2009-08-01

Learning and Teaching Chinese Language and Culture in Dublin: Attitudes and Expectations

Yiling Liu
Dublin Institute of Technology

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Learning and Teaching Chinese Language and Culture in Dublin: Attitudes and Expectations

Yiling Liu

A thesis submitted to the Dublin Institute of Technology for award
of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)

Supervisor: Dr Henry Leperlier, Mr Noel Deeney, Dr Alma Conway

School of Languages, DIT
August 2009

Declaration

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of Masters of Philosophy (MPhil) is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another in any Institute.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the Institute's guidelines for ethics in research.

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ABSTRACT

In response to a world-wide tide of Chinese language learning, educational institutions in Ireland have begun, in the last five years, to put in place degree courses and an increasing number of classes for the teaching of Chinese. It is helpful to understand the attitudes and expectations of students and teachers concerning the learning and teaching of Chinese language and culture in an Irish teaching environment.

Language is part of a particular culture. The learning and acquisition of a target culture are as important as learning the language per se. In a non-target language environment, the learning and teaching of culture helps build comparisons and connections. A heightened understanding of culture is essential in furthering study, encouraging long-term learning and in resolving possible misunderstandings in language.

Chinese language and culture have deep roots and a long history. Successful language learning evolves in tandem with cultural understanding. The teaching of Chinese characters is a part of the teaching of culture, because the written language not only carries many cultural elements, but also shows the logic and philosophy of the language through its characters. Moreover, Chinese educational concepts have a strong influence on the learning and teaching of the language.

Questionnaires were devised and distributed to 130 students aged between 15 and 24. The purpose was to obtain fundamental information about the learning situation and to investigate students' expectations of Chinese language learning and their attitudes and reactions to it. The aim was also to evaluate the likelihood of continued engagement in a learning process. The inclusion of students from different educational levels and cultural backgrounds exhibits the diversity of reactions to learning Chinese. Non Irish-born respondents show more positive attitudes, seem keener about learning than Irish-born respondents including those from a Chinese family background.

As a counterpart to the questionnaire survey of students, qualitative interviews were conducted. Six Chinese-language teachers in Dublin were interviewed. They stressed the importance of maintaining and developing students' learning interests. They also sought to encourage an active and committed involvement on the part of their students in cooperating with their teachers' approaches. They believe it is important to develop positive attitudes towards learning the language and culture.

Pedagogical proposals originating from the author's own practice, especially at the beginner level, use Chinese culture to promote learning interests and long-term motivation. Further research is needed to fully develop the use of culture of TCFL pedagogy in a non-Chinese speaking environment.

A list of Abbreviations

FL, Foreign Language;

TCFL, Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language;

LCFL, Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter One Cultures and Languages

Chapter Two Chinese Culture and Chinese Language

Conclusion

BIBLIGRAPHY

APPENDICES

LIST OF DIAGRAMS AND TABLES

List of Diagrams

List of Tables

Introduction

Contexts

Chinese reforms and opening-up to the outside world from 1979 onwards, and accompanying social and economic developments have led to the Chinese language, already spoken as the native language of 20% of the world's people, being extensively learned and taught as a foreign language. It has been a popular subject of study around the world for over 20 years.

"In China, the Chinese language has been taught as a foreign language since the Han dynasty, (…) In history, we note that the development of Chinese language education has a close relationship with the spread of religions." (《從》 "Interaction" big5.china. Trans. Liu) And "from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, numerous Chinese textbooks and dictionaries were composed by Western missionaries and scholars and published in China. (…) Self-teaching and learning was common."(Xing, Teaching. 2006. p63, 64)

Economics, politics, trade and international affairs all have an influence on the learning of a foreign language. Since China opened again in 1979, it has been undergoing rapid and continuous change. China has become a focus of world attention. Her links with foreign countries have been growing constantly.

The social and economic development of China over the last twenty years has made the learning and teaching of Chinese as FL increasingly popular. Whereas previously those interested in learning Chinese were motivated largely by missionary or purely academic considerations, in more recent times, the demands associated with trade, scientific exchange and other contemporary concerns have become paramount. Among those of non-Chinese background there are more learners of Chinese than ever before, "more than 30 million people are currently studying Mandarin abroad" (Leavey, "Foreigners". news. bbc.). In China, almost every major university now offers Chinese language courses for foreigners. "In 2004, a record 110,844 students from 178 countries had enrolled at Chinese universities, according to the official Chinese News agency Xinhua. That was a 43% increase on 2003" (Leavey). Confucius Institutes are being set up around the world, "by April, 2009, 326 Confucius Institutes (branch institutes) had been set up, covering more than 81 countries and regions in the world" (Guóji Hànbàn, hanban.edu.cn, Trans. Liu).

 "According to a report from the Beijing Daily, following China's entry into the WTO many foreign students want to go to China to look for work, as is shown by Korean companies such as Samsung and Daewoo that search for personnel to work in their China trade businesses and even require 'Chinese TOEFL' scores. The Chinese TOEFL is another name for the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (Test of Chinese Language Ability) [Chinese Proficiency Test], or HSK, which was first offered by the mainland in 1990." (Taipei, "'Chinese Fever'", 2006)

Because of their cultural background, often not too dissimilar from the Chinese, and their geographical proximity, people from Southeast Asia form a majority of the learners of Chinese.

Outside China, Chinese language education for Mandarin Chinese learners with Chinese family backgrounds, has been available in some of those regions where many overseas Chinese have settled in North America and Europe; the extensive learning of Mandarin Chinese has been accelerating, not only among learners with Chinese family backgrounds in recent years. "Chinese fever" (Brooke, "Russia catches." New York Times.2004) has drawn much attention in both the Eastern and Western hemispheres.

In addition to this "Chinese [language] fever", we have also witnessed the advent of a culture craze, which appeared much earlier than the Chinese language fever. As the largest country in the world by population with 5,000 years of continuous history, China's language, culture, history, economics and politics have always attracted interest. When missionaries, notably Matteo Ricci, introduced Christianity to China, a structured study of China began to form in the 16th century. Sinology has been "a subject of discussion among researchers in the field of humanities and social sciences for centuries," (Xing, Teaching. 2006. p237) "In 1814, [the] French Institute set up the subject of Sinology and [a] tenured professorship to that end, pointing to the fact that Sinology ha[d] long been established as a subject of [scholarship]." ("China Prospers", english.peopledaily.com)

Sinology or the study of Chinese culture has been an important object of study for over 200 years. Many academic institutes have been set up in Europe and the United States. Along with the worldwide "Chinese fever" spreading in recent years, the

United States "has become the biggest and No.1 country going in for Sinological study known to the world." ("China Prospers", People's Daily, 2001)

However, the relationship between language and its culture is very important, "In the early 1900s, linguists who researched the structure of Amerindian languages (Boas, 1911) noted that relationships among thought, abstract notions, and language as a means of expressing thoughts and notions were indeed complex. Edward Sapir in the 1920s concluded that a language and the culture of its speakers cannot be analyzed in isolation. Language can be seen as a way to describe and represent human experience and understanding of the world (Sapir, [1921] 1961), and members of language communities share systems of beliefs and assumptions which underlie their construction of the world." (Hinkel, Culture in Second Language, 1999. P2-3)

> "Culture theory, developed on the basis of social anthropology, (…) In the light of culture theory, language is often viewed as a complex system that reflects what meanings are attached to behaviours and how they are expressed (Gardner, 1984)." (Hinkel, Culture in Second Language, 1999. P3-4)

Culture has played an important role in second language learning since applied linguistics was born. "Applied Linguistics was born in the U.S. after World War Two…. The 1950s and 1960s were the expansionist period of Applied Linguistics" (Zh u, The Guidance. 2004. p28. Trans. Liu). "In the 1960s and the 1970s, investigations of the connections between language and culture produced such impressive and

seminal works as Hymes's (1964) Language in Culture and Society, Gumperz (1972) on interactional sociolinguistics, Kaplan (1966) on rhetorical patterns accepted in different cultures and styles of writing, and E. Hall (1976) on behavioural and cognitive constructs." (Hinkel, Culture in Second Language, 1999. P3-4)

"Since the 1960s, a great many educators have concerned themselves with the importance of the cultural aspect in foreign language learning, (...) In the 1970s, an emphasis on sociolinguistics led to greater emphasis on the situational context of the foreign language. (...) As a result, the role of culture in the foreign language curriculum was enhanced, (...) The audiolingual method was replaced by the communicative approach, and Canale and Swain (1980:31) claimed that 'a more natural integration' of language and culture takes place 'through a more communicative approach than through a more grammatically based approach'. (...) It is only in the 1980s that scholars begin to delve into the dynamics of culture and its vital contribution to 'successful' language learning. (...) Furthermore, in the 1980s and 1990s, advances in pragmatics and sociolinguistics (Levinson, 1983) laying bare the very essence of language, (...), have rendered people's frames of reference and cultural schemata tentative, and led to attempts at 'bridging the cultural gap

in language teaching'(Valdes, 1986)."(Thanasoulas, "The

Importance". Icaap. p4-5)

Even though teaching Chinese as a FL has a long history outside China, and many

teachers have been working on it, its teaching was not formed into a theoretical and

comprehensive system until the late 1980s, because of a perceived lack of practical

use of the language and a corresponding lack of professional teachers.

In China, teaching Chinese as a second language (or FL) only recommenced in the

1950s. The pedagogy that was in popular use was called the Grammar-Translation

Method, and also emphasized Language Learning for Specific Purposes in the

1950s-60s. In the 1970s, due to the influence of applied linguistics outside China,

teachers started to use the Audio-lingual Method, combined with a focus on syntax;

"the 1980s was a period of the rapid development of applied linguistics in China."

(Zh u, The Guidance 2004. p28. Trans. Liu) The most important approach was the

Functional Approach, which aimed at enhancing communicative competence. (Wú,

"The Commentary", 1987. Trans. Liu) Therefore, since that time, teachers have

started to lay emphasis on the teaching of culture within the teaching of Chinese as a

FL. "In the field, research was being conducted into language education from the

points of view of cultural distinctions around the beginning of the 1980s." (Zh u,

Teaching 1997. p313. Trans. Liu)

During these decades, teaching Chinese as a FL from a cultural perspective quickly

became a popular topic in discussions, both in and out of China.

Research Objectives and Questions

As has been mentioned above, the background of the research is learning and teaching Chinese as FL in combination with learning and teaching the culture. Today, we can see teaching language is teaching culture; there is a consensus of opinion in the field of applied linguistics on this issue.

On the one hand it is profoundly important to understand the relationship between Chinese language and culture; on the other hand, many researches and studies, for example those undertaken by Robert C. Gardner, show that in foreign language learning, the learning attitude and motivation towards the language and culture influence the achievement. Therefore, the examination and analysis of students' attitudes to learning Chinese culture and language, and their expectations could be a first step towards improving Chinese language teaching in Dublin. To further understand the predicament of teaching Chinese as a foreign language in Dublin, it is also necessary to investigate teachers' attitudes and approaches in the language class, and their expectations of their students.

Consequently the main questions to be examined are as follows:

- What is the relationship between culture and language?

- How has Chinese culture been expressed in the language, especially in the Chinese written language?

- How does Chinese culture influence language learning and teaching?

- What are the attitudes and expectations of learners in Dublin?

- How do the attitudes of non-native Mandarin Chinese learners compare with those of learners a Chinese family background?

- Especially at the beginning stage, how can one teach Chinese culture and integrate cultural elements into the language class, in order to promote a long-term learning process?

Aims and Methodology

There are three aims in this study:

To identify the importance of the relationship between Chinese culture and language;

To examine and analyze the attitudes, probable motivation and expectations of students to learning Chinese culture and language in Dublin;

To investigate the attitudes, approaches and expectations of Chinese language teachers

I have examined the results in conjunction with the existing research literature on the field of culture in second language learning and teaching, and particularly in building the connection with Chinese language learning and teaching.

Through questionnaires, I have surveyed many students who are from both second and third levels, to collect information about their attitudes and expectations. Also, I have interviewed teachers about their own experience, and sought to understand their attitudes and approaches and expectations of their students.

As a Chinese language teacher myself, I have also recorded reflections on my own experiences in teaching practice on these issues.

Chapter One

Cultures and Languages

1.1 What is Culture?

The definition of 'Culture' has produced thousands of opinions and views. In the dictionary, one finds "culture" defined as "the customs, beliefs, art, music, and all the other products of human thought made by a particular group of people at a particular time" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English).

Originally, culture has a link with nature, from the Latin colere, meaning something has been grown and groomed, and the basic view of today's culture as civilization derives from this. Culture includes everything that people have been producing whether concrete or abstract; it does not include nature. Culture encompasses history, politics, social institutions, architecture, social customs, works of art, and language patterns etc., all of these are "grown" from the productive activities in people's lives. In short, culture means all the activities of human society.

Culture is heterogeneous. It crosses a number of fields of study, such as anthropology, sociology, archaeology, history, literature, linguistics, philosophy and psychology. None of these fields functions in isolation.

However, "most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artefacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artefacts, and behaviours in the same or in similar ways." (Banks, J.A., Multicultural education. carla.umn.edu/culture/)

In the context of the study of intercultural communication, usually culture can be identified as "*big 'C' culture*" and "*little 'c' culture,*" (Paige, "Culture". p7) the latter also called "subjective culture." ("Intercultural", wikipedia.) This "*little c*" "is concerned with the less tangible aspects of a culture, like everyday patterns," ("Intercultural", wikipedia.) and the first one, the "'objective culture' or 'formal culture' referring to institutions, big figures in history, literature, etc. (…), [in intercultural studies] a mixture of these two is to be employed, but it is especially the apprehension of subjective culture that triggers the development of intercultural competence." ("Intercultural") It is very important that both "C" and "c" bear specific definitions, which have been used as a frame of reference for culture in intercultural communications.

In this paper, we will focus on applied linguistics among other fields of studies. Culture can be an important and integral part of language education, and also viewed through many different lenses. Patrick R. Moran explains in *Teaching Culture – perspectives in practice:*

One way of thinking about culture is to consider it to be "communication and all the people of a particular culture use for communication, namely language, verbal and nonverbal," including a variety of forms, such as body movements, eye contact, touching, time, space, smells, and the use of the social situation. Culture may be said to be a phenomenon of communication.

The second view of culture is in terms of intercultural communication. People are able to adopt or become involved in other people's cultures and communicate with them effectively and appropriately, such as establishing and maintaining relationships, or carrying out tasks with people of these cultures. Intercultural communication is a process that people go through as they think, do, and feel in order to successfully communicate across cultures.

The third view of culture is of a dynamic construction between and among people. It is "a function of a particular social situation," "consisting of the values, meanings, or beliefs that they create in their unique social circumstances." Culture is "being actively constructed through interpersonal relationships, always in the process of becoming." It "exists as a mental phenomenon."

The fourth view of culture is an arena where groups or communities interact, "vying for power, influence, authority, or dominance. (…) This view originates from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1973; Giroux, 1988) and from multicultural education (Banks, 1991), where the focus is often social justice."

The fifth view of culture is in terms of biology or evolutionary psychology, "where many aspects are seen as universal to all members of humankind, derived from the nature and functions of the human brain. These universals, as in language, music, or

in the universal facial expressions associated with emotions are the shared basis of communication across cultures."

The last one is "a general concept"; it "consists of culture-general components that apply to any and all cultures. (…) such as intercultural awareness, value orientations, attitudes, and behaviours." It focuses on "the contrasts that produce cross-cultural conflicts or misunderstandings." (Moran, Teaching. 2001. p4, 5)

It could be argued that people can feel that culture exists in individuals' communications as a phenomenon of communication. Different individuals have different experiences and education, so that they might have different beliefs, values and behaviours. These have been formed by their own culture, even if they speak the same language. Adults can identify themselves in a social circle; such as nation, family and profession etc., and they might prefer to talk to the person who comes from the same world or circles as they do. This makes communication easier, establishing a relationship is easier, because of a shared knowledge and cultural background. Many topics can be discussed, and people feel free to exchange their opinions and do not need to be afraid of being misunderstood.

> "I take the broader view that culture is a dynamic, living
> phenomenon practi[s]ed daily by real people, together or
> alone as they go about their shared way of life, living and
> creating their history of civilization. When you cross the
> border from your way of life into theirs, your challenges
> become communicating, building relationships, and

accomplishing tasks in their language using their set of

rules."(Moran, <u>Teaching</u>, 2001. p7)

Conversations between individuals from different worlds or circles can possibly be an adventure. Also, anyone can be seen as an individual culture carrier of his or her own culture. If people are interested in understanding a new person or world whose culture could be quite different from their own, they have to try to extract more information than what they could obtain through the simple process of conversation. Whether communication is successful or not depends on these individuals' expressions, understandings and explorations.

However, non-successful communication can also deliver cultural information. Non-successful communication means the correct information has not been delivered. For example: an Irish person, Anraí, was travelling in China in a train, an inspector asked him, "你从哪儿来？（Nǐ cóng nǎr lái? -- Where are you from？）"; he replied "都柏林（Dū bólín -- Dublin）". But the Irishman did not pronounce the "Dū" sound clearly; after looking at his passport, the inspector said, "你不是德国人啊？（Nǐ bú shì déguó rén a? – You are not a German？）?" Because the inspector just heard the sound "bólín" clearly, which means Berlin, he thought the man came from Germany. After this conversation, maybe the Irish man would feel that Dublin is not as well known as Berlin in China. Through this non-successful communication, a Chinese cultural image has been delivered and formed automatically by the person himself, and certainly this image relies on his own culture background.

