Teaching and Learning Culture

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Negotiating the Context

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FOREWORD

Learning and Teaching Culture Beyond Fantasies?

"Beyond the ideas which are chilled and congealed in language, we must seek the warmth and mobility of life."

Henri Bergson (2002, p. 350)

The Joseph E. Hotung Gallery at the British Museum explores China, South Asia and Southeast Asia from the Palaeolithic to the present. In the section devoted to Chinese civilization, one finds a group of 12 colourful and impressive ceramic figures from the tomb of Liu Tingxun, an important military and political character of Tang China from around 700 CE – the "golden age of achievement, both at home and abroad" (MacGregor, 2010, p.55). These were the heydays of the Silk Road. Walking in procession, these creatures, humans and animals of about one meter high, are meant to guard the dead and to impress the judges of the underworld "who would recognize his rank and his abilities, and award him the prestigious place among the dead that was his due" (MacGregor, ibid.). To untrained and ignorant eyes, these sculptures look very "Chinese", even "typically Chinese." Yet, when one looks closer at the faces of the pair of lokapāla figures (Sanskrit for "guardian of the world") one cannot but see Indian faces. At the back of the procession, the horses were, at the time, a new breed in China, brought from the West, while the Bactrian camels originated from Afghanistan and Turkestan.

The Indian, Afghan, and Turkestan references highlight China's close links with Central Asia and other parts of the world at that time. Like other countries, China has always been in contact with the world and its culture bears witness to the many and varied mixings, *mélanges,* but also inventions and constructions of different eras. We could do a very similar analysis of Chinese artifacts from the 19th century or even from today – or of any other "culture" for that matter. A cultural artifact such as the Liu Tingxun tomb also denotes both the symbolic power of the "other" and the power relations between "cultures." As such, the horses and camels, "borrowed" and monetized from other parts of the world, contributed to the General's prestigious status when facing the judges of the underworld.

When one reads about China in Europe and elsewhere, the country is often described as a "monochrome forest" (Cheng, 2008), in which over 1 billion people (and the Chinese "diaspora" abroad) become "chilled and congealed" (see the quote by Bergson at the beginning of this foreword) in limited, static, and sometimes implicitly negative representations. For Alleton (2007, p. 249), such ideas have

been constructed since the Roman Empire based on the "fragmented information" brought back by merchants, travelers and missionaries who visited China. They also contributed to constructing "illusions and fantasies" about China and the Chinese. As we shall see later, the Chinese themselves have also cultivated these elements by (re)inventing themselves and their culture, and reversing the representations that the so-called West has created. At the same time, however, the Chinese have also othered the "West." It is always important to bear in mind that othering is an international "sin" of which we are all guilty (Dervin, 2012).

Attitudes towards China have evolved throughout history, changing how its culture has been described and discussed. In the 17th and 18th centuries, China was admired. "Enlightenment philosophers used virtuous China as a foil to decadent Europe. Every aspect of Europe was held up to criticism: Christianity, hereditary monarchy, and scholastic philosophy; by contrast, China was hailed as the perfect state: land of atheism, benevolent despotism, and social harmony" (Lo, 2013, p. 106). In the 19th century, China was described as a cruel and deceitful land while the 20th century marks a certain fascination with the Chinese revolution. Today, China is the "other" *par excellence*, especially the "other" to be feared. Recent books published in the "West" disclose, in a sense, this fear: *China Shakes The World: The Rise of a Hungry Nation* (Kynge, 2009); *When China Rules The World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (Jacques, 2012); *Tiger Head, Snake Tails: China Today, How It Got There, and Where It Is Heading* (Fenby, 2013).

Throughout the centuries, one figure has been used more frequently than any other to construct Chinese culture in China and abroad: the philosopher Confucius (551–479 CE; his name was Latinized for the first time by Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci in the 16th century). Even if Confucianism (a notion invented by the "West") is said to be the basis of Chinese thinking, behavior, and culture, Confucius has not always been revered in China and has witnessed ups and downs. Philosopher, historian, and writer Li Zhi (1527–1602) was very critical of Confucians and Neo-Confucians. During the May Fourth Movement in 1919, one of the slogans was "Down with Confucianism!" Mao Zedong himself banned the teachings of Confucius in 1949. Finally, The Criticize Lin (Biao), Criticize Kong (Confucius) Campaign (批林批孔运动) that ran from 1973–1976 is also worth mentioning.

Today, Confucius appears to be a "market" (Cheng, 2009), not only in China but also in Korea. The philosopher has also won reverence in Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore, and in overseas Chinese communities. Cheng (2009) goes as far as talking about the emergence of "Confucius Economicus" in the period of 1990–1997. In China, political, media, educational, and social discourses are increasingly related to the importance and influence of Confucius. As such, during the Olympic Games, Confucius' saying 四海之内皆兄弟也 ("all the people of the world are brothers") welcomed people from all over the world.

Interestingly, in his 2012 book entitled *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia,* Doh Chull Shin shows that so-called Confucian values such as hierarchical

collectivism, interpersonal reciprocity and accommodation, communal interest and harmony, and Confucian familism in Asia are no more Confucian than those of people in other parts of the world. Shin (ibid.) bases his criticisms on extensive surveys conducted from 2005–2008 by the World Values Survey Association and the Asian Barometer Survey. This is potentially a direct blow to culturalist and essentialist approaches to such things as intercultural communication, which have used these elements as a way of defining China and the Chinese for many decades (see, for example, the highly criticized work of Hofstede; MacSweeney (2002) and Holliday (2010) offer very convincing criticisms). These ideas have been taught and "alibied" in the sense that they offer "culture as an excuse" (Dervin, 2013) to thousands of university students, student teachers, businessmen, etc. around the world.

