mafia boss, the students would choose the appropriate color of black (illegal and solemnness). This indicates that the students had established a basic conceptual awareness of the metaphorical implications behind certain colors in Chinese culture, and known how to use this conceptual awareness to deal with issues in a real life situation.

Discussion

As mentioned before, this study was intended to be a pedagogical report, focusing primarily on how to seamlessly incorporate the teaching of the metaphorical concepts behind some Chinese color words into regular classroom instruction. Hence, its data collection and analysis were not strictly emphasized and its time frame could not exceed what was specified on the course syllabus (4 class hours). But even with the limited data and time duration, the preliminary findings in this study still show that proper instructional intervention can help students establish, reinforce, or adjust their conceptual awareness of the cultural and metaphorical implications behind some Chinese color words.

One big issue that the instructors have encountered during this study is how to achieve a balance between language training and concept teaching. For a Chinese class at the elementary level, language training is of paramount importance. Will the teaching on concepts recommended by the CBI approach interfere with the language training in a L2 class? How many concepts should the instructor introduce to the students at one time and how far should the students explore into these concepts? When teaching about Chinese color metaphors, should the instructor present the students with all the cultural and metaphorical implications of the color words from the very beginning, or rather adopt a sequential and incremental approach to break down the instruction into different levels and phases? These are the questions that demand the instructors’ constant attention when designing and conducting this study. As mentioned above, during this instructional intervention, the instructors have tried their best to seamlessly incorporate the teaching of the color metaphors into the regular classroom instruction, in order to help the students learn both the language and the concepts at the same time. The classroom activities have been carefully thought-out and designed, so that they could raise the students’ conceptual awareness of Chinese color metaphors while at the same time improve their language skills. The instructors have also used different instructional methods, sometimes even deliberately holding back information or offering conflicting information, in order to experiment and search for the
best pedagogical strategies and methods for this subject. Finally, the instructors also understand that the pedagogical approach and methods tried out in this study are still very experimental, and need to be carefully refined in future studies.

Another issue is regarding the assessment methods used in this study. The in-classroom assessments could have adopted a questionnaire form like the pre- and post-surveys, instead of being conducted on the basis of the instructors’ observation and reflections. However, although this would make the assessment results more quantitative and objective, what needs to be considered is the possible inference that this form of assessment might have caused to the regular classroom instruction. Another outcome that the CBI approach wishes to assess is the students’ ability to develop a conceptual framework based on what they have learned in class, which they can use to facilitate their learning and interpretation of other similar concepts in the future. For this study, this assessment could have been accomplished by conducting a postponed survey, which could include new interpretative tasks on similar Chinese color metaphors.

As discussed above, color metaphors play an important role in people’s life and daily communication. To help Chinese language learners understand the metaphorical implications behind the Chinese color terms at an early stage of learning will not only help them comprehend the rationale behind the choice and use of those terms, but also encourage them to look into the conceptual structure of the Chinese language and culture, where those color metaphors are rooted. As shown in this study, this learning goal can be achieved by properly adapting the concept-based instructional approach to make it more compatible with and conducive to other pedagogical approaches used in L2 learning and teaching.

Acknowledgements
The authors would like to use this opportunity to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their very constructive and thoughtful comments and revision suggestions, which led to substantial improvements of this article.
References


# Appendix A: Sample Color Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Lexical Item</th>
<th>Literal Translation</th>
<th>Figurative Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>红人</td>
<td>red person</td>
<td>favorable person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>黑话</td>
<td>black words</td>
<td>slang used by robbers and thieves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>白眼</td>
<td>white eyes</td>
<td>treat with disdain and impatience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>黄色笑话</td>
<td>yellow joke</td>
<td>pornographic joke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>绿帽子</td>
<td>green hat</td>
<td>wife has an affair with someone else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Sample Pre-Survey Questions

1) Context: She is the red person in the theatrical troupe.
   Expression: red person
   Interpretation: In your opinion, what does “red person” mean?
   ____________________________
   Reason: Please explain the reason for your interpretation.
   ____________________________

2) Context: They all understand the black words.
   Expression: black words
   Interpretation: In your opinion, what does “black words” mean?
   ____________________________
   Reason: Please explain the reason for your interpretation.
   ____________________________
Appendix C: Sample Post-Survey Questions

1) Context: She is the 红人 in the theatrical troupe.
   Expression: 红人 hóng rén (red person)
   Interpretation: In your opinion, what does “红人” mean?
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   Reason: Please explain the reason for your interpretation.

2) Context: They all understand the 黑话.
   Expression: 黑话 hēi huà (black words)
   Interpretation: In your opinion, what does “黑话” mean?
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________
   Reason: Please explain the reason for your interpretation.
浅谈初级对外汉语教学的两大板块——声调教学和语用教学

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假如将对外汉语学习的过程比作搭积木，那么初级汉语的学习便是整个积木构架的基础——它决定着积木最终能达到的高度。其中，有两块积木是初级汉语教学的难点——声调教学和语用教学。

在实践中，我发现全感官教学对声调教学起到了良好的作用。首先，视觉上，我给学生们展示赵元任先生的“五度标音”。学生们根据这个五线谱进行唱调和手势比划。然后，我以夸张的情感来表现四个声调，并让学生进行模仿。情感记忆往往生动而深刻，因此合理运用情感化教学，可以帮助学生有效地记忆声调。一声是兴奋地高声叫“妈妈”，二声是带着疑问的“额”，三声仿佛老爷爷边点头边用低沉的嗓音称“好”，而四声就像肚子被球砸瞬间痛苦的一声“哎”。此时，声调不仅仅是静态的抽象符号，还是一幅幅生动形象的画面，加深了学生们对声调的印象。最后，听觉上，提供学生听音辨音训练，并要求学生对个人朗读录音进行自我纠错。需要强调的是，在掌握声调的学习过程中，勤说勤听，反复练习必不可少。而多样化的课堂活动如“指挥家和他的乐队”“击鼓传词卡”“三联棋”等，可以有效避免重复联系带来的枯燥乏味感，提高学生学习兴趣和学习效率。

有效的交流离不开合理的语用策略，但如何在初级汉语课堂上进行语用教学，是一个教学难点。综合现有的语用教学研究（Roever, 2009；Noroozi, 2012；Li, 2012），我提出了语用教学的三个步骤。现以初级《汉语听说读写》第六课中要求学生掌握“好吗，要是……，行吗”等表达请求的词句为例来进行阐明

一 辨别不同场景下表达请求的词句

这个步骤旨在提高学生的语用语言能力。第六课有两个对话，一个是李友请求老师帮她学中文，另一个是李友请求朋友帮她学中文。我要求学生们分别找出两段对话里李友使用的表达请求的词句。学生们不仅在语境中理解了这些词句的意思，还发现不同场景下李友所使用的对话策略和表示请求的词句大不相同。
二 比较并讨论不同场景下使用不同的关键词句的文化原因

这个步骤旨在提高学生社会语用意识。在我的引导下，学生们讨论李友对朋友和对老师的提出请求的不同方式。他们发现，在美国，学生可以直接称呼老师名字；而在中国，学生称呼老师一般都要加上敬称，继而了解到中国强调尊师重道的传统观念，也理解了向中国老师提出请求时使用礼貌委婉用语的重要性。

三 角色表演和点评反馈

这个步骤旨在帮助学生练习表示请求的关键词句。我设计了几个现实生活中提出请求的情景，要求每个学生轮流扮演不同的角色，完成对话任务。在这个角色表演中，学生将使用习得的表达请求的关键词句。当一组学生结束表演以后，其他同学和老师会给予简单的点评和反馈。然而，角色表演有其局限性。表演双方都是学习者，因而对话可能缺乏真实性及恰当的语用反馈。因此，我们还应鼓励学生多与母语为汉语的人交流，以获得最真实的交流体验和语用反馈。