In another instance, a foreigner, Seán, who hasn't mastered Chinese tones very well, is speaking Mandarin in China. He wants to say "在书上"（zài shū shàng – in a book, "shū" first tone）, but ends up saying "在树上"（zài shù shàng -- on a tree, "shù"

fourth tone) . Although this learner did know that the Chinese language had tones, it was not until this misunderstanding that he realized that they are essential to achieving good communication with Chinese people. Indeed, it is with the repetition of similar situations that foreigners learning Chinese accept that tones are an intrinsic part of the Chinese language, so the idea that Chinese tone language is very hard to master will become a part of the image of Chinese culture. Since Seán wants to learn Chinese language and culture, he "must" learn to master Chinese tones; in his mind learning tones has become a part of the learning process. They have become, as far as he is concerned, an essential part of Chinese culture. A wholly linguistic element has become a cultural element.

"Culture, as a process that includes and excludes, always entails the exercise of power and control." (Kramsch, Language. p8) Between individuals, culture has the power to influence communications.

Culture is also like an invisible band, which binds people together as a society. But among different social groups, a culture is a dynamic historical record and keeps traditions. It is influenced by economics, politics, and other cultures etc. A culture can be understood through geography (where the culture has originated and evolved), history, works of art and social life … It is through studying these aspects, that people will discover the past of the group, turn their attention to the present, and anticipate the future:

 "Culture is our social legacy as contrasted with our organic heredity" (Thanasoulas, "The Importance", p9); it is an existential process.

1.2 The Relationship between Cultures and Languages

As with culture, it is not easy to give a definition for language, though it is much easier to say what language is not. From a linguistic point of view, language can be defined by some of its characteristics. Some questions, such as how people acquire a language, how language is related to the brain and thoughts, have not received satisfactory answers so far.

In *the Longman Dictionary*, language is defined as "the system of human expression by means of words"; in *the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*, language is a "tool peculiar to mankind, used for the expression and communication of thoughts and feelings, a special social phenomenon, a particular system consisting of speech sounds, vocabulary and grammar." These definitions are limited: human speech is established by popular usage; it can be acquired and learned, etc.

As has been mentioned above, language is not only a mental process, but also a social phenomenon. Language is not a culture-free code.

> "Language is a social institution, both shaping and shaped
>
> by society at large, or in particular the 'cultural niches'
>
> (Eleanor Armour-Thomas & Sharon-ann Gopaul-McNicol,
>
> 1998) in which it plays an important role. (…) Language is
>
> not an 'autonomous construct' (Fairclough, 1989: vi) but
>
> social practice both creating and created by 'the
>
> structures and forces of [the] social institutions within

which we live and function' (ibid.)." (Thanasoulas, "The importance". p6)

For foreign language learners, language can be seen simply as a symbol system that is learnable and used in communications. However, the language people learn, as a foreign language, has to be used in another particular community or cultural environment, and normally it is different from their own. This could be more difficult and complicated than learning a set of mathematical symbols. How to master this system could be more complicated than merely identifying it. Learning a foreign language successfully consists not only in acquiring a symbol system, but also implies that learners are now able to use the language to talk to other social groups, and have the competence that can help them achieve their purposes during communications.

Communication does not only depend on accurate grammar, but also on saying the right thing in the context. However, a foreign language learner, who wants to be adopted in another society, already has his or her own original cultural background, and also has certain particular goals in communications; so that maintaining enough equilibrium between cultures will be a challenge. Consequently, people have to decide what to say and to whom, how to express it, and accept what people say within a cultural context. Therefore, the relationship between language and culture should be an essential question for discussion.

Culture and language share similar features: they are both dynamic and are both attached to a certain community. They both show the effects on us of subjective experiences and objective facts; their development depends on the development of a

particular society, and also influences the community. Both culture and language can be learned and acquired by people.

Language is also a part of "big C" culture, "culture is the foundation of the development of a language." (Xing, Teaching. p239)

Since people express what they think through the language they use, their way of thinking is affected by the culture around them; language is a mirror, in which culture is reflected. "Language is intimately linked not only to the culture that is and the culture that was, but also to the culture of the imagination that governs people's decisions and actions far more than we may think." (Kramsch, Language. p8)

The words people use are parts of a culture and also form a particular culture; these words have the potential to influence listeners and speakers. As Claire Kramsch summarized, "Culture both liberates and constrains. (...) it constrains by imposing a structure on nature and by limiting the range of possible meaning created by the individual." Language carries and spreads culture, it has an effect on the development of culture, "in a sense, it is 'a key to the cultural past of a society' (Salzmann, 1998: 41), 'a guide to "social reality" (Sapir, 1929: 209, cited in Salzmann, 1998: 41)'." (Thanasoulas, "The importance". p7)

1.3 The Role of Culture in Foreign Language Learning

Why do people learn foreign languages? The simplest answer could be that they want to talk, communicate and make connections to other groups of people who speak other languages.

However, "when speakers of a language, including native speakers, lack knowledge in those areas [cultural areas], their language proficiency tends to stagnate at a certain level and cannot be further developed." (Xing, Teaching. p238)

> "I want to emphasize that culture learning, whether it occurs in a foreign language or second language context, inside or outside the classroom, with or without teachers, through books or through people, is best seen as a lived experience, as a personal encounter with another way of life." (Moran, Teaching. 2001. p3)

Therefore, the lack of cultural knowledge limits one's ability to learn a foreign language and gain communicative competence. So "true language proficiency implies cultural proficiency" (Xing, Teaching. p241), and "language study is an eminently cultural activity" (Kramsch, Language. p9). Since language and culture are closely linked, culture plays an irreplaceable and important role in foreign language education; culture learning is an integral part of language learning.

Today, the developments of globalisation are triggering an increase of intercultural communications, and people are then interested in learning foreign languages. More and more people are living, speaking and interacting in in-between spaces. We can see that learning a language might be a key to opening people's minds, discovering differences, and helping people make connections. Therefore, "it is reasonable to assert that cultural awareness should be viewed as an important component informing, so to speak, and enriching communicative competence" (Thanasoulas, "The importance". p11). Not only will foreign language acquisition foster people's

cultural awareness, cognition and personal development, it will also promote better international understanding.

In Teaching Culture – perspectives in practice, Patrick R. Moran writes:

"In a conversation with Roberta Kucer, a high school teacher of Spanish and English, I asked her why she taught Spanish. She answered this way:

> I somehow see being a Spanish teacher the same way I see being an English teacher. I feel that one of the central things about teaching – about being a teacher – is to help people make connections, to feel connected and rooted. Spanish is a different material from English, but in this sense, the language is not simply a set of techniques to use to say this and that. It's really a way for people to get a sense of the humanity of other people who use that language. And when you have a sense of the humanity of other people, it's very hard to hurt them. " (Moran, Teaching. 2001. p7)

Today, many people still live in a monolingual and monocultural environment. Very often they tend to view the world's differences through the lenses of their own cultures, "they also consider that other specific societies have the same cultural background, this has been called cultural stereotypes." (Shèng, The principles. p81. Trans. Liu) It is not easy to be aware of or to understand another way of thinking. "When summarizing another group's culture, people often make subjective and

metaphysical mistakes; *prejudice* is deep-rooted and ingrained." (Shang, The principles. p81. Trans. Liu)

> "Our instinctive reaction is to assume that our culture, our
> way of life, is the right one, and that all others are not.
> Whether we simply tolerate these other ways of life or
> treat them as enemies, our attitude toward them is (…)
> ethnocentric." (Moran, Teaching. 2001. p7)

People are "culture-bound individuals who tend to make premature and inappropriate value judgments." (Peck, "Teaching Culture" 1984. p1) In order to communicate with others, not to treat them or let them treat us as enemies, the acceptance of cultural differences is very important. But the sensitivity to cultural differences does not come naturally; cultural perspectives have to be consciously learned. In this fashion culture can both create and solve problems.

"Humanistically, the study of different cultures aids us in getting to know different people, which is a necessary prelude to understanding and respecting other peoples and their ways of life." (Peck, "Teaching Culture" 1984. p1)

Consequently, in foreign language education, the learning of culture not only helps to open learners' eyes to the similarities and differences in the lives of various groups or circles; but also makes language learners reflect upon their own identity and culture. Since "we 'can never see through another's eyes; we must see through our own' (Robinson, 1981, p.150), the overall goal for the learner is to progress towards the development of intercultural competence by addressing the affective component of such a competence (see M. Bennett, 1993)." (Paige, "Culture". p8) The comparison

between people's own culture and the target culture could help them explore their understanding of the changing world.

Culture actually plays a double role of cultural consciousness-raising in foreign language learning: the learning of it helps in the study and the solution of problems of language and misunderstanding in target language contexts, it also opens learners' minds to different aspects of the world. In addition, it also helps these learners to discover and develop their self-awareness. People can develop their personal competence through the learning of culture.

1.4 Teaching Culture

"Research (…) tells us that teachers are an essential component in culture learning, that students consider teachers to be their most important resource." (Paige, "Culture". p55) Since an understanding of another way of life cannot come automatically, in foreign language education, a teacher can be a guide to foster students' findings in the discovery of another culture.

"To a certain degree, we articulate many of these perspectives through reflection, drawing on our knowledge of history or traditions. (…) A common metaphor to illustrate these two dimensions of cultural perspectives is the iceberg" (Moran, Teaching. 2001. p27). The greater part of an iceberg is below the surface of the sea, but we can only see the part floating above sea level. With the changes in the environment, the shape of the iceberg will change. Teaching culture aims to explain

the construction of the "iceberg" and the environment around it. It provides students with a tool to enable them to dig as much and as deeply as possible. If they are happy with this, they will gain more and more motivation through this work, and this influence will affect their language learning positively. This is what could be called a successful process in the teaching of culture.

Due to the double role that culture plays in language learning, I would propose that the first matter to be addressed when teaching a foreign language and culture is to examine the aims and attitudes of students in choosing to learn a specific foreign language, to know and analyze their cultural background. "It goes without saying that foreign language teachers should be foreign culture teachers, having the ability to experience and analyze both the home and target cultures (Byram, Morgan et al., 1994:73)."(Thanasoulas, "The importance". p18) Because of students are not a homogenous group, an understanding the students' culture and language learning background should help teachers organize and design appropriate teaching materials and methods. They can then elaborate appropriate strategies to direct students' culture learning; conversely, the students will become more self-aware:

> "To break through this deep-seated, often unconscious
>
> tendency, learners need conscious learning strategies to
>
> help them understand and enter other ways of life and, in
>
> the process, recognize the role of their own cultural
>
> conditioning." (Moran, Teaching. 2001. p8)

Moreover, along with learning, students' attitudes to cultural differences will change. "In the school context, these attitudes could be directed toward the teachers, the

course in general, one's classmates, the course materials, extra-curricular activities associated with the course, etc..." (Gardner, "Language" 2001.p8) Teachers should try to monitor, observe and understand this change. Consciously integrating language teaching and culture teaching could help students form a positive attitude. At any stage, this positive attitude could provide incentives to language learning.

Teachers can play different roles at different stages in the teaching of language and culture.

First, we should consider what type of cultural knowledge should be taught in foreign language teaching. Educators have many views on this, which can be classified as: History, Traditions, Values, Fine Arts, and Patterns of Living. In this approach, a teacher's role will be to guide and introduce students to culture and language; he or she will be a performance facilitator. Teachers, in tandem with students, can also do research to foster cultural knowledge and mutual understanding between cultures. In addition a teacher's role is to encourage self-reflection by students about the learning process.

> "I wanted them to look behind the behaviours to what
> motivated them, not to accept things at face value and
> then move on. To cultivate this, I had to leave some of
> their questions unanswered, to value the asking of the
> question rather than the finding of an answer. There
> aren't always single answers for different cultural
> patterns anyway. Instead, there are usually different
> behaviors possible in one setting, as well as different

reasons for one behavior." (Moran, <u>Teaching</u>. 2001.

p154)

Meanwhile, the teaching institutions can be seen as laboratories, where people put the cultural knowledge and the language they have learned to use and develop communicative skills. In these institutions, a teacher can be a coach or a director, who organizes and directs activities; naturally this place can also be outside of the classroom, where a teacher can recreate the environment of the target language, a virtual cultural island on which students may be forced to practise language learning.

Second, another essential role teachers should try to play is to act as an intermediary between the two cultures. In particular, a bridge should be built by teachers to link the target culture and the students' own cultures. No matter how far the target culture is from the students' one, whether from the economic or humanistic point of view, there are more and more links in today's globalised world. For instance, a homework project can be assigned, whose aim is to list where all the products students bought came from, such as clothes, stationery, toys. No matter where the learner lives, it is quite probable that half of the consumer products will be from China. This can make connecting the learner's culture with Chinese culture easier. To understand better the Chinese world and establish good business links with it could be used as practical goals for learning Chinese.

Apart from instrumental motivation, a language teacher's role is to link language learning with history and culture. This approach will help students reflect upon their own identity, which might help them understand better a foreign culture and become a successful language learner:

"(…) learning another language involves making something foreign a part of one's self. As such, one's conception of the 'self' and their willingness to open it up to change, as well as their attitudes toward the other community, or out-groups in general, will influence how well they can make this material part of their behavioural repertoires" (Gardner, "Language" 2001.p6)

Also being knowledge-curious can be a good starting point for enthusiasm; "(…) many of the teachers made the observation that although the students are initially very enthusiastic about learning English, their enthusiasm wanes before the end of the first year." (Gardner, "Language" 2001.p2) Especially in non-target language environments, there are few opportunities outside of the classroom to use the language. The more connections students can feel with the target culture and community, the more interests and motivations they will have.

Third, in cross-cultural communications, learners can find differences in values, attitudes to different lifestyles etc…stressful. At this stage, by making comparisons between different cultures, teachers can help the students deal with the stress through culture classes. "Teachers are attempting to help learners make a transition from one world, one way of life, into another. This, as I see it, is our shared calling as language teachers. " (Moran, Teaching. 2001. p11) Experiences of students can be discussed and shared by all of the participants. Teachers can be listeners and co-learners in the discussions.

1.5 Conclusion

The interdependence of culture and language is crucial. Culture and language are dynamic social phenomena that influence and shape each other. Language is a fundamental component of particular culture; it can be seen as a key access point to initiate the discovery of its related culture. Culture is the deepest foundation in language learning.

Undeniably when learning a foreign language, students must learn the culture as well. These two cannot be separated in language learning. Using a language can be seen as a creative process, which has to be supported by a sympathetic feel for the language. The feel or sense of the language could come from the culture learning. The learning and acquisition of a target culture are as important as learning the language per se, especially in non-target language environments.

Culture plays a double role in foreign language learning. On the one hand, when learners try to interpret some foreign language and cultural situation from their own perspective they may discover and encounter obstacles. On the other hand, the learning of target culture helps in the study and the solution of problems of language and misunderstanding in target language contexts. Whether one is a learner or teacher of a foreign language and culture, one should try to look at both cultures – the target culture and one's own – from both sides and build an enlightened and rational way of making comparisons and connections.

There is an onus on teachers to play different roles at different learning stages in the teaching of culture. Firstly, as a guide that can introduce students to the culture, and encourage self-reflection from students; secondly, as a bridge that can link the two cultures, and can also make connections between history and cultural elements in daily life, so that teachers can help learners reflect on their own identities. In addition as a co-researcher or co-learner, who can share their own experience in cross-cultural communication and help students go on to further explorations.

Realistically, learning a foreign language is a life-long task. "It is clear, (…) that learning a second language is a difficult time-consuming process." (Gardner, "Language" 2001.p1) Not all students may achieve a very high level in language and cultural studies, but I believe that in classes they could learn some practical skills or make some good friends, etc. In fact, language learning is an integral part of life-long learning.

The outcome of culture learning and teaching is a raised consciousness "in regard to perception and perspective" (Paige, "Culture". p8), and " 'an ever-increasing ability' " to consider " 'the viewpoint of members of another culture' (p. 228)." (Paige, "Culture". p8) It is like "to give a second (third) voice to their thoughts, thus flying in the face of cultural conventions and stereotypes." (Thanasoulas, "The importance". p17)

Chapter Two

Chinese Culture and Chinese Language

2.1 Chinese culture

China is the largest country in the world by population, with 5,000 years of continuous history; Chinese culture is a huge book that we could never finish in a whole lifetime.

We will first examine definitions of culture within the Chinese context: 文化 (wénhuà) is "culture" in Chinese words. In fact, in the modern Chinese language, both "big C (广义文化 guǎngyì wénhuà; wide meaning of culture)" and "little c (狭义文化 xiáyì wénhuà; narrow meaning of culture)" frame the definition of "culture".

In China, the word 文化 (wénhuà):

> "was probably first used in the West Han Dynasty
> (206B.C. -- 24A.D.), when 'culture' was used (...) to mean
> 'Civil Administration' (文治 wénzhì) as opposed to 'Military
> Administration' (武治 wǔzhì)." (Hé, A Talk 2006. p1)
> "In as early as Confucius' time, culture was talked about
> as '文' (wén; learning) and '质' (zhì; nature, character), the
> opposing side, which was supposed to be 'the moral

behavior and the norms that the learned should have'."

(Hé, A Talk 2006. p1)

Today, the word 文化 (wénhuà) is more linked with education. The term 没有文化 (méiyǒu wénhuà; not having culture), can be applied to a person (illiterate or having received a low cultural education) or an environment (one which is very poor in culture). To take another instance, the expression 文化水平 (wénhuà shuǐpíng; cultural level) also means "educational level"; in China education and culture are often synonymous, and this concept implies how much someone has learned from school and books.