参考文献


Book Review


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In the age of technology, teachers and researchers are seeking implementation of effective and user-friendly technologies in a foreign language (FL) classroom. Following this trend, Blake’s book (2nd Ed.) uses eight chapters to explore how technology can be leveraged to FL learning and teaching and emphasize the importance of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) with empirical evidence.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the interface between technology and second language acquisition (SLA). Blake first accentuates the role of technology in transforming traditional classrooms into interactive learning environments (Chenoweth & Tucker 2006). Then, he teases out common misconceptions about technology in SLA and calls for a careful evaluation and constant installation of technology in FL instruction. Finally, he surveys SLA theories that are fundamental to the application of technology in FL education, such as Krashen’s comprehensible input, Gass and Doughty’s social interaction approach, and Long and Robinson’s task-based learning, which provide theoretical basis for the discussions in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 introduces different types of web-based technologies and their application to the development of web-based learning materials. Meanwhile, he calls to our attention that the proper application of technology is determined by teaching approach, learning objectives, curriculum, and learner characteristics. Therefore, he suggests that web pages should be embedded into a content-based instruction classroom curriculum aiming at language and cultural immersion.

Chapter 3 focuses on tutorial CALL, a learning program in which the computer controls learning by providing feedback and evaluating outcomes. Blake compares a number of CALL developing tools, including web-based authoring tools such as Interactive Language Learning Authoring Package and Hot Potatoes, intelligent CALL (iCALL) such as E-Tutor for German and Robo-Sensei for Japanese, and automatic speech recognition tools such as Tell Me More Pro. In addition, he discusses the evaluation of CALL programs and suggests that CALL programs should be evaluated separately due to differences in embedded technologies.

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1 For book review proposals, please contact the book review editor Han Luo at luoh@lafayette.edu.
Chapter 4 examines computer-mediated communication (CMC), which can be categorized into asynchronous (ACMC) and synchronous (SCMC). ACMC tools provide prolonged responses such as e-mail, discussion forum, blog, and wiki whereas SCMC tools provide instant interactive responses such as instant messaging (e.g., Yahoo! Messenger) and videoconferencing programs (e.g., Skype). Both ACMC and SCMC have been shown to improve intercultural communication competence and second language (L2) proficiency. Therefore, Blake argues for the indispensable role of language instructors in using CMC in FL classes and denies any suggestions on the absence of instructor.

Chapter 5 summarizes the previous four chapters and looks into the application of technologies from five perspectives: a) the multimodal approach that advocates using multiple technologies; b) theory-driven applications of new technologies; c) student-centered classrooms; d) technology-enhanced classroom interactions; and e) digital spaces for bilingual and intercultural development. Blake emphasizes that the constellation of technologies should be grounded in a clear theoretical framework yet flexible enough to be calibrated for ongoing student needs.

Chapter 6 takes up distance learning (DL) for languages. DL refers to the application of various technological platforms for online courses, such as teleconference, hybrid, blended, and virtual courses. This chapter critically reviews different types of DL and argues that a DL course could be slightly more effective than or at least not less effective than a traditional course. Drawing on findings of previous studies, Blake holds that the real challenge of DL lies in how to incorporate it into a well-engineered pedagogical framework.

Chapter 7 investigates the application of social networking service (SNS) to L2 learning. Blake moves from the role of SNS in life to the possibility of using SNS in class. It is argued that SNS, in general, enables learners to reach target language speakers across cultures and thus gives rise to autonomous learning in L2 development. As a platform of sharing and presenting information in groups, SNS such as Facebook could be implemented for self-paced and collaborative learning.

Chapter 8 addresses the interface between gaming and language learning. Blake discusses the importance of gaming in language learning and learning principles (Gee, 2007) that could guide game design and suggests a systematic evidence-based approach to implement games in language learning. Finally, he introduces Mentria, a place-based mobile phone application designed for L2 Spanish curriculum, showing how mobile applications can prompt learner agency in FL practices.

This book is a timely addition to the growing interest in technology-enhanced FL learning and teaching. Compared to its first edition, the second edition draws a clear line in Chapter 5 to distinguish between technologies that have been extensively used in FL classroom and those that are or will be tested. In so doing, the author presents the history and future directions of CALL. It is a brave idea to discuss mobile and game-based learning (Chapter 8), which are extremely rare to find in a traditional FL classroom but certainly can benefit FL learners (Holden & Julie Sykes, 2013; Kim, et al., 2013; Peterson, 2013). Despite its introduction to numerous technologies, the volume is, by no means, a know-how handbook but a strong argument on the importance and feasibility of using technologies in FL education. Framed with theories and empirical evidence, the book elucidates the role of technology in classroom interaction and cross-cultural communication, showing how multiple technologies can be implemented in a FL classroom. Aside from a comprehensive review of educational technologies, the author renders
suggestions on how to choose and use technologies appropriately for various pedagogical
designs.

For the aforementioned merits, I believe this book is an invaluable reference for both
experienced researchers and CALL developers, and for teachers with limited experience in
teaching with technology and developing CALL materials. L2 learners, instructors, and SLA
researchers who are interested in technology-enhanced learning and teaching can refer to this book
for an overview of the topic as well as suggestions on using technologies for specific pedagogical
purposes (e.g., teaching an L2 to business majors).

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“Should You Send Your Kid to High School in the U.S. or in China?”

A Comparison of the High School Education Systems of the United States and China

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Introduction

One of the greatest measures of human development is that of education: we often evaluate a country’s level of advancement by the quality of its education system, and how educated its citizens are. As the two largest political powers in the world, the United States and China are known to have very different education systems, and are often seen to have polarizing stereotypes. When asked what they know about the school life of both ends, most people would say that the U.S. focuses more on holistic learning and creativity, while Chinese schools specialize in rote learning, memorization, and exams. Though these are stereotypes, these are both tried and tested methods of teaching; what we are interested to explore is: is one method better than the other, both from the students’ perspectives and in terms of the results achieved? Does each form of teaching produce a different kind of outcome or characteristically different students, who are now ready for the real world? To what extent are these stereotypes accurate: what values are important to the different philosophies, and how does the emphasis on these values affect the growth of students?

These are all ideas that we intend to explore in this paper, with the goal of comparing and contrasting the high school education system of the United States to that of China. We frame this research topic in the perspective of current and prospective parents: if you had kids, which high school would you send them to? The reason why we limited the scope of this paper to just high schools is twofold. Firstly, it would let us limit the range of coverage so that we can investigate deeper into this topic. Secondly, in general, the high school system is the most heatedly debated level of education in both China and the U.S.

As such, while we will mention both higher and lower levels of education in passing, the focus of the paper will primarily be on the three to four years of high school.

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1 Questions on this article should be addressed to the student advisor Zhongxin Sun at cindysun@andrew.cmu.edu.
Student Life

Life in Chinese schools

An education system encompasses an incredibly wide range of qualities that work together to define the body as a whole, making it unique from all other education systems. One of the most important aspects is the quality of the students’ daily lives inside and outside of classes. It is widely accepted that the joy of learning is almost as important as the process of learning itself, and so we wanted to explore how American and Chinese schools divide up their students’ times.

The typical Chinese high school day begins early at 7 or 8 a.m. in the morning as Yao Zhang, a Chinese native who coordinates study abroad programs in rural China says\(^1\), and usually lasts through too late in the evening at 8 or 9 p.m. Their classes throughout the day are all very heavily exam-focused, due to the Gaokao, (China’s National Higher Education Entrance Examination). Davey and Higgins\(^2\) interviewed a Chinese school student who said:

“I spend my waking hours studying and even my spare time is dedicated to after-school curricula. Life is hard and all my friends worry about failing our exams. Sometimes I feel I can’t cope but I just don’t want to let my parents down.”

Students typically spend the majority of their high school life going through the pile of books containing the concepts necessary for their survival through these exceptionally tough final exams. There is a distinct difference between the ways schools in small and larger cities view the Gaokao. Higher class, elite schools in Beijing and Shanghai tend to not emphasize the Gaokao having a life-or-death consequence to the students, as smaller suburban schools do. This is because the students of these smaller schools often need to leverage the potentially life-boosting possibilities of stellar Gaokao results to propel them forward in life, giving them a leg-up in terms of employment opportunities after their schooling. Davey and Higgins say that “entry into Chinese universities is generally determined by the entrance exam\(^2\), and that chances of success through other methods of admission are “very small”. It is worth mentioning here that this is one good aspect of the Gaokao: it equalizes citizens’ welfare, in that it gives the poor and the rich the same chances of ‘making it’ to a good university, and consequently, a good career.

By their senior year in high school, the Gaokao preparation causes homework and revision to pile up in front of the students, both literally on their desks and figuratively on their shoulders. As a result, most students stay back in school well into the evening after dinner to receive private assistance from their teachers, and upon going home for supper, the homework continues. There is rarely any time outside of this schedule that permits any secondary activity like sports, socializing, and school-organized extracurricular activities; this leaves a lot to be desired for Chinese schools in terms of student life and welfare. Of course, this is not true for all high schools in China, but our understanding is that it is common practice for many schools to enforce restrictions like banning Art and Music classes and extracurricular activities in students’ final year, encouraging them to focus all their time on their Math and Science classes. One such
instance is as stated in the Basic Education Review Sponsor[^3] (translated from Chinese):

> Some schools observe that some classes are simply irrelevant to the content of the Gaokao, and so they either divert attention from them, or remove them from the curriculum altogether. The students have a similar attitude to these classes as they are too busy studying for their own exams."

While it might be necessary to remove these ‘distractions’ from the considerations of these incredibly busy high school students in order to let them focus on the task at hand, we believe that this questions the system. The lack of balance in an adolescent student’s life is arguably unhealthy; this balance should be achieved at all times, regardless of looming pressures. Perhaps this then questions the legitimacy of the Gaokao, and whether it has damaging effects on these young adults’ lives. This is however not a topic of detailed discussion in this paper.

**Life in U.S. schools**

The typical American high school student’s day starts slightly later at 8 a.m.[^4], and usually ends no later than 3 or 4 p.m., during which they only have four class periods, compared to more than 8 in a day in China. The biggest outward difference here is what students generally do after the last bell sounds in the afternoon: this is when the extracurricular activities, such as sports teams’ practices, chess club, choir practice, drama rehearsals, etc. gather and begin their sessions. The National Center for Education Statistics reported[^4] in 1995 that 99.8% of public high school seniors said that any extracurricular activity was available to them. The study also showed that depending on their socioeconomic status, anywhere from 73% to 88% of these students participate regularly in at least one extracurricular activity, with sports and performing arts groups ranking the top two most common ones. Furthermore, an interesting metric they reported[^4] is that of the seniors that expected to earn a bachelor’s degree or higher, 68% of them were active participants in at least one extracurricular activity, and similarly, three times as many participants reported a GPA of 3.0 or above as non-participants. This perhaps shows that active participation in extracurriculars, though certainly time consuming, may have a direct impact on a student’s happiness, well-being, and consequently, academic excellence. Though these statistics are from almost 10 years ago, they could only have become even more convincing now of the fact that extracurricular activities are a huge portion of American high school students’ lives.

It is worth noting that in studies like this, it is unfair to immediately draw a conclusion between participation in extracurricular activities and academic performance, due to the **third variable effect**; since **correlation does not imply causation**. Thus it is yet unclear whether extracurriculars have an unambiguously direct impact on students’ academic performance.

Another study from the Undergraduate Research Committee[^5] concluded from its investigation of this correlation:

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“Parents have a large role in the academic development of their children, and one way of fostering strong academic performance is by encouraging their young children to become involved in some of the activities which promote academic performance. This could influence their activity choices later on in life and may set the foundation for a life of academic success and progress.”

Therefore drawing back to our research question, we feel that it is certainly beneficial to students to actively participate in extracurricular activities, in order to foster a sense of all-roundedness and balance. It appears that this is something high schools in the U.S. do very well, and Chinese high schools somewhat less so. Certainly there are data points that disagree with this, such as larger schools in Beijing or Shanghai that do actually align with this philosophy, and encourage extracurriculars, despite the Gaokao. On the other end of the spectrum, there are also American schools that have no control over students’ participation, leading to them enrolling in more activities than they can handle, thus negatively affecting their academic performance. In general however, this seems to be the right path to take, as long as it is taken in moderation.

Education System

After examining the surface level of the different education systems in terms of student life, we now proceed to explore the underlying administrative aspects. Here we will focus on three important topics: admissions and enrollment, curriculum, and standardization policies.

Admissions and Enrollment

According to the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China[6], Chinese citizens are only required to receive nine years of education, meaning that high school education in China is optional. Even though the gross enrollment rate of high schools is 82.5% as of the end of 2011[7], the uneven distribution of high school education resources[8] still implies intense competition. As such, an independent standardized high school entrance examination system similar to the Gaokao is adopted by most provinces and regions. Students in most parts of China are tested on the core subjects of Literature, Mathematics, English, Physics, Chemistry and Physical Education. Other commonly tested subjects include Biology, History, Politics and Geography. Normally the test takes place around April and May once a year, spanning two to three days[9]. Students indicate their preference for schools beforehand, and all public high schools admit most students based on the standardized test scores, with the exception of student athletes, musicians, etc.

High school admissions in the U.S. is much more diverse. Due to the different legislations in different states, some students are required to finish their high school education while others are not[10]. We randomly selected 10 high schools from the top 100 public schools from the U.S. News public school rankings[11], as well as 10 schools that are ranked after 2000,
and examined their admission methods (see Appendix A). The samples from the top 100 schools mostly base their admissions on a regional standardized test, GPA and teacher recommendations; some even required the students to take a special exam offered at the school. The samples from the unranked schools either indicated that enrollment is solely based on residency and lottery, or did not even indicate any enrollment information at all. A similar survey of admissions methods of top-ranked private schools in the U.S. also showed that common evaluation standards include on-campus interviews, standardized tests (ISEE), GPA, teacher recommendations and involvement in extracurricular activities.

In order to compare these admissions systems, we must first look at why high schools need a competitive enrollment system rather than one completely based on residency and randomness. We believe this is because education resources such as curriculum intensity, teacher quality, facilities, etc., are unevenly distributed. The author of Essays on World Education: The Crisis of Supply and Demand[12] (Bereday, 52) claims in the section Elitist Systems:

“No known system inherently or automatically assures equality of educational opportunity throughout a nation. Conversely, many systems that have stood for years as models for successful education...have been restrictive in the extreme...they were starkly elitist in nature.

To further support our claim, we observe that the schools which have highly competitive admissions tend to advertise the strongest curriculum they have to offer, as well as the ratio of graduates that move on to prestigious universities (see Appendix A). For example, the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology (ranked #4 in the U.S.News public schools ranking, abbreviated hereafter as TJHSST) publicly advertises the college acceptance rate of its graduating class[13] into the top 50 universities in the U.S. as being much higher than that of students from across the U.S.. Similar data can be found about arguably the most prestigious high school in Beijing, the High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China (hereafter abbreviated as HSARU). In the year 2013, 20 out of the 35 top-scoring students in Beijing’s Gaokao are from HSARU[14]. This data indicates that education resources might be highly unbalanced, as we will further discuss in a later section on government policies.