> "The development and characteristics of the system of Chinese education have been greatly influenced by Confucianism and this traditional culture (Wang & Mao, 1996)." It is "not only for personal improvement but also for societal development. Cleverley (1991) argues that traditionally the Chinese have placed a high value on education." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese." 2007)

Therefore, one of the most significant meanings of the word 文化 (wénhuà) is linked with being administered and educated in the Chinese context. It is frequently used about a person's quality and educational level, personal competence, and implies the presence of a cultural atmosphere or surroundings. It plays an essential role and is one of the most important concepts in Chinese people's minds.

We will now write briefly about the philosophical sources of Chinese culture. Chinese philosophy "has occupied a place in Chinese civilization similar to that of religion in

other civilizations." (Féng, A Short History. p1. Trans. Liu) Confucius "was the first person in Chinese history thus to teach large numbers of students in a private capacity. (…) According to tradition, he had several thousand students, of whom several became famous thinkers and scholars. (…) Confucius was a ju ('儒' rú), and the founder of ju school ('儒家' rúji -- in modern Chinese), which has been known in the West as the Confucian school." (Féng, A Short History. p34-35) The source of Chinese civilization is the land, traditional Chinese culture has had an agricultural economy at its base and every family has been an autonomous unit; Confucianism is a system of philosophy established on this foundation. Although Confucianism is only one of the many schools of thought in the historical periods known as The Spring and Autumn (770-476 B.C.) and The Warring States (476-221 B.C.), it is one of the most important in Chinese culture. Confucius became a famous figure, because in over 2,000 years of the Chinese feudal system, some of his ideas were as important as a religion and were extensively used by the political institutions.

It was during a long period of unrest, 770 B.C. -- 221 B.C., that Confucianism, among other philosophies and currents of thought, was born. This is when Chinese civilization experienced an enlightenment. All these new ideas were about the universal in the mind of the individual, life values and *Weltanschauung*. These philosophies have had a lasting influence on all Chinese, especially the intellectuals. "In China, philosophy has been every educated person's concern." (Féng, A Short History. p2-3) It has had a strong and continuous influence on art, architecture, literature, politics, customs, and daily life.

> "At present it is known to many Westerners that the Chinese
>
> people have been less concerned with religion than other

people are. For instance, in one of his articles, *Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Chinese Culture,* Professor Derk Bodde says: ' They [the Chinese] are not a people for whom religious ideas and activities constitute an all-important and absorbing part of life. ... It is ethics (especially Confucian ethics), and not religion (at least not religion of a formal, organized type), that provided the spiritual basis in Chinese civilization. ...'" (Féng, A Short History. p6-7)

"The Chinese people take even their religion philosophically." (Féng, A Short History. p6-7) And "in the old days, if a man were educated at all, the first education he received was in philosophy." (Féng, A Short History. p2-3) It is essential for people to be cultured. And culture is what makes us human beings.

If there are some special words we should use to define Chinese culture, these would include worldly, perceptual, profound, conservative, and rank in society among others. ... Whether they live in China or have settled in other countries, Chinese people "politically speaking, identify with their host countries; but culturally speaking, they basically still identify with Chinese culture." (Z ng, "Globalization". p6, Trans. Liu).

Contemporary culture in China is multi-faceted: urban and rural; Han (ethnic Chinese) and non-Han. There are more than 56 ethnic groups living in China and different groups have different social conventions and traditions, which creates cultural diversity in different regions. Also, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism are still present in people's spiritual lives today. This sense of a shared culture in China is

what has kept more than hundreds of millions of people living together in the one country for a long time.

Culture is a dynamic, living phenomenon; along with the development of society, Chinese culture has been in constant evolution: it has absorbed elements from various cultures each of which cultures have had their own independent evolution. Since the 1919 uprising, traditional Chinese culture has subjected itself to continuous criticism in order to achieve modernization. The development of the Chinese economy and society has created problems and raised questions. The study of traditional Chinese philosophy and classical literature is referred to in Chinese by the word 国学 (guóxué, national study).This has become fashionable, both outside and inside China. In this context, Chinese philosophy has often come to the fore as a way to solve problems.

2.2 *The* "Difficult" Language?

Language mirrors culture and because of the profound character of Chinese culture, the Chinese language can be seen as one of the most difficult languages in the world: "The Chinese language is one of the earliest languages in the world to be recorded in characters." (W , "Chinese", 1993. P241. Trans. Liu) It has a four thousand years' history and is the oldest language still in use today. Non-native Chinese speakers (excluding Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and overseas Chinese) often view the learning of the Chinese language as a huge challenge.

It is not easy to master a language with such a long cultural history, "the longer the historical and cultural traditions the language has, the more difficult it is to master." (W , "Chinese" 1993. P241. Trans. Liu) When one considers that, even for Chinese native speakers, acquiring a high cultural level in Chinese is not an easy task, it becomes all the more evident that acquiring it as a second language will require a considerable amount of time and effort: "learning a second language is a difficult time-consuming process." (Gardner, "Language". p1)

In the field of applied linguistics, generally when we talk about Western languages, the term "language" implies the oral language that people use for communication. This is due to Saussure's influence on applied linguistics. But Chinese character language is different from the languages with Roman alphabets. Unfortunately, Saussure did not seem to have included character-based languages, such as Chinese, in his research. He himself thought that his "theory of phonetics only applied to Greek [or Latin] alphabet languages". (Xú, "Zi as the basic structural unit". 2005. p6. Trans. Liu) However, Chinese has a special written system – Chinese characters record the oral language.

> "Language is 'heard', but the written language is 'seen'. [We can also 'hear' the written language when we read a text aloud. In this situation,] 'heard' and 'seen' are combined in the written language; therefore [Chinese] linguistics research has to discriminate between 'heard' and 'seen'. [Chinese] linguistics research, and in particular applied linguistics, must

reserve a place for 'seen' [and 'heard'] characters." (Xú, "Zi

as the basic structural unit". 2005. p6. Trans. Liu)

Oral Chinese:

There is a lot of good news for learners at the beginning stage such as, to quote just

a few items:

1. A limited phonetic system – "there are only over 400 syllables in Chinese; if
   we include the distinctions among tones, there still are only around 1300
   syllables." (W , "Chinese" 1993. p243. Trans. Liu)

2. Invariable words -- every word is made up of characters, and no character
   can be changed.

3. No conjugations or declensions.

4. "The most economical language [in the world]. (…) When transferring
   information, 'superfluous words' will be omitted as much as possible" (W ,
   "Chinese" 1993. p245. Trans. Liu)

5. "High degree of meaning transparency through the visualizing of characters."
   (W , "Chinese" 1993. p245. Trans. Liu)

When we compare Chinese with European languages, we see that only the Spanish

language has a lower number of syllable sounds. In most Western languages any

vowel can be combined with a consonant sound. But in Chinese not all vowel sounds

can exist in combination with all consonant sounds. This explains the comparatively

very low number of syllable sounds in Chinese.

Written language:

The present state of the Chinese written language is due to the fact that "thousands of years of simplification and standardisation have resulted in the modern Chinese characters that we now use." (L , "Chinese characters" news. bbc Trans. Liu) The distance between classical Chinese and modern Chinese is similar to the distance between Latin and modern Latin-based languages. The modernising revolution of Chinese society in 1919 made it possible for linguists and writers to change written Chinese from the classical language (文言文 wényánwén) into the modern language (白话文 báihuàwén) that is still in use today. They used principles of applied linguistics as a source of reference, advocating the use of punctuation marks in Chinese articles that had not been used in classical Chinese, and inventing a pronunciation system to label characters, Zhuyin Fuhao (, Zhùy n Fúhào often referred as Bopomofo). They also hoped to analyze the grammar of the modern Chinese language. The purpose of these policies was to make the written language easier to learn. Starting in 1956 in Mainland China, the traditional Chinese characters were officially replaced by simplified characters. Pinyin (, P ny n) , a Roman alphabet-based system showing the pronunciation of characters, also came into force.

Looking at the Chinese characters we use today, "Professor L Bìs ng said … there are only 24 strokes, 120 radicals, forming 2500 characters; they are not very difficult to understand, copy or memorise. Moreover, most of the characters fall into [five categories]: pictographs, self-explanatory characters, associative compounds and pictophonetic characters; according to research, these are the most helpful elements when understanding and memorizing characters." (Wáng, "Linguists do not think",

2008. Trans. Liu) Today, thanks to computers, Western learners find it easier to type and recognise characters.

How many Chinese characters do people need to memorize? Although "there are fifty-six thousand characters in total in the *Comprehensive Chinese Dictionary (《汉语大字典》)*, which is the biggest dictionary in contemporary China, …It includes many Chinese character variants and many other characters used in the past but obsolete today. The number of characters in actual daily use in modern Chinese is much lower than in that dictionary: about 4,000 characters." (L , Teaching. p189. Trans. Liu) It is a complex task to obtain a faithful representation of character usage and frequency: "Following research done on the Chinese text corpus encompassing 1.8 million characters, the Teaching Research Centre in Beijing Language and Culture University edited *the List of Chinese Characters' Frequency*, from *the Modern Chinese Frequency Dictionary*. There are 4,574 characters, which can be divided into the following strata": (L , Teaching p189-190. Trans. Liu)

Amount of characters	Coverage rate (%)
100	47.33584
1000	91.36559
1500	95.94920
2000	98.06666
2500	99.12771
3000	99.63918
3500	99.86826
4000	99.96001

Table 2.2.1 Chinese Characters Frequency (L , Teaching p190. Trans. Liu)

Knowledge of between 2,000 and 2,500 characters is sufficient for ordinary people to be able to deal with everyday tasks.

2.3 Chinese Characters and Culture

In this part, I will focus on characters, the Chinese written language and Chinese culture. Reading competence in Chinese can be much lower than communicative competence, especially for a western learner. Since "language plays a major role in the perpetuation of culture, particularly in its printed form," (Kramsch, Language. p8) a low reading competence in Chinese will seriously impede the learning of Chinese culture.

Single Chinese characters are called "zì" (字 zì) in Chinese; they are the oldest surviving language characters, which are still being used in the world. These first appeared more than 3,000 years ago as inscriptions on oracle bones or tortoise shells. These are generally accepted as the earliest surviving Chinese characters and were a relatively developed text. They have gradually developed from their beginnings as pictorial symbols into straight-line, square-shaped forms. Modern and ancient characters have essentially remained the same. Chinese characters represent one-syllable words or morphemes. Moreover, there are hundreds of dialects or regional languages (fāngyán) in China, many of them using Chinese characters.

As is generally perceived: "teaching and learning Chinese characters might be two of the most challenging tasks in the acquisition of Chinese language proficiency." (Xing, Teaching. p105) Learning Chinese characters still should be one of the most important learning experiences in language learning. If learners fail to learn characters, they will not be able to understand the language or culture completely.

First, I would like to talk about whether zi (字 zì) or ci (cí) could be a basic structural unit.

"ci", which is very often made up of two characters, is used as a unit of expression in modern Chinese. The concept of ci in linguistics comes from outside China; it is the translation of the English word: "word". "To ordinary Chinese people, zi is graphically different from ci, a ci is likely to contain more than one zi." (Xing, Teaching. p116) Ci does not have a root in the Chinese language, it can be seen as the smallest expression pattern, not the basic structural unit. But every single zi has its independent morpheme. To understand the logic of the Chinese language, it is essential to understand how characters work.

"Chinese language uses zi as the basic structural unit' " (Zhāng, "From ' ci as the basic structural unit' to 'zi as the basic structural unit' – the strategy transformation in TCFL", 2006. p38. Trans. Liu) Zi is the carrier of image, pronunciation and meaning; it is the root of Chinese language culture. This explains why only over 2000 characters are sufficient to express most meanings in the Chinese language. Some Chinese linguists have been advocating resetting a core principle of Chinese linguistics with zi as the basic structural unit. We can see the importance of the zi concept in Chinese people's minds.

Ci combines several *zi* to produce coherent arrangements and thinking. For example, 牛 (níu) – cattle, 小牛 (xiǎoníu, little + cattle) – calf, 牛肉 (níuròng, cattle + meat) – beef, 小牛肉 (xiǎoníuròng, little + cattle + meat) – veal, 母牛 (mǔníu, female + cattle) – cow, 公牛 (gōngníu, male + cattle) – bull/ox, 水牛 (shuǐníu, water + cattle) -- buffalo, 牛奶 (níunǎi, cattle + milk) – milk, 牛油 (níuyóng, cattle + oil) – butter… If we compare with the Chinese and English words above, it is very clear that 牛 *zi* is the basic unit in making up these Chinese words. Therefore, we can see this language logic helping to shape the Chinese people's way of thinking: the systematic use of connections and the use of metaphors. Learners can also use this knowledge to improve their learning of Chinese.

Moreover, the logic of the Chinese language "emphasizes the participation of subjective elements … and is good at analyzing and proving on the basis of facts." (Xú, "Zi as the basic structural unit". 2005. p10. Trans. Liu)

Secondly, Chinese characters are also one of the most important symbols of Chinese culture. "For most nations or ethnic groups, the foundation of their cultures is their language and characters / script." (Wáng, "Chinese characters". 2004. Trans. Liu)

> "The whole system of Chinese characters is also intrinsically linked to Chinese culture. It has been very important to maintain a unified writing system for thousands of years; if not, it would be difficult to imagine what Chinese society would have become. It has also been borrowed by neighbouring countries,

which form a large Chinese Cultural Circle." (L   ,

"Chinese characters" news. bbc. Trans. Liu)

The Japanese language still makes wide use of Chinese characters; Korea to a lesser extent and Vietnam used Chinese characters till the end of the 19th century. It is very clear that these countries have been influenced by Chinese culture. Characters are been seen as one of the most important representatives of Chinese culture.

The core concepts of Chinese traditional culture are mostly based on *zi*. "All of these characters, concepts, statements, not only express meaning, values, philosophy, but also express beliefs and aesthetics. [In this situation,] the Chinese language regards the characters highly." (Wáng, "Chinese characters". 2004. Trans. Liu) For instance, 天 (ti n, sky/day/heaven) , 乾 (qián, heaven), 坤 (k n, earth) , 有 (y u, to have/exist) , 无 (wú, not/ not exist) etc.; in ethics, 仁(rén, benevolence) , 德(dé, morality) , 礼 (l , manners) etc. … The Chinese philosophical concepts and semantic values contained in Chinese characters remain constant. Thus, in former times, scholars could keep their values and concepts unchanged. Also, the officially specified form and the writing logic of each single character exhibit an orthodox, reasoned and standard format and conform to accepted principles and meanings; each and every aspect of every character forms an integral part of an agreed whole. These concepts help shape the Chinese people's way of thinking. Therefore, the relationships between characters of the written language, cultural and political structures, and social developments are still present in today's Chinese culture.

On the other hand, although the written language is the main depository of Chinese culture, due to the Chinese language being "the most economical language [in the world]," (W , "Chinese" 1993. p245. Trans. Liu) the same written script can have different meanings in different contexts; also different individuals, generations or social classes could have different understandings of a certain written script. These different views would be subjective and could be carried across into the Chinese written language and vice versa. However, the different subjective views can often lead to misunderstandings; but they can also create opportunities for the emergence of new thoughts and concepts, which may in turn enrich and enhance social development.

Moreover, "when someone wants to import something or some concepts from the outside to Chinese societies, translating them into the Chinese language should be the first step." (Wáng, "Chinese characters". 2004. Trans. Liu) This shows that the concepts and images from the language and characters have a strong and rich influence on Chinese people's minds.

The Chinese language is deeply rooted in Chinese characters; the closest analogy in Western languages would be the use of Greek and Latin roots in medical, legal and scientific terminology. Therefore, when talking about learning the Chinese language, whether from the linguistic or the cultural point of view, it is an essential experience to learn the characters for any long-term or profound study of the language. It is necessary to emphasize that learning the characters is not only a part of learning the Chinese language, but also an integral part of the learning of the culture as well.

2.4 The Chinese cultural influence on the language teaching process

The Chinese written literary language is not only the repository of many cultural elements (e.g. architecture, medicine, science, etc.), but also helps to form the culture, especially the core of Chinese culture in classical literature. Learning the characters is an important path to connecting the language and the culture; also this learning experience and the growth in feeling for the picto-semantic value of characters, and how learners perceive them, all help learners build up some sense for the language.

Education is of great significance in Chinese culture. "Chinese education and learning traditions have been influenced by Chinese culture in general and Confucianism in particular for centuries." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese". 2007. p1) The Chinese perception of education has influenced Chinese society deeply, especially in arts studies. For example, a traditional ideal learning path for a Chinese intellectual has been described as follows: it is said "修身，齐家，治国，平天下" (xiū shēn, qíjiā, zhìguó, píngtiānxià) in 《大学》 (dàxué, *The Great Learning*), this means that, a person should cultivate himself, then regulate the family, then govern the state, and finally lead the world into peace. The development of Chinese education is closely associated with the development of Chinese culture and society. Education is a very serious career. Teaching is one of the most respected professions. A Chinese teacher is an important representative of Chinese culture, especially the learning culture. When teaching the Chinese language, a teacher

(especially a native speaker) would bring a Chinese cultural atmosphere into a classroom, through his/her talk, behaviour etc., which express values of Chinese culture. Cultural elements are shown not only in the teaching of culture, but also in the teacher's cultural concepts, teaching aims, approaches, expectations of students and so on. Chinese (educational) culture has a strong effect on the learning of the language and the culture.

2.4.1 Chinese learning concepts

In Confucianism, learning is a way to overcome individual weaknesses and become perfect, everyone should get education to improve him/herself. Moreover the efforts of every single person will contribute to society. "Education is perceived as important not only for personal improvement but also for societal development." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese". 2007. p2) As discussed in Chapter 2, through learning foreign languages and cultures, learners are not only able to solve language misunderstandings, but can also develop their personal competence. The teaching of language and culture helps improve cross-cultural understanding and influences the development of human society. From this standpoint, Chinese learning concepts are in harmony with the aims of the teaching of culture. There is always a cultural dimension to the work of every Chinese teacher.

However, as "Säljö (1979, p. 106) noted, 'learning does not exist as a general phenomenon." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese". 2007. p9) As in many other cultures, hard work and diligence have always been encouraged in Chinese culture, so this learning approach should also have an effect on language learning as well.

Language learners can feel these learning concepts and cultural atmosphere through the words and deeds of Chinese people and teachers, learning materials etc. whether inside or outside the classroom. Learning can be seen as a process to adapt to particular definitions of learning within a man-made system. Therefore, to learn Chinese could be to try to adapt into the Chinese learning culture, it is not only about developing a specific process of learning, but also a way to raise learners' self-awareness, and enhance their self-discovery.

2.4.2 Chinese learning approaches

In the Chinese educational tradition, rote-learning and memorization have been emphasized and considered as a significant part of learning. Learning by heart also has been emphasized in language learning by teachers. But "memorization has never been seen as an end in itself but as a prelude to deeper understanding." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese". 2007. p8) Therefore, two important processes – memorizing and understanding – are required for successful learning.

Memorization can also be more effective when learners are capable of deeper understanding. "Research shows that many of the teachers and better students do not see memorizing and understanding as separate but rather as interlocking processes, and high quality learning outcomes usually require both processes (Biggs, 1996; Kember, 1996; Marton *et al.*, 1996; Marton *et al.*, 1997; Watkins, 1996)." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese". 2007. p8)

In my own teaching practice in Dublin, I have observed that the students' curiosity in learning Chinese is quite strong. But I think that the attitudes and abilities that students show to learning something are related to their interests in it, and being

interested in culture is very important in the shaping of a long-term learning

motivation, especially in a non-target language-speaking environment. In fact,

because of the lack of cultural interests and long-term motivation, some of the

students could be lost in the learning process and felt very disappointed at the end of

the first semester. The desire to learn Chinese has to be regulated into a study plan;

otherwise, it might be frustrated by time-consuming work, or quickly disappear

altogether. Therefore, teachers have to pay attention to training the students'

competence in memorizing and understanding. This will help them form a habit or

style of successful learning, especially in the Chinese language and culture learning

process.

2.4.3 The Relationship between teachers and students

In China, although a teacher can be seen as an authority on what he or she teaches,

the relationship between teachers and students is not as distant as it appears in

classrooms; outside the classroom, "there is a feeling that teachers and students

should think of each other as members of an extended family. Responsibility,

authority, and morality are all part of the relationships." (Pratt, "Chinese conceptions".

1999. P241-258)

On the one hand, in classrooms, there is a formal relationship. Teachers transmit the

knowledge and information directly to the learners, students are encouraged to

accept and conform to the established principles and procedures by teachers. They

also feel responsibility for what they teach.

> "Students are not encouraged to speak out, to question or
>
> to criticize, and are unwilling to commit themselves for fear

of being wrong and thus losing face (Tsui, 1996). Being
modest and self-effacing, not be 'blowing your own trumpet'
is praiseworthy, while wasting other students' class time by
expressing independent judgments is egotistical and
selfish." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese". 2007. p6)

And generally in the Chinese world every student believes whatever the teachers say, they "also expect classes to be formal. They expect the teacher to control the class, and 'cram knowledge'." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese". 2007. p7)

On the other hand, outside the classroom, informal relationships are significant and the teacher-student relationship can be compared to that of friends or kin. In Chinese traditional culture, it is said "一日为师，终生为父" (yí rì wéi sh, zh ng sh ng wéi fù); this means that, if someone becomes my teacher even for one day, he then could be a father for my whole life; this shows how close the relationship can be, and how students show "affection and respect for the dedicated and hardworking Chinese instructors." (Thurston, China Bound. 1994. P137) And teachers have a duty to look after or help students, not only in their studies but also in their lives, since the students are their own children. Therefore, Teachers occupy a very significant position in people's minds in the Chinese Confucian cultural circle. However, in the Dublin educational environment, this kind of relationship is hardly seen.

We consider that learning a language and a culture is a life-long process, it is very important to build up trust though the teaching process. If students can trust teachers, who are from the target language communities or have extensive experience of the target language culture, it will make the learning more effective. The family-like relationship outside the classroom will consolidate the trust; it will help students to

absorb advice on the learning of a living language and culture. A Chinese teacher should try to build up trust, and use his or her commitment to help students outside the classroom.

2.5 Conclusion

Because of modernisation, Chinese culture has been going through self-revaluation and dynamic development over the last 100 years. In the last 30 years, more and more people have become interested in what they perceived to be a strange land. Tourists go to China for its beautiful landscapes; business people go on visits to foster trade. Some of these visitors become language learners; students learn Chinese to prepare for their future careers and lives. Although China and the West have always had an exotic image of each other, the advent of globalisation has made people feel more and more connected with one another. In fact, people found out that they have many things in common. Chinese culture is one element of world cultural diversity. The culture and language do not come from another planet, they are part of our global human experience, and therefore they should not be so impossible to learn.

However, learning the Chinese written language is not an easy task for learners who speak Roman alphabet languages. For them, the change from an alphabet-based language to a picto-semantic system is a huge challenge. It is not our opinion that Chinese is *the* difficult language. We propose that this image is too simplistic. The

development of optimistic attitudes towards Chinese language learning and the build-up of confidence in the students' learning process can overcome this "difficult language" image. The Chinese saying: "世上无难事，只怕有心人" shìshàng wú nánshì, zhǐ pà yǒuxīn rén), means nothing is impossible for those who are determined to achieve a goal. As discussed in this chapter, a successful learning process needs commitment and energy.

Successful Chinese language learning is interlinked with the learning of culture. Since the Chinese language has deep roots in Chinese philosophy, the learning and teaching of culture not only need to keep an eye on today's situations, but also need to pay more attention to Chinese history and philosophy, in order to understand and make it possible to build a connection between past and present cultural phenomena and the language associated with them. Good teaching of culture gives students a key to the Chinese world, integrates them more into the target culture, develops their cultural interests and thereby enhances their language learning motivations.

The Chinese written language not only carries many cultural elements, but also shows the logic of the language and its characters. Understanding characters can help guess the meaning of a word and develop learners' creativities. The more words a learner can understand and use, the deeper is his or her understanding of the culture. We have emphasised that teaching Chinese characters should be seen as a part of culture teaching; especially the development of characters, their meanings and their links to Chinese ancient culture, history and classical literature, which are the core of Chinese language and culture. From this point of view, learning

characters could be seen as a short cut to learning the Chinese language, and not be viewed as its greatest hurdle.

It is thus important to develop a strategy to teach Chinese characters, in order to contribute to long-term Chinese learning. And since Chinese language and culture have deep roots and a long history, successful learning can only be achieved over the long-term.

However, at the beginning stage, the curiosity and the interest in the language and culture have a strong effect on the learning process; a fleeting passion for the Chinese language is no substitute for long-term and sustained learning. Chinese educational concepts are a very important part of Chinese culture, and derive from the very long intellectual and humanistic traditions of China. Among them we find the belief that learning is a way to improve people's selves, this can be in harmony with the aims of the learning of culture, and play an essential role in a long-term language learning process.

Learning the Chinese language entails a profound encounter with both Chinese learning culture and the culture of China in general. Since the majority of the language teachers are native speakers, students could see them as the strongest cultural representatives in the language classroom. During the teaching process, teachers will bring their understanding of learning, such as educational concepts, learning and teaching approaches and expectations from students into classes, especially if it is possible that most Chinese teachers could construct a Chinese family-like relationship with students naturally, which is very different from the Irish environment. These influences from teachers could exert a strong cultural influence

on what students think about the learning of Chinese language and culture. Therefore, being influenced by Chinese learning culture is a part of one's personal experience of Chinese culture through language learning. These cultural elements have been developed over thousands of years, and will have an influence on the language learning achievement. We consider that the process of accepting the challenge of learning Chinese certainly could be seen as a process of adopting Chinese culture as well.

Chapter Three

Students' Attitudes and Expectations:

Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language in Dublin

3.1 Introduction

Since 2006, along with various Chinese courses in educational institutions, learning Chinese as a foreign language has been a serious subject, with high levels and specific goals, in many Irish universities. As a Chinese language teacher, I have found it is necessary to understand students' attitudes and expectations as regards Chinese language learning and culture, and to analyse their motivations. In fact, understanding their motivations and attitudes towards Chinese is essential to a good and efficient teaching practice. In his analysis on the social psychology of second language learning, Lambert states that:

> "in brief, [we] hold[s] that an individual successfully acquiring a second language gradually adopts various aspects of behavior which characterize members of another linguistic-cultural group. The learner's ethnocentric tendencies and his attitudes toward the other group are believed to determine his success in learning the new

language. His motivation to learn is thought to be determined by his attitudes and by his orientation toward learning a second language." (qtd. in Gardner, "Attitudes and Motivation." Bilingualism, 1991. P47)

As we explained in Chapter Two: culture is social legacy; it is the deepest foundation in language learning; long-term foreign language learning can be seen as a process of adopting the particular culture of the target language. For the purpose of this research, I wanted to find out the students' views on Chinese language and culture; especially on the Chinese characters, which are closely connected with the culture.

Two questionnaires were designed for two different cognitive/educational levels: secondary level and third level. Further reason for the two different sets of questionnaires is that both learning environments and premises are different: at secondary level, students do not decide themselves to attend Chinese classes, rather, this is organised and decided by school teachers, but at third level it is the students who usually choose to learn Chinese.

The questions are designed to obtain information on the four following points:

- Attitudes to learning a foreign language

- Attitudes to Chinese culture and language

- Attitudes to learning Chinese language and culture and motivation

- Expectations from the learning of the Chinese language

Likert's five-point scale has been used in questionnaires because it is a psychometric scale commonly used in applied linguistics survey research. And this scaling method is very suitable for my research to measure tendency and acquiescence between positive and negative responses to a statement.

We submitted questionnaires in two colleges and to one secondary level group in Dublin. 130 students participated in the survey. The ages of the respondents we surveyed varied from 15 to 25, including a 4th year transition group in secondary school, who were taught an "Introduction to Chinese" course; the other groups are overseas Chinese who are in Irish secondary school but attend a Saturday Chinese school and third level students who have chosen to learn Chinese as FL. Students surveyed in the questionnaires are beginners or false beginners.

Since the questionnaires were submitted to the students during class time, all questionnaires were completed and returned after the students filled them out. As can be seen from a copy of the questionnaire in Appendixes 1 and 2, students could fill out the questionnaires on an anonymous basis and felt comfortable in expressing their opinions.

According to answers to the first two questions in the questionnaires, I was able to separate the respondents into four main groups by their language and cultural background:

- Chinese family background learners (eg. Overseas Chinese who are first or second generation of Chinese abroad. In this survey of 13 overseas Chinese, 69% of them born in Ireland, 77% speak Cantonese to their parents, and 7% of them speak English to their parents)

- Asian learners (all of these respondents were overseas students from Southeast Asia, areas which have been influenced by Confucianism)

- Irish learners

- Non-Irish learners (they are all Roman alphabet language speakers in the survey)

81 students in the secondary school filled in the questionnaire; 11% (nine students) of these are Chinese family background learners, the remainder are Irish. 49 respondents are attending a third-level institution; 45% (22) are Asian learners, 33% (16) are Irish, 14% (7) are non-Irish and 8% (4) are Chinese family background learners.

Secondary School

Irish
Chinese background

Third Level

Irish
Chinese background
Asian
Non-Irish
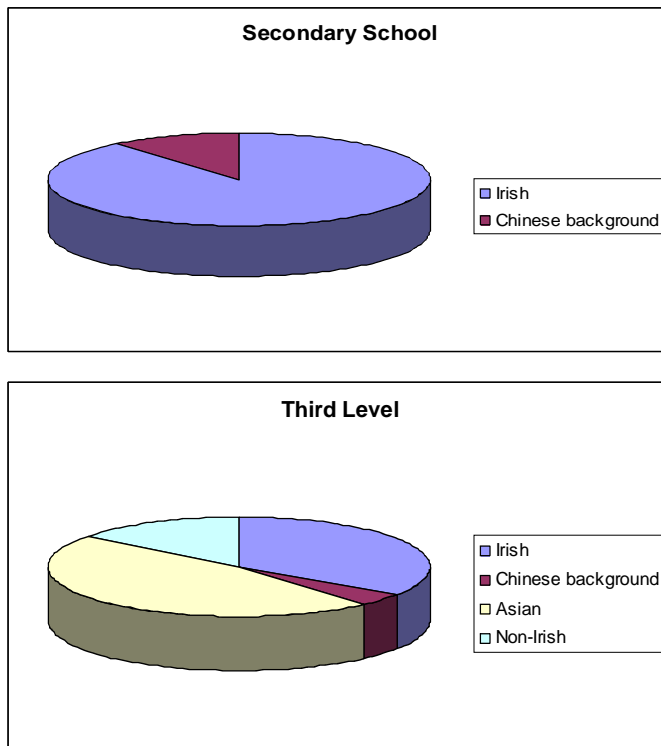
Diagram 3.1.1. Distribution of Respondents, Secondary and Third Level

3.2 Comparisons of the questionnaires' Results: Secondary (S) and Third (T) Levels

As mentioned above, the results are also analyzed into the 4 categories that the questions are designed for (Attitudes to learning a foreign language, attitudes to Chinese culture and language, attitudes to learning Chinese language and culture and motivation, expectations from the learning of the Chinese language).

Although I use the five-point scale in the questionnaires in order to obtain information from the respondents, in order to show clear results, I combine points "1" and "2" into the "Disagree" group, points "4" and "5" into the "Agree" group, so point "3" is the "neither agree nor disagree" group.

3.2.1. Attitude to learning a foreign language

Topic	Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree	
	S	T	S	T	S	T
It is necessary to learn at least one foreign language.	6%	5%	8%	9%	86%	86%
Learning the language I want to learn is more important than choosing a teacher I like.	10%	12%	39%	23%	51%	65%

Table 3.2.1 Attitude to Learning a Foreign Language,

Survey Results on Secondary and Third Level

There is not a wide difference between the two groups for these two questions. Most respondents think that it is common sense to learn at least one foreign language today. What they think of the teacher doesn't influence their choice; they can think and choose independently.

However, 39% of the respondents in secondary school chose the language they wanted to study according to their opinion of the teacher and the language. For this latter group, teachers could have a strong influence in creating interest in learning a specific language.

In secondary school, only 34% of the students think, "it's essential to know French culture to be able to learn French successfully," and 35% of them do not think so. Here I used "French" in the questionnaire as a representative of a foreign language, because it is popular in Irish secondary education. We see most of them do not think there is a necessary link between learning language and culture. However, at third level there is a big difference: 65% of the students who are studying Chinese as FL at this level think "it's essential to know another culture to be able to learn the language successfully"; only 12% of them do not agree.

3.2.2 Attitudes to Chinese culture and language

A."I am interested in Chinese culture, because it's very different from other cultures."
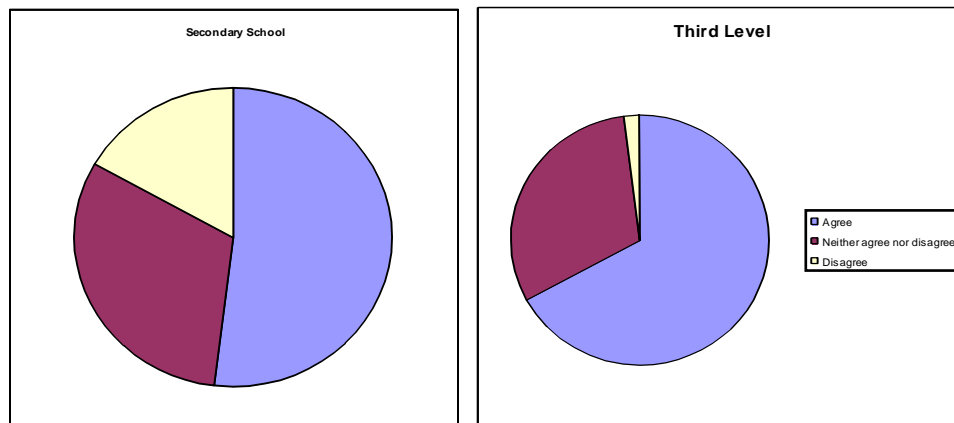
Diagram 3.2.1 Interested in Chinese Culture, Because It's very different,

Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

The cultural difference between Europe and China is much greater than the differences among various European and Anglophone countries, and we think this reason makes students interested in Chinese culture.

B. "I could easily find any information about Chinese culture, like social conventions, values, today's people's life etc. in my mother tongue."
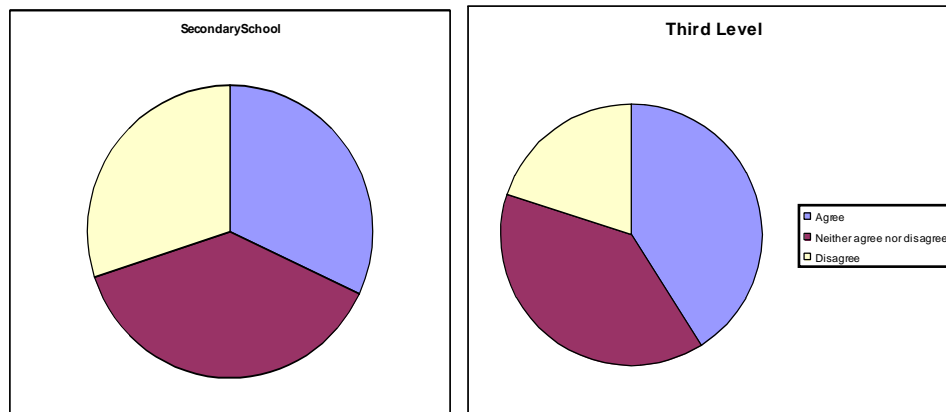
Diagram 3.2.2 I could easily find any information about Chinese Culture

in my Mother Tongue, Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

Over half of the respondents think it is not easy to find information about Chinese culture. Looking at the results from another question about who Confucius is: 85% and 43% of the respondents in secondary school and at third level respectively do not know who he is, a further 27% of university respondents are not sure.