Under such imbalance of education resources, schools need a way to differentiate the likely-to-be-successful students from the large pool of applicants. The particular choices of admissions methods made by China and the U.S. are largely influenced by historical and cultural factors. However, we believe that admissions criteria is an important indication of what these high schools perceive to be the type of student that would succeed. We can see a strong pattern that Chinese high schools value students who understand the knowledge well enough to perform well under highly stressful situations, whereas schools in the U.S. tend to value consistency in performance and attitude towards their learning over the years, over quantitative results from tests.
Curriculum

The curriculum of a high school education is arguably its most important factor. In this section, we examine the respective curricula offered by Chinese and U.S. high schools.

As the high school curriculum is much more intense than that of middle school, a student in both China and the U.S. is allowed to choose academic tracks that is most suitable to their interests and talents. In China, high school students are allowed to select either the Science track or the Humanities track in their second year. Apart from the common subjects of Literature, Mathematics, and English, students in the Science track also take classes in Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, whereas students in the Humanities track can elect History, Geography, and Politics. Students are tested on the respective subjects in their track[15] during the gaokao. In the U.S., all high school students have mandatory courses in the area of Sciences, Mathematics, English, Social Sciences and Physical Education. Apart from fulfilling the requirement, students are free to choose electives from a variety of subjects including computers, Foreign Languages, Performing Arts and Advanced Placement courses[16].

It is very easy to see that students in the U.S. have much more flexibility than those in China. U.S. students are encouraged to pursue their own interest areas and select course difficulty levels based on their learning abilities, whereas the only choice Chinese students get to make is between the Science and Humanities tracks, after which the courses and difficulty levels are controlled by schools rather than individuals. While the U.S. education model may seem to be more advantageous on the surface because of the freedom it offers, it could be argued that such a system might lessen the standard on high school education and allow for underachievers. From an interview with a current Computer Science undergraduate at Carnegie Mellon University who attended a U.S. public school in Washington, we gathered some objections:

“U.S. public high schools are absolutely terrible. In my school, it was basically just a few serious students struggling hard to get the most out of their education, lost in the majority of people who didn’t care at all and who were going nowhere.”

Because of the relaxed standard, it could be argued that some U.S. students have the excuse to not try hard enough to achieve their full potential. Of course, a unified standard for all students with different backgrounds, different interests and different abilities, such as the one enforced by the Chinese education system, has very clear disadvantages, which we detail in the “Education Philosophy” section.

Standardization Policies

Education standardization is an ongoing effort to promote education equality, giving equal education opportunities for students coming from poorer areas or from underrepresented minorities. In 1965, the U.S. passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that “emphasizes equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability”[17].
The act authorizes federal funding for schools, especially those with high numbers or high percentages of poor children[^18], and was reauthorized in 2002 under the new title *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). This act enforced state-based standardized testing to improve education quality, regulate teacher qualification, and encourage parental involvement[^19]. However, from the common family’s point of view, the debate of whether to pay more for a private school in order to gain access to better education resources powers on.

In China, education standardization has also been an effort since Deng Xiaoping’s Education Modernization Reform. In May 1985, the Central CCP government passed an Education System Reform Act, which describes a system that broadly covers the entire China, promising funding for poor areas and special education for students with disabilities[^20]. The nationwide *Gaokao* also forces high schools in different areas to achieve the same academic standard. In addition, standardized textbooks published by the People’s Education Press started being widely used in most parts of China[^21]. However, contrary to common belief, government sponsored education elitism in China still exists. In the 1950s, the Ministry of Education selected a few schools, called the *Elite High Schools* (重点高中), to receive extra resources and funding from the government. Even though the *Elite High Schools* no longer exist due to concerns about education inequality, alternative names were given for this group, such as *Experimental High Schools Programs* (实验试点)^[22] and *Exemplar High Schools* (示范校)^[23]. In our interview with Jiacheng Ye, another Computer Science undergraduate at Carnegie Mellon University who attended the No. 2 High School Attached to East China Normal University (华东师大二附) in Shanghai, China, he talked about the special funding his school received:

“The high school program I went to took up much more resources than average. In fact, the high school received more than $3 million U.S. Ds funding directly from Ministry of Education, China merely for the infrastructure of this program (Experimental Scientific Creativity Program), with only around 40 students every year in Shanghai.”

Both the U.S. and China have, on the one hand, ongoing efforts to standardize education to provide equal opportunities, and on the other hand, education elitism efforts to provide exceptional education for select people. We will explore the questions of, which effort would benefit the people from each country, or whether these efforts are contradictory, in the “Ideal Education” section.

**Education Philosophy**

The education philosophy of an education system highly influences its establishment and development. After examining the differences between the education systems of the U.S. and China, we now explore the root causes for these differences.
Textbook-centric versus holistic learning

A common stereotype of Chinese education is that it is very textbook-centric. To confirm this, we interviewed 4 Computer Science students in Carnegie Mellon University who attended high school in China (see Appendix B for the interview logs). The students are from Shanghai, Hangzhou (Zhejiang), Jinan (Shandong) and Guiyang (Guizhou), and all went to top-tier schools in their respective areas. When posed with the following question:

“Do you think this statement is accurate? ‘Chinese schools focus too much on books, and not so much on skills outside books.’”

All four interviewees answered “Yes”. Three of them indicated that this is especially true for the high school they went to, whereas one person (Jiacheng Ye from Shanghai) indicated that his school is an exception (see quote in the previous section). Some of them explained that they did not have the chance to explore subjects like computer science outside of the Gaokao, and others indicated that most subjects were taught in a dry and overly theoretical way.

Indeed, “high scores, poor abilities” (高分低能) has been a saying among many educators in China who were unsatisfied with the fact that schools focus too much on books and tests. In response to the apparent problems, in 2001, the Ministry of Education published the Basic Education Curriculum Reform Program, which provides guidelines to introduce Su Zhi (quality, or holistic) education in China[24]. The program criticized passive learning, rote learning and textbook-centric teaching, and instead emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, social works, and social awareness. These new points of emphasis incorporate very well what holistic learning should encompass, leading to clear observations of improvements after the program was published. In Beijing No. 8 High School (where the author Yuyang Guo received her education), students are explicitly encouraged to ask questions and discuss during class, and even challenge the material taught by the teacher or written in the textbook. A relatively large amount of class time for Humanities subjects were dedicated to student presentations, and a new course that teaches students how to build circuit boards and design their own gadgets was introduced for students in their second year. One free elective per semester (except for the final year) was added to the students’ schedules, where they could choose from more than a hundred subjects to learn about or projects to work on. However, since this is a rather prestigious and open-minded high school in one of the biggest cities in China, it is certainly not representative of the result of reformation in Chinese high schools in general. As can be seen from the interview results, even the best schools in specific regions still tend to set Gaokao and test-taking skills as their highest priorities, consequently ignoring some of these requirements for change.

U.S. high schools do a much better job when it comes to holistic learning. We also interviewed a current Electrical and Computer Engineering student at Carnegie Mellon University who went to high school in Shenzhen, China, but also did one year of exchange in a U.S. public high school in Brattleboro, Vermont. He explained to us the difference in the styles
of learning:

“In Brattleboro, doing exercises together in class is very common. Since the class size is small, everyone has the opportunity to practice in class and get feedback from the teacher. Whereas in China, since there are about 40 students in class, there is no time to practice in class what we learned. It turned out to be a more passive style of learning.”

He also explained how, because of the Gaokao, teachers in China have the pressure to go over a lot of material in very limited time, and thus don’t have the time to allow for student participation. Huajun Zhang also noted that “exam-oriented education dominates practice in most schools even though it is criticized for ignoring students’ diversity and restricting students’ creativity.” [25], Such dominance comes from the chain reaction where unequal urban rural development causes intense job competitions, job markets highly value university names, yet university admissions remain solely based on exam scores. Therefore, high schools must focus on helping students to get a good score. To examine how we might change the status quo, we must look at what each education system defines to be a ‘good’ student, and whether that definition conforms to the education philosophy of holistic learning.