This indicates that the respondents in Ireland have a limited knowledge of or no exposure to Asian culture; they might not think it is relevant enough to their lives, especially for the students in secondary school.

C. "When I think of Chinese culture, the first thing that comes to my mind is the Chinese person."
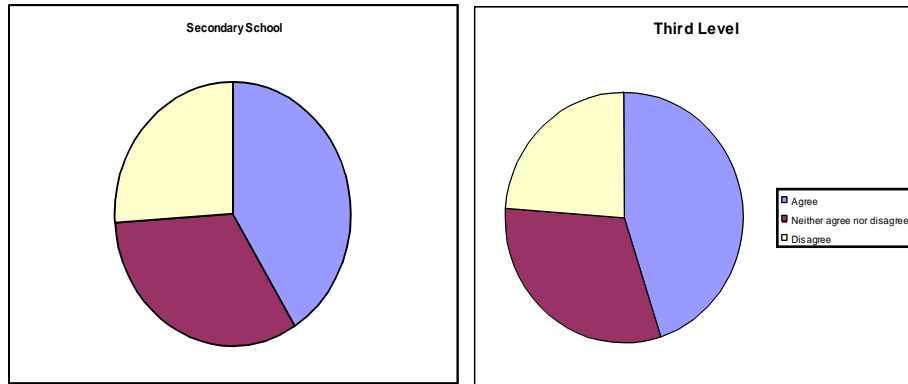
Diagram 3.2.3 Chinese Person is the First Representative of Chinese Culture,

Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

Culture is people's lives, people are the living carriers of culture; they are the most important representatives of the culture. Looking at the result of this statement, nearly half of the respondents might have this awareness; also it shows that they might think culture appears in people's lives and communications, and there are more students who agree with it at third level than at secondary level.

D. "I am more interested in Chinese culture than in the language."
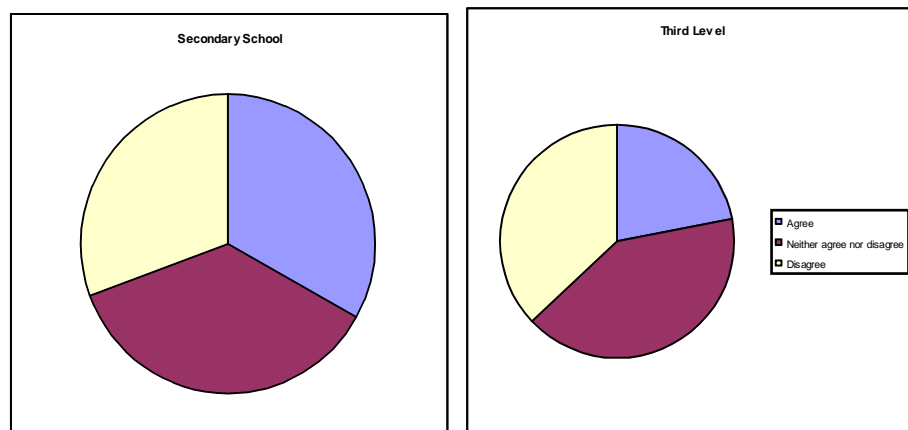
Diagram 3.2.4 More Interested in Chinese culture than in the language,

Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

58

From the diagram, we notice a near equal percentage of interest in culture and in language at the secondary school level; the results show us most of the students are interested in either the culture or the language; they might treat language and culture separately. However, at third level, only one fifth of the students are more interested in Chinese culture. Also, we can see that more people seem to be reluctant to dissociate culture from language. According to our teaching experience, the "disagree" group might focus on using the language to communicate with Chinese people, and it seems that they also think that if they learn the language, the culture will come.

No learners with a Chinese family background at either secondary or at third level think they are more interested in the culture than in the language.

E. "To communicate with a Chinese person is fairly easy."
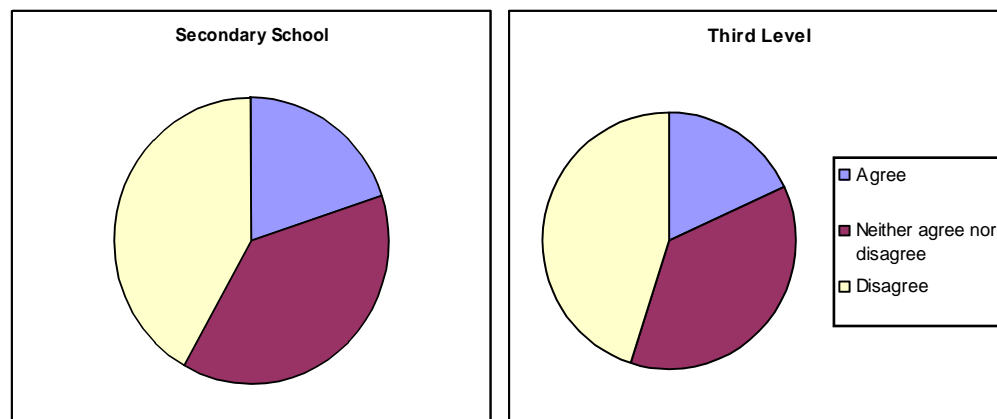
Diagram 3.2.5 To Communicate with a Chinese Person is Fairly Easy,

Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

Less than a quarter altogether agrees with this statement. Nearly half of the respondents disagree with this proposition, including two learners who have a

Chinese family background in each group. In the third level group, 45% of those who disagree with the statement are overseas Asians.

It is therefore ironical that the students with little knowledge of the Chinese language and culture have a more positive view of it, they also think that communicating with Chinese people is not as hard as their fellow students with a much higher level or knowledge of language and culture, this shows that facing up to the reality of ancient and modern Chinese culture, the more the college students learn, the more they realize how little they know.

Referring to another item, which is "I know enough about Chinese culture to communicate easily with Chinese people." 78% of people disagree with this statement in secondary school, including 4 Chinese family background learners; while 49% of people disagree at third level, including 2 Chinese family background learners, and 35% of respondents at third level neither agree nor disagree.

Because of the differences in language and cultural background, the respondents, in their minds, might be a little bit afraid of talking to Chinese people. Apart from the tasks they do together, maybe they don't know how they are going to talk about their lives; it is not easy to share their experiences with each other, even some of the Asian people surveyed think so.

3.2.3 Attitudes to learning Chinese language and culture, probable motivations:

As we discussed before at the beginning of this chapter (3.1), the learning attitude and motivation to the language and its culture are related to achievement. Positive attitudes to and expectations from the target language and culture learning could probably lead to motivation which in turn can produce good results in learning.

"The orientation is 'instrumental' in form if the purposes of

language study reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic

achievement, such as getting ahead in one's occupation, and

is 'integrative' if the student is oriented to learn more about

the other cultural community as if he desired to become a

potential member of the group. It is also argued that some

may be anxious to learn another language as a means of

being accepted in another cultural group because of

dissatisfactions experienced in their own culture while other

individuals may be equally as interested in another culture as

they are in their own. However, the more proficient one

becomes in a second language the more he may find his

place in his original membership group is modified at the

same time as the other linguistic-cultural group becomes

something more than a reference group for him. It may, in fact,

become a second membership group for him. It may, in fact,

become a second membership group for him. (…) (P114)"

(Gardner, "Attitudes and Motivation." Bilingualism, 1991. P47)

These two types of motivation could promote a long-term Chinese learning process:

instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation could

bring some focus to the learning process, and the integrative one can help learners

to make the target culture become a part of their own selves in order to integrate into

the target language society. At the same time, an integrative motivation could help

sustain an instrumental motivation; therefore, an integrative motivation has a profound effect on long-term language learning.

However attitudes lead to motivation, a positive attitude will not always result in a real internalized motivation, according to Gardner: "Someone may demonstrate high levels of Integrativeness and/or very positive attitudes toward the Learning Situation, but if these are not linked with motivation to learning the language, they will not be particularly highly related to achievement." (Gardner, "Language" 2001.p9)

Therefore, the results of questionnaires can only show "probable motivations" through the examination of the students' attitudes towards learning Chinese; only real achievements can demonstrate a genuine motivation.

A. "I'd like to learn Chinese, because I think it is necessary to learn Chinese in the changing world."
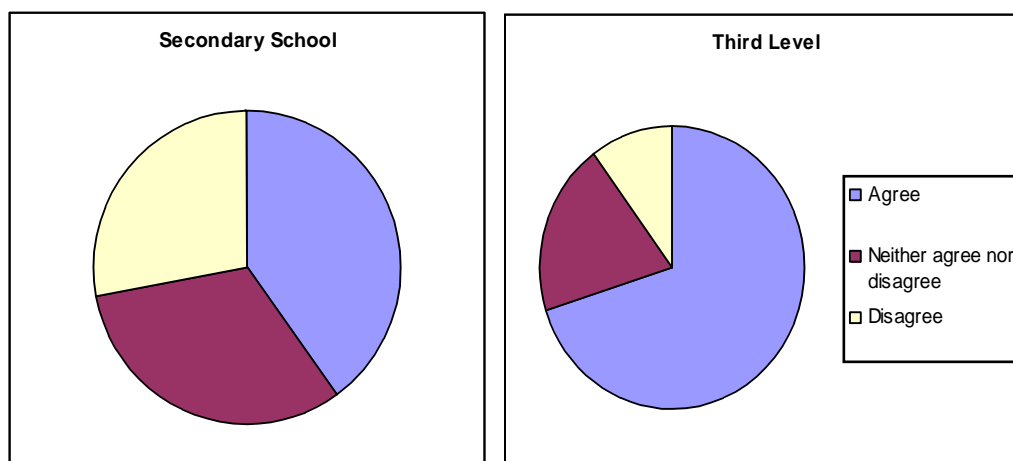
Diagram 3.2.6 It Is Necessary to Learn Chinese, Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

45% of the students in secondary school agreed with this statement, but this figure goes up to 78% in the case of Chinese family background learners at secondary level.

Also we can see clearly that the students at third level have a higher probable instrumental motivation to learn Chinese, since they chose Chinese as a serious subject to learn.

B."I'd like to learn Chinese, because I am interested in Chinese culture."
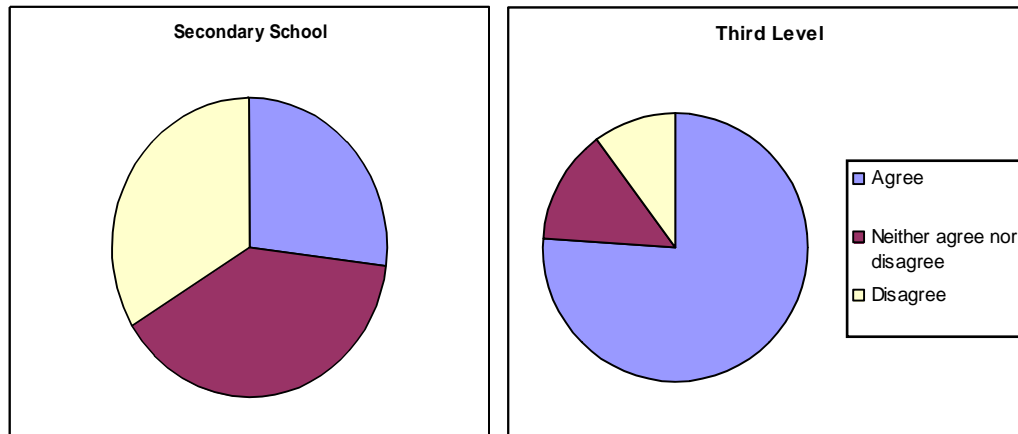
Diagram 3.2.7 Interested in Learning Chinese because Interested in Chinese Culture,

Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

From these two graphics, we can see that the students in secondary school are less interested in Chinese culture than the ones at third level.

As regards Chinese family background learners in a secondary school, their response is very similar to the general attitude in the left graphic, which shows us they don't have a very strong interest in Chinese culture. However, the Chinese background group sample consists of only 9 students; their relevance seems to be therefore not completely statistically significant. These results are supported by my own teaching experience.

Looking at the right graphic, most of the students who chose Chinese as FL to learn at university level, have an interest in the culture, so that would help them to form an

integrative probable motivation. Referring to Diagram 3.2.1 at third level, the probable motivation of the third level students could be formed by a strong curiosity.

C. "Chinese is more difficult to learn than other European languages (including Irish)."
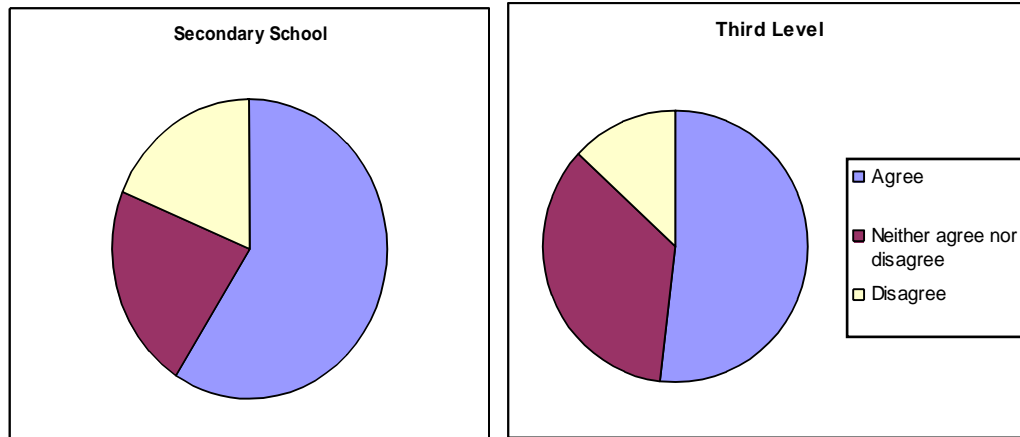
Diagram 3.2.8 Chinese is more Difficult to Learn than other European Languages,

Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

From the two graphics above, we can see that over half of the respondents agree Chinese is more difficult to learn than other European languages.

When comparing the two red sections, which represent the "neither agree nor disagree" percentage, we notice that there are many more students in the diagram on the right side, which could mean that third level students are more realistic about the difficulties involved in learning the language.

When confronted with this language, with patterns and expressions very different from their own, and a culture far removed from their lives, we see that over half of the respondents agree Chinese is more difficult to learn than other European languages, including Irish.

3.2.4 Expectations in the learning of the Chinese language:

Topic	Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree	
	S	T	S	T	S	T
Aptitude at learning language is very high.	16%	8%	38%	55%	46%	37%
I have self-confidence that I could learn Chinese very well.	35%	9%	37%	22%	28%	69%

Table 3.2.2 Expectations from Learning Chinese,

Survey Results at Secondary and Third Level

Although over half of them think Chinese is a very difficult language (cf. 3.2.3 c), most respondents express self-confidence about their aptitudes at learning a language.

This self-confidence seems to lead 67% of Chinese family background respondents into thinking that they will learn Chinese well at the second level; no Chinese family background learners think they are not confident. However, a high number of respondents are self-confident about their learning abilities: 69%; Asian and Chinese background learners occupy the majority of this optimistic group; a small sample (4) of students do not have self-confidence: 9%.

3.2.5 Summary

From the results above, in secondary school, most of the Irish students think Chinese is hard to learn. Although most of them think that in a changing world it is necessary to learn Chinese, this attitude won't be enough to form an integrated motivation to learn the language. Therefore, over 70% of them do not have an expectation that they could learn it well. Young overseas Chinese have already adapted to Irish life. Most of the learners who have Chinese family background do not think Chinese is

hard to learn, and they are quite self-confident that they could learn it well. They are not interested in the culture, but most of them think it is necessary to learn the language, which could help them form an instrumental motivation.

When we compare the results of the two different levels, according to their language learning experiences, most respondents in secondary school do not think there is an essential link between learning language and learning culture. However, the respondents in colleges have more positive views concerning this relationship.

The last question asked in the questionnaire for secondary school students is whether they think Chinese should be a Leaving Certificate subject. Close to one third of them agree with this proposal, while 42% don't agree; but 28% of them neither agree nor disagree. This shows that if the Chinese language had been put in place as a Leaving Certificate subject, only 30% of respondents would view it favourably. This is in contradiction with 45% expressing the view that "it is necessary to learn in the changing world" (question 16) One missing element is where the 28% neither agree nor disagree would position themselves if forced to make a choice. One could only suppose that, since it is part of the transition year, the Chinese class does not appear as part of the real world they are being prepared for, i.e. the Leaving Certificate.

3.3 Questionnaires' Results about the Attitudes and Expectations of Students at Third Level

In this part, I will focus on the third level, where students have chosen Chinese as a second, third or fourth language to learn. It is a serious subject for them; they have made a choice to study Chinese. They would have had the time to form a more mature opinion on the learning process.

3.3.1 About the Language:

Topic	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree
Chinese is more difficult to learn than other European languages (including Irish).	14%	35%	51%
Mandarin Chinese is not as difficult as I thought after having attended Chinese classes	35%	36%	29%

Table 3.3.1 About the Language, Survey Results at Third Level

From this table, we can surmise that some college respondents have changed their minds after having attended classes. They seem to have come to the conclusion that Chinese is not as difficult as they first thought, although it was "more difficult to learn than other European languages".

If we look at the details of the "agree" group and the "disagree" group in the second row, we discover that there are no non-Irish students in that 35% "disagree" group, who still think Mandarin Chinese is difficult after having attended the classes, but they occupy nearly one third of the "agree" group; this shows us that non-Irish students who are also Western learners have a more positive attitude than Irish students. And Asian learners form 43% of the "agree" group. Because of the similar

cultural background, their attitudes are more positive after attending classes than is the case with other respondents.

When talking about the Chinese language, many people would think about its written form, which looks like beautiful and mysterious drawings. Since the core of a character is its meaning, it is the foundation of the logic of the Chinese language and of its incipient philosophy. With this in mind, I also asked respondents a few questions about the written language ---- Chinese characters.

Looking at our survey results, only 18% of the respondents do not think Chinese characters are very difficult to learn. 57% of them think they are difficult, including one Chinese background learner. 54% of this group (in the overall group 57%) are Asians.

When being asked if they are more interested in Chinese characters than in the language, 12% of students agree (49% of students disagree). The results I obtained seem to show that learners in Dublin are not interested in the Chinese written language; they would like to pay more attention to oral communications as they usually do when they are learning other European languages. Therefore, in the teaching of the Chinese language, it is very important to emphasize the learning of characters. Learners in Dublin might otherwise miss out on fundamentals of the Chinese language, which are necessary for the sustained and long-term learning of Chinese.

However, the students were asked if Chinese characters help them learn Mandarin. We obtained the following results: 59% of college respondents agree, comprising Irish students 48%, Asians 38%, Chinese background learners 7%, and non-Irish 7%;

only 20% of them disagree. Also, as a written language, the Chinese character has had a strong influence on the formation of Chinese culture. But consider our survey results of the following statement: "If Chinese had no characters I would have learned another language." 84% of the respondents disagree, only 4% of them agree. The majority of respondents seem to miss the link between the written character and the culture.

3.3.2 Concerning Culture:

Topic	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree
Being curious about Chinese culture helps me in learning Chinese.	8%	31%	61%
Chinese teachers are very different from other language teachers.	39%	43%	18%
[My view of] Chinese Culture has changed after having attended Chinese classes.	20%	56%	24%
Chinese classes have a strong cultural atmosphere.	20%	35%	45%

Table 3.3.2 About the Culture, Survey Results at Third Level

In the second row of this table, Asian students occupy 67% of the 18% "agree" group; they have a stronger feeling that Chinese teachers express a particular character in classes, which is different from other European language teachers.

In the third row, only one Asian student is in the "agree" group, but they occupy 70% of the 20% "disagree" group. We can contrast two attitudes among Asian students: on the one hand they think Chinese teachers are different from other language

teachers; on the other hand, they do not think the cultural background presented in class is different from what is already in their minds.

In the last row, a Chinese cultural atmosphere is quite evident in Chinese classes. The 45% "agree" group includes a sizeable 32% of Asian students, while only 9% of this group are Chinese background students, 14% are non-Irish; 45% are Irish students. From these figures, Irish students are the group most affected by the Chinese cultural atmosphere prevailing in class.

3.3.3 About the Possible Motivation:

"I decided to learn Chinese, because …"
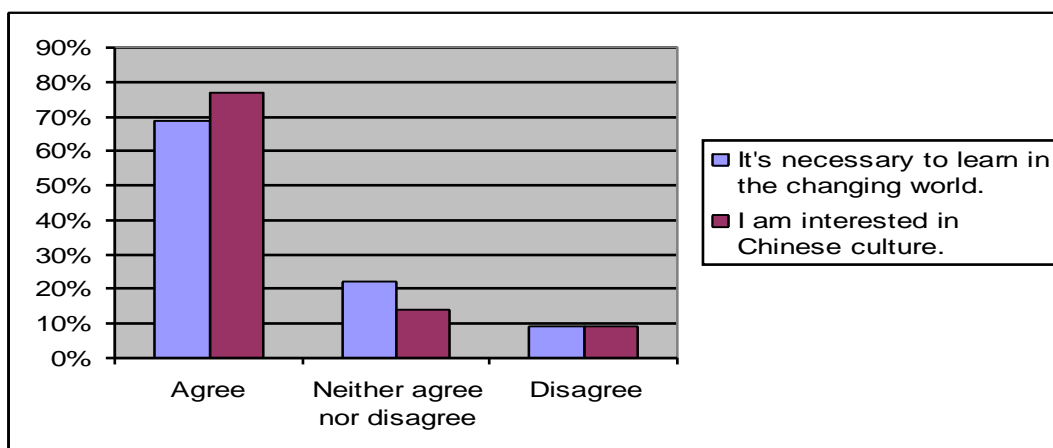
Diagram 3.3.1 I Decided to Learn Chinese, Because …, Survey Results at Third Level

Looking at the comparison graph above, it is clear that respondents have self-awareness to help build up their motivations: However, the majority of respondents have come to learn Chinese because of the culture.

It is very important for the students to keep these ideas in mind, in order to form an instrumental and integrative motivation to learn Chinese. A truly integrative motivation could be the best path to a much higher level of Chinese.

3.3.4 About the Expectations:

Topic	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree
To learn Chinese successfully means I can speak fluent Chinese.	18%	19%	63%
I have self-confidence that I could learn Chinese very well.	9%	22%	69% *

Table 3.3.3 Concerning the Expectations, Survey Results at Third Level

* see Diagram 3.3.2 for detailed explanations

Most respondents think that to learn Chinese successfully is to speak fluent Chinese, but for 18% of them learning to speak is not enough in itself; success to this smaller group might include reading and writing as well.

When talking about having self-confidence in learning Chinese, as to the 22% of the middle column: 64% is Irish and non-Irish, the rest is overseas Asian. Four respondents do not have self-confidence (9% of all respondents), including three Irish and one overseas Chinese.

We break down the 69% in the "agree" column of the second row, and we see:
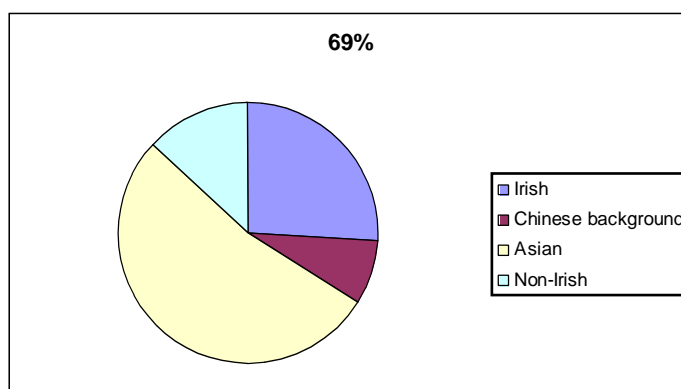
Diagram 3.3.2 I Have Self-confidence that I Could Learn Chinese well, Survey Results at Third Level

Self-Confidence in Learning Chinese according to cultural background: a comparison to the general distribution of cultural background of all respondents:

	I Have Self-confidence that I Could Learn Chinese well (69%)	Percentage of different background of total respondents (100%)
Irish	26%	33%
Chinese background	8%	8%
Asian	53%	45%
Non-Irish	13%	14%

Table 3.3.4 Self-Confidence in Learning Chinese according to cultural background: a comparison of the general distribution of cultural background of all respondents, Survey Results at Third Level

From the figures above, we notice that Chinese background students definitely are reasonably self-confident about their linguistic abilities and that Asian students are quite optimistic about learning Chinese, and their self-confidence percentage is higher than it is in the total respondents. The other two groups' expectations are not as clear-cut: most of the Irish and non-Irish are in the middle. But from the comparison of the two column percentages, non-Irish students are slightly more positive than the Irish students. And three of the Irish respondents do not have the self-confidence to face up to this "difficult" language, but no non-Irish students are more pessimistic than the Irish.

3.3.5 Summary

From the charts above and its results, we can see that third level students have a higher cultural awareness in constructing their motivations. They will have to form an instrumental and integrative motivation, to achieve a high level in Chinese.

The attitudes between the different groups: most of the Chinese family background respondents and Asian respondents have expressed self-confidence in learning Chinese. Asians are still the majority holding an optimistic view. Although Irish students are the group that is most sensitive to Chinese culture, the non-Irish respondents are more optimistic and positive than the Irish.

3.4 Conclusion

Learning and teaching Chinese is a recent development in Dublin, but it is growing. It is still limited to a couple of secondary schools in their transition year and to three third-level institutions, two of them as a compulsory part of a degree programme. It is therefore difficult to obtain a clear picture and form easy categories.

In my teaching practice, I have found different learners all have their own particular stories about learning Chinese. In Dublin, the learning of Chinese has been deeply influenced by teaching environments, personal experiences, etc. However, through the questionnaires survey, the results we obtained still enable us to form an aggregated image of the attitudes and expectations of different cultural background students in the learning of Chinese at second and third level in Irish education.

This survey shows us that respondents learning Chinese as FL at secondary level find it difficult to build connections between Chinese culture and their own culture. Parents, teachers and social institutions all have a role to play here. In my experience, I have observed that family influences play quite an important role in the

learning of Asian students, especially those of Chinese family background; their parents always have an eye on their education, and also respect their study of Chinese. This should be kept in mind for the eventual setting up of Chinese as a Leaving Certificate subject. It is only through a comprehensive policy that Chinese language learning could be popularized effectively in the Irish secondary educational system. However, to truly evaluate the feasibility of Chinese learning programme at the secondary level, it would be worthwhile to investigate students' potential and linguistic abilities. In this respect, cultural attitudes should also need further investigation; it is beyond the scope of this study.

The group of learners who have a Chinese family background forms a special group. From our survey, we can see they might have a very strong instrumental motivation in the learning of Chinese, and have self-confidence to learn it well. But they are not very interested in the culture. They are part of a Chinese cultural community, but it is my opinion that they identify themselves more with the Irish than with the Chinese; for these young students, integration into Irish society is more important than the remnants of their parents' Chinese culture.

However, for other learners, especially Europeans, Chinese culture is quite remote from European cultures. However, these two worlds have come closer in recent years, mainly because of increasing trade. Learning Chinese as a foreign language often starts from the demands of communication, but curiosity and interest in different cultures also lead to a learning process. These could be the first steps to genuine language learning. But curiosity and interest are not enough to initiate an effective learning process. A teaching strategy using cultural elements encourages

students to explore their curiosity and interests, but it is also essential that the language learning is supported by a sustainable and properly structured learning process.

In my own teaching practice and research, I have observed that cultural awareness and personal development form the strongest motivation in language learning, and a great encouragement to reach a higher level. The results from the survey clearly demonstrate that third level students have a higher cultural awareness and self-awareness. They are preparing for a long-term language learning process.

Aims or expectations and attitudes are essential prerequisites to language learning, which has an effect on motivations and outcomes. When we compare Irish students' attitudes with other groups in our survey, it appears that the Irish need more encouragement to achieve their aims. Support from educational policies, teaching institutions, and even the media should be forthcoming; moreover additional research on teaching methodology and pedagogy should be conducted in the Irish educational environment.

Chapter Four

Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

4.1 Interviews with Chinese Language Teachers

As a counterpart to the questionnaire survey of students, I also designed interview questions for Chinese language teachers (Appendix 3). The aim of these interviews was to obtain information on teachers' understanding of LCFL students in Ireland, their own attitudes and expectations of the teaching of Chinese culture, and teaching approaches.

I interviewed six Chinese language teachers in Dublin. Five of them are Chinese native speakers; the sixth is a non-native speaker.

Because of the small sample, a reflection of the actual situation of Chinese teaching in Dublin, and the type of interviews, qualitative interviews, it is neither statistically feasible nor practical to summarize results in graphic or table formats.

They can be separated into two groups: three of them teach Chinese in language institutes; classes are composed of mature students, or university students learning Chinese as an elective, hereafter referred as Group A (composed of teachers A, B, and C); the other three teach Chinese as part of a degree programme in universities,

hereafter referred as Group B (composed of teachers D, E, and F, a non-native speaker).

The questions asked focussed on teaching Chinese language and culture. They covered five topics: students' motivations, learning cultures, the teaching of Chinese culture, difficulties of learning and teaching, and teachers' expectations. All the interviews were recorded. They lasted from 40 minutes to two hours. I will summarise their answers in the following section.

4.1.1. Students' aims, attitudes and motivations

Most students are from Ireland or other European countries, and a few of them come from various Asian countries. Aims and motivations of Group A include career advancement, business trips or travelling, cultural interests, obtaining university credits, and some personal reasons (e.g. married to a Chinese person or having a Chinese family member).

In Group B, students chose to learn Chinese as one of their major subjects. Some of them have cultural interests or have been influenced by their families; these students have not formed a clear aim as to why they are learning Chinese. But most of the students in Group B decided to study Chinese for their future careers.

In Group A, three of the teachers emphasised that learning attitudes depend on individual aims and motivations.

Teacher A said, Chinese elective students who only want to pass exams show negative attitudes in learning activities, but students who have quite clear aims, such as the development of their careers, show positive attitudes. Aims and motivations

are responsible for learning attitudes in Chinese class, irrespective of cultural background or personality.

Teacher B mentioned another situation: overseas Chinese students, who are Cantonese speakers, and grew up in Hong Kong, show different attitudes and behaviours in class. For example, they are more modest and prudent; sometimes they may pretend they understand, because they feel quite embarrassed if everybody understands but themselves.

In Group B, teachers also mentioned that learning attitudes cannot be divided by cultural background, but depend on individual dispositions.

Teacher F pointed out, Non-English/Asian and multilingual speakers are far more daring in trying to speak in class; probably from their own experience, knowing that you learn a language by using it as much as possible.

However, both *Teacher D* and *Teacher F* noted that learners of Chinese background (overseas or half-Chinese, who were born in Ireland) have a more relaxed attitude.

When asked whether their students' motivations changed in the course of the learning process, they answered as follows:

Teacher A: I have not noticed any change of motivation in the learning process.

Teacher B: there are more students in Level 1 classes than in Level 2. Students who make good progress decide to continue into Level 2. They have more confidence in continuing to learn Chinese. Failure to achieve progress would discourage students from continuing the learning process.

Teacher C: Students who only have a superficial interest in the culture would quickly give up learning, especially if they cannot achieve progress at the beginning. But the

students who have some personal reasons to learn Chinese will work very hard at it, since they see learning the language as a part of their lives.

Teacher D: Because I have not taught the same students over an extended period of time, it is very difficult to examine the changes in their motivation in a short learning process.

Teacher E: Most of our students decided to learn Chinese just for a future career. After two years' teaching efforts, 1/3 of our students have become more interested in culture. It probably will help them to increase their motivation to learn the language. However, because most of our students did not receive any information about Chinese language and culture in secondary school, learning Chinese is a fresh, but challenging endeavour, unlike learning French or German. If they can accomplish this successfully, it will give them a special sense of achievement and pride. It will also fuel their learning motivation.

Teacher F: Irish students who are successful at learning seem to have an inner motivation that is not connected with their background; it could be an innate desire to escape from their background and a taste for a deep cultural adventure.

4.1.2. Learning cultures and approaches

Teacher A and *C* think there is no great gap between Chinese learning culture and Irish learning culture in language education: on the one hand, students who have to take language exams might show a passive attitude and stop learning after passing the exams; on the other hand, students who do not need to take exams, which means they come to class because of personal interest, would not feel pressure to learn things by heart.

Teacher A said that students' choice of a subject depends on their interests; once the interests disappear the learning process will stop immediately.

Teacher B: In China, teachers normally talk and explain a lot, and students expect even more in a language class. But students feel that what they have learned is very easy to forget and is useless in many particular situations. In Ireland, students seem to be more independent and active [most of *Teacher B's* students are mature students]. Their learning is more practical. This is very important in language learning, because the main task of language teaching is to achieve communication in the target language.

Moreover, *Teacher A* also mentioned that the students in Ireland concentrate on listening and speaking more than on reading and writing because of their language learning culture.

Teacher C: Teachers are standards and authorities in formal language classes, especially for the students who do not have experience of the target language. Also, in the Irish language-learning environment, students are not used to learning a foreign language formally. Students who have English as a first language do not put a high value on foreign language learning, and this is clearly reflected in the second language-learning situation in secondary school.

Teacher D: I thought there would be many differences between these two learning cultures, before I came to Ireland, but actually, they are very similar. The Chinese emphasise memorisation; this is very helpful in language learning, especially for Chinese characters. In Ireland, students are very diligent, but they also enjoy a participative learning process and prefer independent thinking. In learning Chinese, these two learning approaches should work together to achieve success.

Teacher F: In Ireland, students have very little experience of what it means to speak another language, which means they also rely on rote learning for exams and learn what is needed for a particular task without long-term planning. Irish students find it very difficult to learn independently and construct their own learning processes.

4.1.3. Teaching Chinese culture

Due to the structure of their courses, Group A teachers only have one class a week for each group of students. As *Teacher C* said, the main task of the programme is teaching language. However, they still think teaching culture is very important in language learning. Language teaching should lead students to culture learning.

Teacher A: An introduction to cultural elements has to follow language teaching, to enable teachers to make students interested in the language and relaxed in the classroom. For example, when teaching expressions of time, a teacher can introduce Chinese concepts of time, the Chinese lunar calendar, and so on. Teaching culture can promote a long-term commitment to the learning of the Chinese, but its efficacy still depends on individuals and their differences.