What is a good student?

Here we pose the interesting question: does each education system have a stereotypical ‘good’ student? In the Chinese education system, the answer is unambiguously ‘yes’. For more than forty years, Chinese schools have had a standard award for “Student of Merit” (三好学生, literally translated to “three-goods student”). The three good qualities are: good morals, good academics and good health. This is a very well-defined standard within the Chinese education system, and gives teachers and schools the ability to very quickly and precisely identify who the ‘good’ or ‘best’ students are. Of course, this phenomenon has its pros and cons; the pros being that academic recognitions are very easily awarded, while the cons being that each student has a metaphorical label attached to them.

The U.S. education system strongly believes against labeling students by their academic results, and instead rewards effort, even in the face of failure. Progress is highly respected in U.S. high schools, even if it lacks in deliverables, as long as there is promise that results will eventually surface. However because of this, it is much more challenging for schools to be able to identify which students are ‘good’. Of course, they also have test scores with which to grade students by, but these numbers carry much lower weight in the presence of other qualitative factors. It is very interesting to see the stark difference between how these two education systems define a ‘good’ student, leading to the possible creation of students that adhere to these standards.
Education Outcome

One of the main metrics that parents care most about when it comes to their children’s education, is results, no matter whether they are a Western family or a Chinese family. The term ‘academic performance’ is more often than not measured quantitatively: Grade Point Averages, test percentages, attendance, project grades, oral presentation scores, etc. It can also be measured qualitatively: are they better able to speak publicly and more fluently about their views on a subject matter? Do they better express their opinions when it comes to an argumentative situation? Are they good citizens of their class, their family, and their country? These are all outcomes that parents hope for their children to get out of an education system, starting from the early years, all the way up to high school and further studies.

China’s education system is most well-known for its ability to maintain high quantitative figures across the board, both on the axis of number of students, and on the axis of the various subjects they take. The 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a leading survey of education organized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), showed[26] that Shanghai’s teens come at the top of world, second to none. The two-hour standardized exam focused on the subject area of Mathematics in 2012, and was taken by 2 million 15-year-olds from 65 countries around the world, representing 80% of the global economy. Though only represented by Shanghai (in first place) and Hong Kong (in fourth place), it is clear that Chinese students are highly consistent when it comes to reproducing test results in the Sciences. In contrast, the U.S. ranked 36th, performing below the OECD average in Mathematics, Reading, and Science. Of course, these numbers alone cannot fairly and accurately represent the quality of a nation’s education system, because these numbers do not tell the complete story. First of all, a weakness of this test is that China only submitted scores from within Shanghai, whereas all other participating countries, the U.S. included, submitted scores nationwide. It is undoubtedly true that Shanghai’s test results cannot fairly represent those of the entire country, either in the positive of the negative direction. Secondly, as mentioned in previous sections, correlation does not imply causality, and so this correlation must be kept in mind. Thirdly, these are just quantitative results: what about the qualitative factors?

A study conducted by Yuan Xianwei of Illinois State University[27] aimed to determine in terms of mathematical question-posing, are students in Chinese high schools or American high schools more mathematically creative? He did this by selecting 3 groups of students from the U.S., Shanghai, and Jiaozhou, with similar and relatively strong math background, and asked them to pose questions given some mathematical setup (such as when given a figure). He then removed trivial and poor questions from the dataset and counted the number of flexible and original questions output by each group. The following chart plots these results, where the vertical axis measures the number of ‘good’ questions obtained.
While the students in Shanghai did slightly worse than those in the U.S., the group in Jiaozhou by far outperformed the most mathematically creative questions. When asked to detail their thought process for coming up with these questions, a student in the U.S. explained how he let the ideas come naturally to him:

“Some of the ideas came and I kind of took them and sat back for a second just stared up the space and looked down again and then something else appeared.”

A student from Jiaozhou told Yuan that she started off from the basis of a mathematical problem, then worked her way up.

“It’s like, when I saw the circle, I thought of radius, area, circumference, etc. Then when I saw the triangle, I immediately thought of area, perimeter, altitude, etc. Then I just tried to connect all of them to make the problems harder.”

This very interestingly shows the difference in the methodologies that American and Chinese students approach these problem-solving situations, arguably from both polarizing ends: top-down and bottom-up. Here it can be said that the thought processes of the students reflect the core teaching philosophies that they received very well. Perhaps what dictates the success of an education system is not quantitative figures or qualitative results, but rather the adherence of the students to the philosophy and vision set out for them from the start of their learning careers, in which case both the U.S. and China seem to deliver equally well.
The “Ideal” Education System

So far in this paper, we’ve discussed what the good aspects of both the education systems in the U.S. and in China are, and how they help a middle school student grow into adolescence and into adulthood, both in terms of academic maturity and breadth. We’ve also laid out each system’s weaknesses: what do the high schools in both countries do or not do that may repress or hinder the academic growth of these young minds? Unsurprisingly, both the U.S. and China have their own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to educating these high school students.

Standardization

In China, the focus on standardized tests and standardized class material allows the Chinese Ministry of Education to better control the overall teaching quality throughout the nation, so as to reduce the statistical variance between schools. In the U.S., although traditionally the administration of a school is the primary organization responsible for regulating its own curriculum, as we’ve previously alluded to, recent efforts have been made to move the U.S. in the direction of standardized testing too. Thus in this aspect, it is clear that the “ideal” education system should also adopt similar standardization efforts, in order to properly regulate the quality of teaching and of the material covered.

Allocation of time

In terms of focus, comparing the various first-hand views of the Gaokao and its ability to consume a Chinese high school student’s life, to the benefits of devoting time and immersing oneself into extracurricular activities, leads us to believe that the life of a student of the “ideal” education system should not be focused on achieving the best possible scores for a single monolithic examination. As previously discussed, the returns of growing a high school student breadth-wise by having them participate in diverse activities far outweigh those spent rote-learning mathematical theorems. Of course, exams are still required, but we feel that taking the American stance on testing in moderation and balance yields the greatest benefits for students.

Balance of Creativity and Concrete Knowledge

Shifting focus to education philosophy, we set out to answer the very difficult question: which country’s overarching philosophy achieves the best results? We found no concrete answer, as expected. However, the general pattern that we observed is that out of all the values that teachers can teach to their students, creativity seems to be the one that is the most emphasized. American high schools often state their mission in the lines of “... a combination of fundamental knowledge, individual creativity and curiosity”[13]. Although U.S. high schools’ focus on developing creativity is well-known, the study we referred to in the “Education Outcome” section brings to light a new, interesting perspective: that Chinese students are on
average more mathematically creative than their American counterparts. Why is this the case? Our explanation here is that, in order to achieve true creativity, there must be a balance between ‘concrete knowledge’ and ‘thinking out of the box’. This kind of balance was proposed two thousand years ago by the well-acclaimed Chinese pedagogist Confucius, who said, “Learning without thought is labor lost, thought without learning is perilous” (学而不思则罔，死而不学则殆). Furthermore, Terence Tao, the famous mathematician and 2006 Field Medalist, also has some similar ideas about creativity and problem solving in Mathematics [28]:

“When I was a kid, I had a romanticized notion of mathematics, that hard problems were solved in ‘Eureka’ moments of inspiration. [But] with me, it’s always, let’s try this. That gets me part of the way…you work on it long enough and you happen to make progress towards a hard problem...”

The thinking process of the Chinese students in the previous study resembles Tao’s, indicating that laying a solid foundation of concrete knowledge is just as important, if not even more so, than inspiring creativity. Thus, we believe that an “ideal” education system is definitely not one that just focuses on memorization or exam taking, because the advancement of knowledge of humankind relies on original thinking. However, it is also not one that solely prioritizes creativity and not the knowledge itself, which has the risk of degenerating a system that falsely rewards ‘reinventing the wheel’. An ideal education system should be able to balance concrete knowledge and creative thinking well.