Teacher B: Teachers could enrich classroom activities by using some cultural elements; these cultural elements always have to be combined with the language learning. However, acquiring and understanding culture is limited in class. If students are interested in Chinese culture, they would do some research after the class. I believe students will understand the culture through language learning, both language and culture are important.

Degree programmes include the teaching of both Chinese language and Chinese culture. Group B teachers have more experience of teaching culture.

Teacher D: The content of culture classes includes history, literature, customs, etc. I showed TV documentaries in classes, and asked students to discuss them. I also organised some small competitions or debates to test what the students had understood. Whatever the subject, teachers should try to build a bridge between Chinese and Irish culture. I believe that culture teaching could promote long-term language learning.

Teacher F: A mix of different methods could be used in teaching culture: interactive with a high cultural content; communicative methods and exposure to the written characters to reinforce the idea that Chinese is made of characters and that to truly master Chinese one has to reach a comfortable reading level.

Knowledge of a language's culture is inseparable from its associated (local) culture. Long-term learning could mean that the goal of a truly motivated student is the acquisition of a level of culture close to that of a native speaker.

Teacher E: I think the aim of teaching culture in language education is to raise students' learning interests, to enhance their language learning. To raise and preserve students' interest also should be a language teacher's responsibility. I think teaching culture is one of the teaching strategies in long-term language learning. However, there are other teaching strategies, such as making the learning process easier, so that students could feel a little successful; or making the language classroom more interesting, which could also maintain students' motivations and learning enthusiasm.

Teacher E finds it very difficult to imagine how language learning will take place without culture learning, these two learning processes are fundamentally connected with each other. In our programme, culture classes have been divided into two parts: Chinese culture and Chinese society. The culture part includes Chinese food, music, tea, traditional medicine, philosophy and religion and so on; the society part includes Chinese history, economy, the legal and political system etc. We included Chinese history in the "society part," because today's social situations and phenomena have come through historical development. Although we talk about more traditional Chinese cultural elements in the "culture part", it is very important that we still have an eye on today's modern life. Students find this very interesting.

Teacher E further adds that there are many ways to teach culture, such as lectures, organising different workshops, cultural trips etc. We have had some very successful experiences: Chinese business manners in a restaurant, Chinese New Year shopping trip, classical literature reading, and many others.

Teacher E does not agree with what she has learned of the design of culture classes in Britain, where teachers could spend half of a semester on a cultural element that they had researched. *Teacher E* said, it is easier for the teacher, but students would not have a chance to have a full picture of Chinese culture. Also I don't think every single detail of a cultural element has to be introduced to students who are at the beginning stage. Teaching culture at this stage should focus on the contours of Chinese culture and society, and provide students with a general outline of Chinese history. If students do not acquire such an outline, it will not be easy for them to understand today's situations. Otherwise, students could be forever looking at the

Chinese world through Western eyes. Such students would not be able to understand their future Chinese business partners' mentality or do a good job.

4.1.4. Teaching difficulties

All of the teachers I interviewed considered Chinese characters to be the most difficult part of language teaching. *Teacher E* said that a Chinese language educator mentioned that teaching Chinese is like teaching two languages: the oral Chinese language and the written character language.

In addition to Chinese characters, *Teacher B* and *Teacher C* mentioned that tones are also difficult for students to master.

Teacher A, Teacher C and *Teacher D* also emphasised that in an English-speaking environment, such as Ireland, it is not easy to find an opportunity to practise Chinese, so that students would not have the confidence to speak the language. *Teacher F,* when discussing language environment, cultural background, Chinese characters and tones, noted that all of these combined with each other to embody the difficulties of teaching Chinese.

The lack of suitable teaching materials was a common complaint, mentioned by *Teacher A, Teacher B* and *Teacher D*.

But *Teacher C* and *Teacher E* think that if students were more serious and proactive, Chinese teaching would be more successful.

4.1.5. Teachers' expectations

<u>Classroom atmosphere</u>:

The three teachers in group A share the same view. Because students have a passive attitude in the language class, teachers wish for students to be more active and to seek to gain the initiative, for example by asking questions about the expressions in different language situations (*Teacher C*). A teacher's job is to assist learners in accomplishing tasks. Teacher and students should cooperate in the classroom.

Teacher D: I want the classroom atmosphere to be serious, but also active and enjoyable for language learning. In fact in my classrooms, one group of students is rather quiet; but another group of students is sometimes too relaxed to allow the teacher conduct a formal class, even though it is easy to communicate with these students. I think it would be preferable if these two kinds of classroom atmosphere complemented each other.

Teacher E: Since the students in my classes are too young to concentrate on a single thing for an extended period of time, I introduced some teaching strategies, for example, forming small groups and giving them assignments, and students now follow my lead and work more seriously, so basically I feel satisfied.

<u>Successful learning approach</u>:

Teacher A: Students have clear learning aims; they can form their own learning approaches with the teacher's help in order to achieve these aims. Also I think basically our teaching aim is to make students continue with the learning process,

once they have completed the formal language course; so the aim is to guide them towards independent learning.

Teacher C: Successful language learning needs persistence and cumulative learning, both of these being essential. But students also have to be encouraged to find more opportunities to communicate with target language speakers, in order to promote the continuance of the learning process; otherwise, their motivations could gradually disappear.

Teacher D: A successful language learning approach should be combined with learning culture.

Teacher E: I think, as a teacher, the successful approach is to make students truly interested. I have always considered language education's goal is to help students build a good foundation; real learning (acquiring) will take place in practical situations.

Teacher F: To be truly motivated, students' learning will be the acquisition of a culture close to a native speaker's level.

Benefits of learning Chinese:

Teacher A: I hope students will understand the foundations of Chinese language and culture. Even though some of the students have only attended a single Chinese class, I still expect they will have had a taste of the differences in languages and cultures between the West and East Asia.

Teacher B: After having completed a short-term course, students might have acquired some Chinese language and culture, and use what they have learned in practical communications, and continue to improve their Chinese.

Teacher C: Students will be more interested in Chinese language and culture, and continue learning Chinese.

Teacher D: Students will acquire the culture and promote their personal competence and Chinese language skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Teacher E: As a Chinese, I hope that I could have an influence on students through teaching. In the future, students should be able to actually use what they have learned, as well as understand and enjoy Chinese culture.

Teacher F: Students should become intermediaries between two cultures and acquire new additional thinking modes without replacing their own and will be able to examine their own societies from a new angle.

4.1.6 Summary

In their interviews, teachers state that there is a place for culture in Chinese language teaching. They are trying to use diverse methods to integrate Chinese cultural elements into language teaching.

Most students in short-term learning programmes are mature students. Teachers in Group A think students' learning attitudes and motivations have been strongly influenced by their aims and learning results. Teachers use cultural elements to bring some cheer to their classes. They usually try to explain the context of the language they teach, and make some efforts to bring an active and joyful atmosphere into the classroom.

It is difficult to see changes in learning motivations over such a short teaching period. But one of the teachers considered that there is still a strong probability that some

cultural elements will direct individuals' interests towards exploring the Chinese world and this will lead to a long-term learning process.

In degree programmes, teaching culture is a very important aspect of the language curriculum. For example, some of the teachers have already had good feedback from field trips. In Group B, students are younger and have not yet been in a position to formulate specific aims; therefore, their learning motivations may be more susceptible to influence from the teaching and learning methods. However, Irish students are not used to learning a foreign language; they need more encouragement to promote their study. Using cultural elements would be one of the teaching strategies in language teaching: teaching culture will enhance language learning and understanding; in addition it could promote learning interests and enhance student motivations.

At the end of the interviews, teachers explained that they hoped students would put the language to good use and understand Chinese culture through the learning of the language.

4.2 Critiques of Teachers and Teaching Materials

4.2.1 Teachers' perspectives:

Chinese language teachers as target language cultural carriers have a fundamental influence on students. Teachers can be seen as the representatives of Chinese

culture, they may well be the only target language cultural contact for some of the students. Teachers play an important role in the language teaching process.

In Confucian culture, educational cultural principles

> "include the high value placed on education by society; beliefs that learning involves reflection and application; that hard work can compensate for lack of ability; that the teacher is a model both of knowledge and morality; and that learning is a moral duty and studying hard is a responsibility to the family (Watkins, 2000; Watkins & Biggs, 2001)." (Wang, "Understanding Chinese" 2007. p2)

As Chinese teachers they will bring this model for learning cultures to students in the classroom. Teachers feel morally responsible for their students' learning and wellbeing. They try their best to build up trust with students in order to encourage their learning. At the cultural introduction stage, Chinese teachers can be good at passing on knowledge. Their teaching approaches, which emphasise understanding, analysing and memorisation, are quite effective in training students to form efficient learning habits.

However, most Chinese language teachers are native speakers; they do bring a strong Chinese atmosphere to their classes. TCFL teachers have to remind themselves that LCFL students are not Chinese students but foreigners with a very different cultural background. Some of the Chinese teachers' attitudes and methods may not be efficient with Western learners. Due to the lack of teaching resources and

the few opportunities to receive professional training outside China, their teaching approaches tend to follow the pattern of their own study experience in China. For example, Chinese people are not good at showing emotions, especially in the serious educational context, a simple and cool expression: "（很）好 [(hěn) hǎo, (very) good]" from a teacher is often the extent of teachers' praise. But it might not be enough to encourage a Western student to work hard. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to have a good grounding both in Chinese culture and in the students' culture. Understanding the students' learning culture in Ireland will help teachers to organize more effective methods and strategies to enhance the learning of language and culture by these students.

Moreover, along with the introduction of superficial cultural phenomena, an interaction between Chinese culture and the students' own culture will occur. At this stage, awareness and reflection, experience and creativity, are more important. Native Chinese language teachers need to cooperate with more non-native teachers; Chinese teaching approaches need to combine with Western approaches to encourage a creative learning process whereby the students discover and develop their own talents.

With the wide popularisation of Chinese language learning some attitudes are changing and this is reflected in the teachers' interviews: more attention is now paid to students' learning interests, students' cultural motivations are encouraged. More classroom activities and discussions are organised with a view to the promotion of independent learning.

4.2.2 Teaching Materials:

Some of the teachers in the interviews mentioned the dearth of suitable and interesting teaching materials. One of the reasons could be that many Chinese language textbooks and materials are published in China, where some of the compilers, editors and publishers probably do not have enough experience of TCFL in non-target language environments. It is difficult to produce suitable textbooks.

Owing to the rather serious character of Chinese education, teaching material originating in China has seldom included cultural activities. The general attitude of compilers was that, especially in language learning, students just needed to learn everything by heart. Other methods or approaches were seldom considered. Consequently, it was easy to ignore that learning a language is an enjoyable cultural journey.

As a case in point, we examined cultural elements in several textbooks, for example, Conversational Chinese 301. This was a famous textbook for beginners, its first edition having been reprinted 14 times between 1999 and 2005. With the exception of the Chinese characters and the one picture on the front cover, there is nothing that sets it apart from other types of books, such as business textbooks.

Although the situation has changed, the lack of pictures is still one of the prominent features of Chinese language textbooks. Since Chinese characters have a picto-semantic structure, books containing pictures might be regarded as only suitable for children or for playful activities, not for a serious learning process. For Western learners, such textbooks are very boring, especially in comparison with textbooks for other languages.

To take another example, even where there are pictures, as in <u>Chinese in steps</u>, published in the UK (Cypress Book Co. UK Ltd. 2005), all of the pictures represent British life; there is no evident Chinese content in these images at all. Maybe the editors want students to feel comfortable and include the Chinese language as a normal part of their lives, but the image would give students a distorted sense of Chinese culture; also the lack of Chinese cultural elements might disappoint motivated students.

In recent years, along with the development of T/LCFL, more and more new editions of Chinese language textbooks and other materials have been published; they include more pictures, make use of CD-ROM and have become more multi-media orientated. Still it is a complex task to better integrate cultural elements into Chinese language material.

4.3 Pedagogical Proposals

This study would not be complete if I did not include my own attitudes, analysis and understanding of the Chinese language situation in Dublin. The amount of teaching hours, involvement and level of the programme I have been involved with make it imperative that I incorporate my teaching experience in order to complete the other teachers' critiques. Although they are based on my own personal experience in Dublin, they have not been thoroughly tested and are presented here mainly as hypothetical proposals. One reason is that time constraints in the teaching schedule

and its structure left limited opportunities to test these proposals. Obviously, work on the field should be conducted and this could be part of further research.

From this experience, it is my firm belief that one must emphasise the importance of combining the teaching of Chinese language with the teaching of its culture. The teaching of culture goes in tandem with the teaching of language; otherwise, it cannot be a complete learning process. The learning of culture can gradually guide the learning of language up to the advanced stage. Consequently, at the beginning stage, although learning language is the main task, it is vital to integrate Chinese cultural elements into the teaching process, in order to promote a long-term learning process.

Focusing on beginners' level, I propose the following pedagogies in teaching culture:

4.3.1 Setting up and exploring a new "I"

A name represents an identity; a Chinese name represents a personal identity in the Chinese cultural context. I believe that learning a foreign language is similar to exploring oneself in a different culture.

In my teaching practice, I have noticed that learners who are at advanced level all have Chinese names, which they use in a Chinese context all the time. Moreover, at the beginning level, nearly every student wants to have a Chinese name, they are curious to see and hear this other self in a Chinese context, especially in Chinese characters.

Since the survey results show that Irish students feel Chinese culture is quite remote, it is a good start for students to have a Chinese name, so that they can feel they are closer to this culture, and begin to gain a positive attitude to the learning process.

Chinese culture can then be integrated into one's individual culture. In some situations, one's cultural stereotypes can be ignored: if Chinese language teachers often use a student's Chinese name in the classroom, the student will feel more Chinese, and think about his or her original culture from another angle.

If a student's Chinese learning process proceeds smoothly, he or she will acquire a measure of Chinese identity. This will further motivate towards integration and help to attain successful long-term learning.

4.3.2 Combining the teaching of culture with student diversity

From my students' survey and interview with teachers in Dublin a multi-faceted picture emerges to show that LCFL students are a diverse group, comprising all age groups and an enormous variety of cultural and social backgrounds. But at the beginners' stage, everyone has to start to learn the language as a baby.

In the teaching of culture, some specialists have proposed that "introduction to culture should be combined with language teaching at every stage." (L , "The principles" in <u>Teaching Chinese</u> p193. Trans. Liu) Since L Jiànjì, as it appears, proposes to teach Chinese culture at an early stage through the language itself the quality and quantity of Chinese culture introduced to students would be severely constrained. As Chinese is written with characters, which are not readily accessible to foreign learners, teaching culture through the language at the beginners' and intermediate levels is limited. This makes it all the more difficult for learners to communicate with Chinese people at a certain cultural level.

For instance, at the beginners' level, a mature student's needs cannot be satisfied with these simple introductions of culture or language situations; on the other hand, it

is not easy to organize a deep discussion about a Chinese historical event in a class for young teenagers. Once I heard a mature student complain, "I feel like a baby when learning those stupid dialogues by rote." Therefore, it is important to teach culture while taking into consideration students' learning aims, cultural backgrounds, experiences, and capacities.

Students' interests and learning approaches vary according to age. Their awareness, cognition and competency are at different levels. Students in secondary school can be more interested in cultural activities; it is a good time to start learning Chinese characters. Students on third level degree programmes are given enough time and opportunities to build up a good foundation in language and culture. Mature students' learning depends on the individual, but most of them seem to want to focus on cultural communication skills. Due to the variety of backgrounds, aims etc. among learners, teachers have to design different teaching strategies, to deal with these diverse situations.

In Chinese language classes, students come from several different cultural backgrounds. Proceeding from the results of our survey of students in secondary school and in university, I propose that teachers should stimulate overseas Asian students into exploring Chinese culture at a deeper level; Irish students should be introduced to methods which will enable them to discover and research Chinese culture and open their minds to the Chinese world. Encouraging students from different cultural backgrounds to work and study together, for example in research projects and on class presentations, can also be a mutually enriching and efficient way of understanding Chinese culture.

4.3.3 Teaching Chinese characters as a part of teaching culture

The Chinese language and characters are deeply rooted in the culture. But from the results of the questionnaire survey, we can see that, most of the respondents at third level think Chinese characters are very difficult to learn, and also believe that "to learn Chinese successfully means I can speak fluent Chinese." They would like to pay more attention to oral communication as they usually do when they learn other European languages.

Learning Chinese characters is not only an essential part of the language learning but is also a part of culture learning. My personal experience is that the better a student's comprehension of Chinese characters, the more comfortable that student would feel practising and using the language.
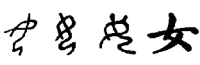
It is natural that most learners who have non-Chinese background concentrate on communication skills first at the beginners' level. It is difficult at first for them to understand, comprehend and accept the fact of the inner structure of Chinese characters as carriers of Chinese culture. However, the Chinese oral language is, at first, easier to master than the written system. If students can speak and understand basic conversations, they will feel more self-confident in bringing their learning process further. I propose that the semantic and cultural structure and system of Chinese characters be introduced and taught separately at the beginning stage.

The history of Chinese characters, their evolution and value in Chinese philosophy, beliefs and aesthetics are an intrinsic part of Chinese culture. It is therefore very important to analyse characters and the main radicals. This approach will help students build up their own foundation in the written system in order to memorise

Chinese characters more effectively; this, in turn, will help students to understand Chinese culture better.