**Individuality**

Recognizing individuality, we believe, is also an important part of education. People are born with different abilities and gifts, therefore it is definitely not ideal if an education system evaluates different students using the same standard. In this aspect, the U.S. does much better than China. Many reports have shown that Chinese students tend to be less confident, and even feel that lose their own identity under the evaluation system [29]. The U.S. education system, on the other hand, respects individual students and help each student build their confidence regardless of their achievement. Some Chinese educators have recognized this huge disadvantage and decided to experiment with complimenting students who wouldn’t be recognized as ‘good student’ in the traditional evaluation system. Such method made a very positive impact on the students involved. Parents and teachers reported that these students gained more confidence and were more positive towards school studies after being recognized [30]. Therefore, we also believe that an ideal education system should recognize individuality.

**Learning to learn**

Lastly, also in the realm of education philosophy, is the dichotomy between the importance of gaining knowledge versus the importance of developing learning skills. A
common saying heard around classrooms in the U.S. is “learning how to learn”, meaning improving one’s understanding of how knowledge is acquired, and developing a higher-order ability to better and more quickly learn new concepts in the future. Again, this is a common value core to the missions of many American high schools, as they subscribe strongly to this belief that the knowledge itself is oftentimes less important than the learning of the knowledge. This is considerably less so in Chinese schools, since the heavy emphasis on the Sciences leads to a potentially skewed view that content is paramount; a textbook-centric philosophy, as mentioned in previous sections. In this respect, we believe that in the ideal situation, “learning to learn” should be a standalone subject matter by itself, due to its presence in every other area of study. This class would focus on honing skills such as problem solving, pattern recognition, planning, concentration, adapting to different circumstances, etc., and would approach teaching these skills through application. Only through application can students truly learn how these skills can be applied in real life (just as taking a Physical Education class while behind a desk would not be very effective). From the analysis in this paper about how students learn best, we strongly believe that the “ideal” education system should incorporate ideas such as this.

Exploring Other Education Systems

So far in this paper, we have only touched on education systems in the U.S. and in China. It is also interesting however to capture very briefly in this concluding section what education is like in other countries. Sweden is world-renown for its educational standards, where “efforts to promote equality have been central”[31] to their education policies, as stated in the book The Market Comes to Education in Sweden by Anders Bjorklund, et al. Schooling is compulsory for all children between the ages of 7 and 16, and has a firmly established national test system that echoes the goals of the Chinese Gaokao. Bjorklund, et al. did a study on the predictive power of the Swedish National Tests:

“Test scores and grades are particularly strong predictors of educational attainment, but they also predict earnings even conditional on education attainment... This indicates that the tests have additional predictive information that is not contained in grades.”

With these tests in mind, it seems that Swedish students are also high-achievers, ranking “near the top of all upper-secondary students in both mathematics and science scores” in the 1995 TIMSS (Third International Mathematics and Science Study). Also interesting to note is that Sweden had the lowest between-school variance of all the OECD countries, as compared to the U.S., which had a long tail of poor performers. This could perhaps very well reflect the Swedish effort to standardize and equalize education throughout the nation.

Conclusion

Education is one of man’s proudest achievements, and one of man’s greatest proofs of self-advancement. As technology continues to make its rapid advancement, an inevitable effect on
almost every aspect in our life is globalization; of which education is certainly not resistant. While different countries may have started out with their own black-box ideologies of what constitutes education, what makes a ‘good’ student, what knowledge is important, and how academic excellence should be recognized, these days, we can very clearly observe the convergence of the different education systems. Be it high schools in the U.S., China, Sweden, or any other country in the world, each with its own pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses, praises and criticisms, the most important thing that any parent should keep in mind when asked the question “should you send your kid to high school in the U.S. or in China?” is this: the family unit should be the deciding factor. Wherever a child of a family is educated, their family’s presence to make up for missteps in the education system, or to reward their effort where reward is due, has the utmost impact on their growth, both academically and socially.

Students Advisor’s Comments

Zhongxin Sun

Yuyang and Issac’s paper is their joint research project for the class 82-333-Introduction to Chinese Language and Culture: Modern Chinese Culture (Spring 2014).

Both Yuyang and Issac major in computer science at Carnegie Mellon University, and both of them are very interested in Chinese Studies. For the final research paper, they are free to work indendently or work as a team.

As part of the course design, the research project for this course is subdivided into four steps stimulating a real-life progression of doing research. The first step is read one book and write a book review, as a first step towards finding a research project. According to the syllabus, the book review should introduce students to a topic of Chinese culture in greater depth and, more importantly, train students how to read academic literature and write from critical perspectives. Students are free to pick the topics/books they are interested in by themselves. For Yuyang and Issac, they picked a book on Chinese education.

The second step is to narrow down their research and write a research proposal based on the book review and any additional research they have done. This is the very important step for undergraduate students because many of them tend to have very broad topic to start. I often tell students a good research should be narrowed down in order to be meaningful and manageable. One way to narrow down the topic is to design the research project to address one specific question or problem.

Instead of analyzing the very broad topic on “the strength of limits of Chinese education”, Yuyang and Issac’s research questions is well-defined as “Should you send your kid to high school in the U.S. or in China? A comparison of the high school education systems of the United States and China.”

The third step is in class presentation which is base on their book review, their research proposal and any further research students have done. Students’ presentatons are followed by a few minutes “question and answer” session in which the other students, and I will participate. After receiving feedback or questions, the final deliverable is the final research paper writing—the fourth step.

For the paper writing, we strongly encourage students to use both primary sources and
secondary sources. Yuyang and Isaac conducted interviews by themselves in the campus when conducting interviews are encouraged in this class for students to understand China.

This paper designed a good research question and the question was expressed well in the paper. The paper provide sound arguments to answer the research questions based on various evidence and expressed in the structure of the paper. Counter-arguments are discussed and refuted. They conducted interviews by themselves and collected first-hand data and second-hand data to support their arguments on Chinese education.

There are still some weakness in this paper, for example, the student researchers should be sensitive to the ways in which and respondents’ and interviewer’s attributes affect data collection. Besides, protecting your research subjects is guarding their privacy even though the research topic may not be too sensitive. It is important to make sure the identity of the respondents will not be disclosed to anyone. I would strongly suggest the authors keep the respondents’ identities hidden by using fictional names or trying to disguise other identifying information.

In conclusion, this is one of the best undergraduate students papers from the class of “Modern Chinese Culture” (Spring 2014) and I am glad to recommend this paper to your journal.
References


Appendix A: Schools Used for Admission Survey

Some Top-100 U.S. Public High Schools

- Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology
  - 6560 BRADDOCK RD ALEXANDRIA, VA 22312
  - [http://www.tjhsst.edu/abouttj/admission/index.html](http://www.tjhsst.edu/abouttj/admission/index.html)
  - GPA, school administered test, a comprehensive, holistic evaluation
  - test, essay, teacher recommendation verbal score

- Lake Washington School District
  - 11133 N.E. 65th St., Kirkland, WA 98033
  - International Community School
  - lottery, long wait list

- Whitney High School
  - 16800 SHOEMAKER AVE CERRITOS, CA 90703
  - Standardized test, writing test, GPA at school

- The High School of American Studies at Lehman College
  - 2925 GOULDEN AVE BRONX, NY 10468
  - Standardized written test (SHSAT)

- Staten Island Technical High School
  - 485 CLAWSON ST STATEN ISLAND, NY 10306
  - standardized written test (SHSAT)