Emphasising the teaching of the inner structure of single zi (character) does not mean we do not need to pay attention to ci (word), which is the unit of expression in modern Chinese. Teaching the meanings and usages of a ci is not sufficient; it is also important to teach the constituent parts of a ci. As Chinese is a language heavily dependent on subjective context, it 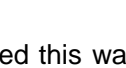is vital to understand the context, topic or logic applying among individual zi's. "Reading comprehension is not simply a matter of knowing a lot of words; one has to get a feeling for how those words combine with other words in a multitude of different contexts."(Moser, "Why Chinese," p3)

For example, normally in the first class, learners will learn the greeting "n h o" (Hello!). Besides oral conversations, teachers can pick a zi " (h o) " to introduce Chinese character and a little cultural information: " (h o) " means good, and it has two parts, " (n)" and " (z)". " (n)" means woman, the current zi went from its pictorial form to a more symbolic form as follows: 𡚭 𡜇 𡚸 女. Similarly, " (z)" which means child, went through the following stages: 𡥀 𡦂 子. Then the zi " (h o) " 𡚻 𡚼 𡛥 好, meaning's "good" can be explained this way: a woman is hugging a child, and this reflection of love in Chinese culture is a good thing. Words or sentences can then be introduced into the classroom such as: " (n h o, Hello)," " (n h o ma? How are you?)," " (h nh o, very good/fine)," " (h orén, good man)." Teachers can teach words or sentences including this character " (h o) " in future classes while students will be learning sentences and characters with an intrinsic cultural element.

I strongly believe that teaching Chinese characters is a part of teaching culture. It might require more time to analyse and explain single radicals and characters, but these will help students build a strong foundation and remove further obstacles for future Chinese language learning. Along with the understanding of more and more Chinese characters, will come a higher sense of the written language and better integration between oral and written Chinese in the comprehension and practice of the student. Moreover, a good understanding of the written language will push the oral to a higher level and consolidate Chinese learning in the long-term.

4.3.4 Diversity in culture teaching

From the survey, but also from my own experience, it appears that students' knowledge of Chinese culture is very limited. Learning a language should be a pleasant cultural journey. Teachers should encourage students to gain as much cultural experience as possible. This will also make the learning process easier, possibly faster and more attractive.

Culture is dynamic.

Culture is a dynamic phenomenon. This can be reflected in the Chinese Language classroom. The teaching of Chinese should include all of its dynamical elements: its long history, its changing and revolutionary character leading up to its internationalisation as exemplified in its contemporary cinema, literature, architecture and art. The teaching of culture should display the process of cultural dynamic development.

I propose that teaching culture could start from people's real lives: to help students discover what possible connections there are between their own culture and the

target culture. This is especially true for Chinese language learners in the Western world, because of a greater cultural difference. From my teaching practice, I have noticed that students can lose their enthusiasm and patience quickly at the beginner level.

Chinese culture is diverse -- same language, different cultures.

Mandarin Chinese is the official language in China with Beijing speech sounds as the standard sounds and the Northern dialect as the base; therefore, Chinese cultural elements encountered by the foreign learner are more often than not from Northern parts of China. China is a huge country made up of many different regions and cultures. The wide cultural gap between the North and the South is very seldom taught formally in Chinese language courses. However, many Chinese language students will be doing business in Southern China. When teaching culture, teachers will have to pay attention to this cultural diversity.

Learning and teaching approaches: using cultural elements variously.

Although part of the process of learning a foreign language includes repeating texts, dialogues, vocabulary etc. and committing them to memory, even a good learner motivation could be ruined if learning were to take place mostly through rote learning. Language cannot be taught well without an appreciation of the various approaches and teaching styles involved. For example, at the beginners' stage, a wide variety of short texts including cultural elements should be used to improve reading comprehension. One of the best methods to understand and memorise vocabulary is to study the language in different contexts, situations or styles as often as possible. Moreover, it is necessary to teach communicating strategies in culture classes as well, such as how to open and lead a conversation, and adjust to different contexts;

these practical skills can help learners use the language appropriately, even when they are at the beginning level, and feel confident and satisfied.

Cultural elements play an important role in textbooks, classroom activities and teaching approaches. It is therefore of paramount importance to design textbooks emphasising communication in many different linguistic situations in order to enhance the learning process.

4.4 Conclusion

Although learning motivations are formed and influenced by many different elements, for example, learning aims, the teachers I interviewed think culture plays an essential role in language learning. Some teachers have emphasised that learning interests are important in the promotion of learning approaches and motivations at the beginner stage. Teachers should protect and develop students' learning interests. Language drills are dull and using cultural elements in the teaching process is one of several good teaching strategies.

We discovered that on the one hand, it is not easy to construct a programme for learning a foreign language and culture for Irish students, who have little experience of learning a second language; on the other hand, Chinese language teachers, especially native speakers, do not find it difficult to understand the Irish learning context and approach; they try to adapt to this teaching environment. But still these teachers expect students to be more active and serious in their studies of Chinese, to be able to cooperate better with the teachers' approaches.

It is essential for teachers to understand the students' learning context and style. Cooperation with non-native teachers has to be increased and enhanced. Moreover, learning and teaching materials need to be improved, in order to not only make use of new Chinese language learning approaches and to display cultural elements properly, but also to suit the students' learning aims in a non-Chinese environment.

In second language learning, the learning of culture gradually comes to the fore as the prime element in language learning as the learner progresses. It is therefore significant to explore pedagogy at the beginners' level and to use Chinese culture to promote learning interests and long-term motivation.

I am of the opinion that not enough is being done about the importance of Chinese culture for the acquisition of the language and its relevant pedagogy.

Therefore, in this section, although there has been no student feedback at this stage, I proposed four points related to the integration of Chinese culture and Chinese language learning.

Giving a Chinese name to students will help them form a self-image in Chinese culture. This strategy will lead students to self-exploration and self-development in the language learning process.

Learners are of different ages, cognitions, learning aims, capacities, etc. These differences should be studied to enable teaching to take account of students' diversity.

Since many teachers considered Chinese characters to be the most difficult part of Chinese language teaching, teaching characters should be an integral part of culture teaching. At the beginners' level, it is not necessary for the competence in the

Chinese written language to be on the same level as in the oral language. Teaching characters is essential for students to build up their own foundation, sense and logic of the Chinese language and to achieve a balanced and integrated competence in the oral and the written language.

In teaching culture, different contents and approaches have to include diversity.

Research for effective pedagogy has been an ongoing process for the last thirty years. LCFL participants have been eager to improve Chinese language teaching methods. But research and innovation in pedagogy are complex and time-demanding.

Teaching in an Irish social environment, *Teacher E* said in her interview: "As far as I can observe, powerful cultures and languages, with a strong economy and therefore a powerful culture, are always in a position of superiority in multilingual conversations. As a case in point, much more attention is often paid to Japanese language and culture in Ireland. It then became the representative of Asian culture. In 2000, the Irish government started a new language programme to promote Japanese language learning in Ireland. We were surprised that at that time they did not think about Chinese at all. Already, in 2000, learning Chinese was getting popular around the world. We can see there is a long way to go for Chinese language and culture learning in Ireland."

Conclusion

The main goal of this research is to contribute to the provision of the teaching of Chinese language in Ireland. This is a typical non-Chinese language-learning environment. Its origins lay in the author's observation that the level of success in learning Chinese was relatively low by comparison with other languages. Since the teaching of Chinese in educational institutions began in earnest five years ago in Dublin, it is important to understand the attitudes and expectations of students and teachers to Chinese language and culture, in order to improve and organize teaching practice.

The questionnaire survey and interviews deal with how Chinese culture and language are received and taught. Therefore, the first concept to define here is culture, especially in applied linguistics. Culture is the social legacy and foundation of the language. It has the power to influence communication. Culture and language shape each other dynamically. Successful foreign language learning is a long-term process. In fact, long-term language learning is a cultural learning process. It can also be a two-pronged process: to understand and explore the world of the target language as well as one's own world. Moreover, language teachers are a decisive component in the learning process.

In the Chinese context, culture has a significant influence on Chinese education and the language learning and teaching process. These concepts and approaches have been largely beneficial to language learning and teaching, as has been the

relationship between teachers and students. The Chinese language learning process can be in harmony with the Chinese cultural experience of learners.

The oral language and written language should be examined separately in Chinese applied linguistics. In the teaching of the language, I propose that teachers emphasise *zi* as a basic *structural* unit to make students understand the logic of the language. The Chinese language and its characters are not only the repository of many cultural elements but also help form the culture.

Since this research is learner-based. I designed questionnaire surveys in order to investigate Chinese language and culture learning. The results demonstrate that not only in secondary school, but also at third level, Irish respondents do not show that they have enough self-confidence to learn Chinese well; this is all the more surprising because most of them think Chinese is necessary and interesting to learn. Without any support and encouragement, it is not easy for them to form a strong motivation leading to successful long-term learning.

Most of the respondents who have Chinese family background at both secondary and third levels are confident that they will be successful in learning Chinese. This in spite of the fact that they did not show any particular interest in learning about Chinese culture. Respondents in this group were mostly born in Ireland, who wanted be identified as Irish. It is thus difficult for them to form an integrative motivation to achieve a higher level in the future.

Asian respondents at third level, who were not born in Ireland and are studying in Ireland away from their own countries, form the majority of the group that has an optimistic attitude to Chinese language learning. Non-Irish Western students'

learning attitudes and expectations are more positive than those of the Irish. From the survey results, we can see that international students in these two groups seem keener and more serious about learning Chinese than the two Irish-born groups (Irish and Chinese family background learners born in Ireland), they are more open to exploring a different language and culture.

However, results from the probable motivation questions demonstrate that third level students have a higher cultural awareness and self-awareness than secondary level students. They are prepared to engage in a long-term language learning process. We propose that more support and encouragement should be provided to strengthen their long-term motivation.

Through interviews with Chinese language teachers, I have examined the current situation of teaching Chinese in Dublin: developing cultural interests, raising cultural awareness and promoting future independent learning are considered by teachers to be important in teaching the language. However, from my personal observations, I believe the specialisation of Chinese language teachers needs to be more professionalised; more non-native speakers are required to cooperate with native teachers, in order to adapt Chinese teaching to the local non-target environment. Teaching materials, especially for culture, need to be developed and improved. Teaching methods should pay more attention to the way language is usually learnt in different learning cultures.

To sum up, I propose some teaching strategies to promote a long-term learning process: improving self-awareness and development by using a Chinese name, making the methods and cultural content suit the diversity of teaching objectives,

teaching Chinese characters separately in order to improve long-term oral-written language achievements, and making the teaching of culture diverse and varied in order to enrich the cultural experiences of students.

TCFL theories have been burgeoning over the last 20 years. The development of the Chinese economy and society has had a strong effect on TCFL. Applied linguistics, as an independent subject, was only established in the middle of the last century. Moreover, TCFL is a relative newcomer to this field. It has of course been influenced by earlier work in applied linguistics. Nevertheless, the construction of a specific corpus of Chinese applied linguistics is still in its infancy, especially regarding research on pedagogy.

In a non-Chinese language environment, due to inherent and external difficulties, e.g. teaching resources, or low demand from the learning market, TCFL's development has been a slow and inefficient process. The motivations for learning and teaching are not easy to preserve. To achieve quality and efficiency in TCFL, a core strategy could be to intensify and improve the teaching of Chinese culture while integrating it with language teaching, as argued above. It can only succeed as a long-term task. The key to successful learning is persistence. Cultural teaching strategies are effective for successful communication and understanding. They promote an active and positive attitude in the learning process. This will help learners achieve personal development and enable them to view the world from another cultural perspective. I believe that there will be tremendous opportunities and challenges for all future graduates in Chinese as a Foreign Language.

But at present the students of LCFL require much help in order to cope with the rapidly changing situation in their chosen field of study. Therefore, in future, more research has to be done on what pedagogy would be used in the teaching for maintaining learners' strong motivations. The teaching of Chinese culture can be one of the most important strategies. At the beginning stage, the primary aim of teaching culture should be to help language learning, i.e. to communicate within a specific language context. It can also help to develop cultural interests and promote an active and positive attitude in language learning. This will provide students with an integrative motivation leading to a long-term learning process.

I believe their choice of a difficult but rewarding field, that of the language and culture of China, will furthermore provide them with an intellectual formation beyond the specific contents of their study and provide them with directions in the changing world.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire Survey (For Secondary School)

In order to improve our Chinese language teaching and better understand students, we would appreciate your help in filling out this questionnaire for the School of Languages in DIT. This is also part of a lecturer's research with the School of Languages in DIT.

Please put the circle around the chosen answer.

1 Where were you born?   Ireland   China   Other Asian countries   Others… … (Please specify)

2 What language do/did you speak to your parents? English   French   Cantonese   Others… … (Please list them all)

3 My aptitude at learning language is very high.   *Strongly disagree*   1   2   3   4   5 *Strongly agree*

4 It is necessary to learn at least one foreign language.   1   2   3   4   5

5 I think if I had more encouragement from my parents, I could learn more.   1   2   3   4   5

6 Learning the language I want to learn is more important than choosing a teacher I like. 1   2   3   4   5

7 When I think of Chinese culture, the first thing that comes to
  my mind is the Chinese person.   1   2   3   4   5

8 To communicate with a Chinese person is fairly easy.   1   2   3   4   5

9 I know enough about Chinese culture to communicate easily with Chinese people.   1   2   3   4   5

10 I know who "Confucius" is, and understand some of his ideas.   1   2   3   4   5

11 I am interested in Chinese culture, because it's very different from other cultures.   1   2   3   4   5

12 Chinese language is more difficult to learn than other European languages (include Irish).   1   2   3   4   5

13 It is essential to know French culture to be able to learn French successfully.   1   2   3   4   5

14 I am more interested in Chinese culture than the language.   1   2   3   4   5

15 I could easily find any information about Chinese culture, like social conventions,
 values, today's people's lifestyle etc, in my mother tongue.   1   2   3   4   5

16 I'd like to learn Chinese, because I think it is necessary to learn in the changing world.   1   2   3   4   5

17 I'd like to learn Chinese, because I am interested in Chinese culture.   1   2   3   4   5

18 I am confident I could learn the Chinese language well.   1   2   3   4   5

19 I think Chinese should be a Leaving Cert. subject.   1   2   3   4   5

Appendix 2

Questionnaire Survey (For Third Level)

In order to improve our Chinese language teaching and better understand students, we would appreciate your help in filling out this questionnaire for the School of Languages in DIT. This is also part of our lecturer's research with the School of Languages in DIT.

Please put the circle around the chosen answer.

1 Where were you born?   Ireland   China   Other Asian countries   Others… … (Please specify)

2 What language do/did you speak to your parents? English   French   Cantonese   Others… … (Please list them all)

3 My aptitude at learning language is very high.   *Strongly disagree* 1   2   3   4   5 *Strongly agree*

4 It is necessary to learn at least one foreign language.   1   2   3   4   5

5 I think if I had more encouragement from my parents, I could learn more.   1   2   3   4   5

6 Learning the language I want to learn is more important than choosing a teacher I like. 1   2   3   4   5

7 When I think of Chinese culture, the first thing that comes to my mind is
the Chinese person.   1   2   3   4   5

8 To communicate with a Chinese person is fairly easy.   1   2   3   4   5

9 I know enough about Chinese culture to communicate easily with Chinese people.   1   2   3   4   5

10 I know who "Confucius" is, and understand some of his ideas.   1   2   3   4   5

11 I am interested in Chinese culture, because it's very different from other cultures.   1   2   3   4   5

13 Chinese characters are very difficult to learn.   1   2   3   4   5

14 The Chinese language is more difficult to learn than
other European languages (include Irish).   1   2   3   4   5

15 I could easily find any information that I want to know about Chinese culture,
 such as social conventions, values, today's people's life style etc, in my mother tongue.   1   2   3   4   5

16 I decided to learn Chinese, because I think it is necessary to learn in the changing world.   1   2   3   4   5

17 I decided to learn Chinese, because I am interested in Chinese culture.   1   2   3   4   5

18 I am more interested in Chinese culture than in the language.   1   2   3   4   5

19 Chinese culture has changed after having attended Chinese classes. 1 2 3 4 5

20 Mandarin Chinese is not as difficult as I thought after having attended Chinese classes. 1 2 3 4 5

21 It is essential to know another culture to be able to learn the language successfully. 1 2 3 4 5

22 Being curious about Chinese culture helps me in learning Chinese. 1 2 3 4 5

23 Chinese teachers are very different from other language teachers. 1 2 3 4 5

24 Mandarin Chinese classes have strong cultural atmosphere. 1 2 3 4 5

25 Chinese characters help me learn Mandarin Chinese. 1 2 3 4 5

26 I am more interested in Chinese characters than in the language. 1 2 3 4 5

27 If Chinese had no characters I would have learned another language. 1 2 3 4 5

28 To learn Chinese successfully means I can speak fluent Chinese. 1 2 3 4 5

29 I am self-confident that I could learn Chinese very well. 1 2 3 4 5

Appendix 3

The interviews Questions for Chinese language Teachers

1 In your Chinese classes, where are your students from (nationality, language background, and cultural background)?

2 According to your observation, what do you think are the students' motivations in learning Chinese?

3 According to your observations, what are the different learning attitudes that students (different cultural background or individual) hold?

4 Based on your teaching practices and learning experience, what are the differences between attitudes towards learning language between Irish and Chinese students? Are there differences in methods?

5 What contents and teaching methods can be used in language culture classes?

6 What kinds of role do teachers can play in language teaching?

7 As a teacher, what kind of atmosphere do you expect in the classroom? What is the current atmosphere?

8 Do you think teaching culture works on a long-term language learning? How does it work?

9 What could be a successful language learning process?

10 What is the most difficult part in Chinese-language learning? (Learning environment, cultural background, Chinese characters, or tones)

11What problems or difficulties have you met in teaching Chinese in Ireland?

12 As a teacher, what do you expect your students to gain from learning Chinese?