- Hume-Fogg Academic High School
  - 700 BROADWAY NASHVILLE, TN 37203
  - GPA and standardized test (TCAP)
  - [http://www.humefogghs.mnps.org/Page1406.aspx](http://www.humefogghs.mnps.org/Page1406.aspx)

- KIPP Austin Col
  - 8509 FM 969 BLDG 513 AU.S.TIN, TX 78724
  - Admissions information not found

- City Honors School at Fosdick-Masten Park
  - 186 EAST NORTH ST BUFFALO, NY 14204
  - [http://www.cityhonors.org/page/admissions--process/](http://www.cityhonors.org/page/admissions--process/)
  - teacher recommendation, GPA

- MAST Academy
  - 3979 RICKENBACKER CAU.S.EWAY KEY BISCAYNE, FL 33149
  - GPA, effort indicators, attendance, teacher recommendation

- Langley High School
  - 6520 GEORGETOWN PK MCLEAN, VA 22101
  - Admissions information not found
Other U.S. Public High Schools

- Harmony School of Advancement
  - Houston, TX
  - Residency and lottery
  - [http://hsadvancement.org/?midframe=/Admission/how%20to%20enroll%20HSAA.htm](http://hsadvancement.org/?midframe=/Admission/how%20to%20enroll%20HSAA.htm)
- MOTT Hall high school
  - Manhattan, NY
  - [http://schools.nyc.gov/SchoolPortals/05/M304/EducationalSupport/Admissions/HighSchoolAdmissions.htm](http://schools.nyc.gov/SchoolPortals/05/M304/EducationalSupport/Admissions/HighSchoolAdmissions.htm)
- Shaw High School
  - 214 DEAN BLVD SHAW, MS 38773
- South Pittsburg High School
  - 717 ELM SOUTH PITTSBURG, TN 37380
- Southeastern Sr. High School
  - 195 EAST JAMESTOWN ST SOUTH CHARLESTON, OH 45368
- Mount Ayr High School
  - 1001 EAST COLUMBUS, S. ST MOUNT AYR, IA 50854
- North Baltimore High School
  - 124 SOUTH 2ND ST NORTH BALTIMORE, OH 45872
- Triton Jr-Sr High Sch
  - 300 TRITON DR BOURBON, IN 46504
- Vassar Senior High School
  - 220 ATHLETIC ST VASSAR, MI 48768
- Waitsburg High School
  - 420 COPPEI AVE WAITSBURG, WA 99361

Some U.S. Private High Schools

- [http://www.andover.edu/Admission/HowToApply/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.andover.edu/Admission/HowToApply/Pages/default.aspx)
- [http://www.roxburyleatin.org/admission/how--to--apply/index.aspx](http://www.roxburyleatin.org/admission/how--to--apply/index.aspx)
Appendix B: Interviews with Carnegie Mellon Undergraduates

Interview Questions:
Here are the interview questions we asked to each student who attended Chinese high school:

1. What type of school did you go to in China?

2. Are you in general satisfied with the education you received?

3. How heavy was the work load? (compared to college workload in CMU?)

4. Do you think this statement is accurate? “Chinese schools (not the school you went to, but in general) focus too much on books, not so much on skills outside books.” (what about for the school you went to?)

5. What is your impression of U.S. high schools? If you had the choice, would you have gone to an U.S. high school or a Chinese High School?

Interview Answers:
Below are the answers we collected from four students who are all currently studying in Carnegie Mellon University, majoring in Computer Science:

J. YE, Shanghai

1. I went to a public school. (华东师范大学第二附属中学，if want to more details you can grab them from Wikipedia, use Chinese Wiki since it has more details) I was in 科技创新实验班 of Class 2013. 科技创新班 is an experimental education program in several high schools in Shanghai. (See http://baike.baidu.com/view/3475068.htm# for what it is)

2. Yes, I am satisfied.

3. It was not that bad. I would say only half of the work amount (or even 1/3) compared to CMU. For Grade 10 and 11, we typically have no class after 3:40 p.m. and we have in average 2-3 hour work every day (and it has been a trend for students not to hand in their hw).

4. I would say this statement might be true for some of the high schools which always press their students to work all day. I heard there are high schools in China that push their students to work from 5:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. (probably not in Shanghai).

However, for the high school education I got, it is definitely false. For the first two years in my high school (especially in 科技创新实验班), students are very encouraged to explore their interests (in most of the case, do some small research in the field one feels interested in) and have plenty of time to pursue things they want. With the
appropriate amount of work we get every day as described above, students in 科技创新班 got chances to have an afternoon off every week for their interested area and do their own research. They finally bring their work to 英特尔青少年科技创新大赛 (the U.S. counterpart is ISEF).

From this long process of going to 创新大赛 for about 3-6 months, students refined their skills for information searching, executive power, help-asking, self-learning, writing and presentation.

So I will not agree with this statement.

5. My impression about U.S. high school is that a lot of students feel too reluctant to school. Sometimes I get an impression from them that schools are just things to ‘应付’. I get an impression that they think school work has nothing to do with cool things.

6. However, this may not be the case for the high school education I got. Here, coursework is not the priority for the first two years and there are myriad opportunities and contests for students to pursue their aspirations and develop their interests.

In other words, If I get the chance to choose again, I would say I never regret my choice 4 years ago, even if I got the chance to study in a U.S. High School, considering the quality of education.

However, please note that this environment is definitely not the general case for an average high school in China. The high school program I went to took up much more resources than average. In fact, the high school received more than $3 million U.S.Ds funding directly from Ministry of Education, China merely for the infrastructure of this program (with only around 40 students every year in Shanghai).

K. MAO, Hangzhou

1. Hangzhou Foreign Language High School (we just have more language classes than other normal high schools but have same classes otherwise)

2. It's okay. Could be more enlightening and creative

3. Similar to CMU (to some extent less)

4. I agree. Like it's too much theory and not enough practical skills or practice. Like in computer science classes in my high school, they just didn't know how to teach students fun of programming at all…. But my high school offers a lot of opportunities for extra curriculum. That part is good.
5. U.S. high school...um... quite polarized. Top students receive pretty good education but weak students learned nothing from school. If given one more chance, um I'm actually not sure...

**Q. JIA, Jinan**

1. Just a normal high school. They call it experimental high school but there really isn't much difference. Not an international school. (authors note: Shandong Experimental High School)

2. Well. In general, yes. Given the fact that it was the best school I could go to. But on the other hand, I do feel like I didn't get the chance of exploring different fields much, like, computer science haha

3. It was like about 70% of the workload I have now.

4. Yes. And in particular my school. This is part of what I said for question 2.

5. Hmmm. I don't know much about U.S. high schools, actually. So I can't really say much about which one is better... sorry if this is not particularly helpful

**A. WU, Guiyang**

1. Normal high school that’s for Chinese universities. (author’s note:)

2. Yes

3. About the same as CMU. On weekdays we have 6 hours of class time and 2-3 hours of homework time every day. Weekend schedule varies depending on whether one “bu ke” or not.

4. I agree. I think most Asian (Japan, China, maybe Korea) high schools education are aimed toward their competitive college entrance exam. Thus most of them focus on books and exam skills instead of skills outside books. My high school is the same.

5. U.S. high schools? I think students play every day! :D. Not sure how they teach students about “skills outside books”, but I think the development of those skills depend on the support from parents a lot.

Well I will still choose to go to Chinese High School because I learnt a lot there, and had a memorable experience.
Special Interview with Jiaxin Yu, Shenzhen

Because J. YU went to high school in China, and did one year of exchange program in a U.S. public high school. We asked him a different set of questions:

Q: What type of Chinese High school did you go to, and roughly when? What type of U.S. High school did you do your exchange program in, and roughly when?

A: I went to a public high school in Shenzhen, China from September 2008 to June 2010. I went to a U.S. public high school as an exchange student in Brattleboro, Vermont from September 2010 to June 2011.

Q: What do you think is the biggest difference between the two schools?

A: There are many differences between these schools. I would say there are two biggest differences. a) Students in Vermont are not as focused on academics as students in China. I would say about 20%-30% students in the Brattleboro school don't go to colleges. b) The teaching style in Brattleboro is much different from the one in China. In Brattleboro, doing exercises together in class is very common. Since the class size is small, everyone has the opportunity to practice in class and get feedback from the teacher. Whereas in China, since there are about 40 students in class, there is no time to practice in class what we learned. It turned out to be a more passive style of learning.

Q: Do you think there is a difference between the two in terms of educational goal and ideology? If so, what? if not, what is the common goal/ideology?

A: I think their goals are slightly different. In the U.S. (at least in the school that I stayed at in Brattleboro), there is no pressure to go over many materials in a semester.

Coupled with the fact that their class size is about a third of what's in China, I think it allowed them to have more active participation and active learning during class.

Q: Assuming that you are going to have three kids, would you send them to U.S. or Chinese High Schools? Why? (you can send different kid to different schools, and ignore factors like language/culture or preparedness)

A: There are many many many factors that would influence my decision to where I would send my kids to school. Academic-wise I don't really have a preference. I am confident in providing additional guidance that either school system lacks. For example, if they go to a Chinese high school, I wouldn't worry about the learning aspect of school, and I would provide support for my kids to develop creativity or team work skills. But other factors like bullying/safety at school, other kids that my kids will interact with, etc. will also influence my decision.
Abstracts/摘要

1. Pragmatics in Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language

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Abstract

This paper reviews the current literature in teaching and learning pragmatics in Chinese as a second language. An exhaustive and inclusive literature search was conducted both electronically and manually to locate data-based studies on Chinese learners’ pragmatic competence and development published until 2015, yielding a total of 14 studies. These studies were grouped into three categories: (a) studies that documented pragmatic development in a study abroad context; (b) studies that examined heritage learner pragmatics; and (c) studies that tested the effectiveness of pragmatic-focused instruction. The paper discusses three generalizations emerged from the findings: (1) Chinese learners develop their pragmatic abilities while abroad, but initial ability, general proficiency, language contact, and social participation affect the development; (2) Heritage language learners have an advantage in pragmatics learning; and (3) Instruction helps pragmatics learning, but the effect varies across modalities of practice.

Keywords: Chinese, pragmatics, second language acquisition

摘要

本文综述已有关于汉语作为二语的语用教学和学习研究。通过电子和手动检索关于汉语学习者语用能力和发展的研究，本文收录了截止2015年以来的一共14篇文章。这些收录的文章被分为以下三类进行述评：（a）在目的语语境中的语用发展的研究；（b）华裔学习者的语用能力的研究；（c）针对语用教学效果的研究。基于收录文献的研究结果，本文归纳出了三个结论：（1）汉语学习在目的语语境中可以发展其语用能力，但其语用发展受到初始语用能力，汉语水平，语言接触和社会融入度的影响；（2）华裔学生在语用学习上有优势；（3）语用教学有助于语用学习，但教学效果因练习的方式不同而不同。

关键词：汉语，语用学，第二语言习得
2. It does matter with whom you chat: Chinese Learners’ Perspectives on NS vs. NNS Chat Partners

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Abstract

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) often referred to as “chatting” can provide an ideal platform for language learners to engage in real-time, authentic interactions. Comparing learners’ online chatting with native speakers (NS) vs. non-native speakers (NNS) have been done in the previous studies. However, the research has not yet investigated learners’ attitudes and perceptions about chatting partners. There is also a scarcity of CMC research focusing on Asian languages. This study aimed to investigate Chinese learners’ attitudes towards their chat partners, both cognitively and affectively. Twenty four Chinese learners from the intermediate and advanced Chinese classes at a university participated in a series of CMC activities, text chatting in Chinese characters with NS and NNS. Online questionnaires and the chat transcripts were collected and analyzed. The results showed that Chinese learners preferred to chat with NS partners because they received increased input about language and increased cultural input from NS. The analysis of open-ended questions from the questionnaires and the comparison of instances of negotiation of meaning in the chat transcripts supported the findings. Pedagogical implications, limitations and references to future research directions are discussed.

Key words: Computer-mediated Communication, chat partner, learners’ attitude, negotiation of meaning, Chinese language learners

摘要

计算机辅助沟通（CMC）能为语言学习者提供实时、真实、理想的互动平台。在对比跟母语和非母语聊天对象的研究中鲜有讨论学习者对聊天对象的态度和看法。讨论亚洲语言的相关研究则更少。本研究旨在从认知和情感的角度调查中文学习者对CMC活动中聊天对象的态度。24名中高级、大学中文学习者参与了四次CMC聊天活动，与母语者和非母语者进行汉字文本聊天。对态度量表和聊天记录汉字量的分析结果表明，母语聊天对象能增加中文学习者语言和文化输入，中文学习者更愿意与母语者进行聊天。对问卷中的开放式问题和聊天记录中意义协商（negotiation of meaning）话轮的分析同样支持上述结论。同时对教学启示、研究局限和未来研究方向也进行了讨论。

关键词: 计算机辅助沟通, 聊天对象, 学习者态度, 中文学习者
3. A Concept-Based Instructional Design:

Introducing Chinese Color Terms and Their Metaphorical Meanings at the Elementary Level

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Abstract

Metaphor is an indispensable part of human life. Scholars have argued that not only do we use metaphors to talk about abstract concepts that are hard to explain in concrete terms, but how we perceive and interact with our cultural reality is also influenced by a conceptual structure that is fundamentally metaphorical. As a sub-category of conceptual metaphors, color metaphors play an important role in human life and daily communication. Understanding the metaphorical implications behind the color terms will not only help us understand the rationale behind of the choice and use of them, but also enable us to look into the conceptual structure of the language and culture in which these terms are rooted. The purpose of this instructional design is to investigate if classroom instruction inspired by the concept-based instructional approach could raise students’ conceptual awareness of the cultural implications behind certain Chinese color words and affect their metaphorical interpretation of certain Chinese color terms. Since few pedagogical reports have focused on the instruction of Chinese color terms as conceptual metaphors, this study will help us understand students’ learning process and provide useful pedagogical information and strategies for language teachers on this subject.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, Chinese color terms, Concept-based instruction, Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

摘要

比喻是人类生活中不可或缺的一部分。学者认为，比喻不仅是一种运用具体语言解释抽象事物的修辞方式，也是影响着我们思考和认识世界的一种重要思维模式。作为概念比喻的一种，颜色词在我们的生活和日常交流中起着重要的作用。理解颜色词背后所蕴含的喻意，不仅有助于我们理解人们选择及运用这些颜色比喻的原因，也可以促使我们深入探讨这些颜色比喻所展示的相应语言和文化的特性。本次教学设计的主要目的是探讨在汉语作为外语教学的环境下，能否通过课堂教学来提高学生对汉语中颜色比喻的意识，并加深其对这些颜色比喻的理解。由于前人研究较少涉及到颜色词在概念比喻层面上的教学，本次研究可以帮助我们理解学生学习汉语颜色比喻概念的过程，也可以为其他教师在此课题上的教学提供实用的信息和方法。

关键词：概念比喻，汉语颜色词，概念型教学，汉语作为外语教学
Studies in Chinese Learning and Teaching (SCLT) publishes pedagogical reports and research papers in the field of Chinese learning and teaching. It is especially interested in essays and studies that contribute to a better understanding of Chinese language, literature and culture education. The journal also publishes critical reviews of books and software that contribute to Chinese pedagogy and student work in their Chinese classes (e.g., essays and calligraphy). In addition, SCLT serves as a forum for Chinese learners, educators and program administrators to exchange thoughts on all aspects of Chinese education.

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