Culture Language and Teaching: Towards a New Agenda?

> If one says: 'You think like this and we think like that', then we just stare at each other and 'dialogue' stops here.
>
> Anne Cheng (2010)

Going back to Henri Bergson's quote, what the philosopher suggests is that we, as thinkers, intellectuals, researchers, and practitioners, start concentrating on the "warmth and mobility of life" instead of freezing it. The article by Mads Jacob Kirkebæk in this book is quite telling in this sense as it problematizes the central issues of this volume on learning and teaching culture. Asked to create a "China-box" filled with Chinese artifacts for language and culture education in Denmark, the author is puzzled: "How is culture to be defined? Is culture something that can be fitted into a box? If not, how do we teach culture, and how do we fill up that box?"

The excellent book edited by Mads Jakob Kirkebæk, Xiangyun Du, and Annie Aarup Jensen on the power of context in teaching and learning culture offers many answers to these questions. The rich and exciting chapters that they have collected propose a Task-Based approach to these issues in order to infuse instability, *mélanges*, intersubjectivity, and individuality at the centre of culture learning and teaching. Many of the chapters deal with Chinese "culture" and how to teach-learn it from a complex perspective.

The editors and authors are, in this sense, very close to the current criticisms that have appeared in sinology and anthropology, for example. In what follows, I will take up some of these ideas to summarize and add to the arguments presented in the book.

Let me start with sinologists. First of all, Gernet (2007, p. 21) argues that examining Chinese culture necessitates looking into the alterations that have taken place in China in social, religious, and political terms, and as we did with the Tang tomb figures from the British Museum, to problematize foreign influences and reciprocities.

Anne Cheng, who is a professor of the intellectual history of China at the prestigious *Collège de France* in Paris, endeavors to "show that there is not one

unique way of thinking in China and to recognize the fact that China did not stop thinking in Ancient times, or when Western modernity was introduced to her" (2007, p. 11). She also suggests avoiding comparison (and, at the same time, opposition) between European and Chinese cultures in favor of examining how ideas have circulated between these two political and "imagined" spaces (2008). According to Laplantine (2012, p. 43), this could allow us to go with the "flux of movements" between China and the rest of the world rather than stop them. He adds: "continuously distinguishing and building up contrasts (…) often turn (them) into stereotypes" (ibid.). In relation to literature, Laplantine (ibid.) suggests examining the many similarities between authors such as Su Dongpo and Montaigne, Lu Xun and Kafka, Shen Congwen and Rousseau, or Lao She and Bertold Brecht.

The philosopher Billeter (2006, p. 82) also argues against making comparisons and suggests that we base our analyses of intercultural encounters between the Chinese and other peoples on the "unity of human experience." This is very much in line with Moghaddam's interesting proposal called omniculturalism in the field of education (2012). Based on a two-stage approach, "the omniculturalism imperative compels us to give priority to human commonalities, and requires that children are taught the important scientifically-established commonalities that characterize human beings" (ibid, p. 306). In stage two, differences between groups are introduced to students, but the priority is always *human commonalities* (ibid.). There will always be differences between individuals, even from the same country, but identifying what we have in common might require more intellectual and strategic work (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1986), which makes this approach more stimulating.

Cheng (2008) also proposes becoming aware of the "spectacles" that we wear when we read the relations between two cultures, as these often blind us. Interestingly, in this volume, this is what Niels Erik Lyngdorf, Ulla Egidiussen Egekvist, Xiang-yun Du, and Jiannong Shi do in their article concerning a dinner organized for Chinese students during an intercultural student exchange program between Denmark and China:

> When dinner was ready, the Chinese students were surprised to find that one of the dishes was plain, raw carrots. The Danish teachers had prepared a menu that they believed was very Chinese-inspired (rice, stew, and raw vegetables on the side) to make sure it would be to everyone's liking; however, they soon realized that the Chinese guests were not used to eating raw vegetables. As a result, only a few Chinese students politely tried eating the raw carrots.

This reflective approach to self and other can lead to new learning, not so much about culture, but about how and why we (co-)construct certain entities in certain ways. For the anthropologist Laplantine (2012, p. 23), when one speaks of the Chinese or when a Chinese person speaks of an "other," much is said about the self through the way the other is imagined.

This is very reminiscent of how research into ethnicity, for example, has been problematized over the last decades. In his summary of its major paradigms,

Wimmer (2013, p. 1) explains how research into ethnicity, and also research on culture teaching-learning, has moved from primordialism (ethnicity is natural) to instrumentalism (people choose identities as they see fit); essentialism (ethnicity is stable) and situationalism (people identify with different categories depending on the situation); perennialism (ethnicity is stable) and modernism (ethnic distinctions are changing). In my own research on the Chinese (Dervin, 2011; Dervin & Gao, 2012; Dervin & Gao, forth.), through applying the more critical sides of Wimmer's continuum, I have examined how the opposite sides are put into play in discourses of otherness. In relation to Chineseness, I am especially interested in culturalism. For Eriksen and Stjernfelt (2012, p. 249), this notion refers to the argument that "individuals are determined by their culture only; that these cultures constitute organic and closed wholes; and that the individual, because of this over-determination, is unable to emancipate and free from her culture: on the contrary, she can only blossom in this culture." According to Laplantine (2013, p. 43), culturalism "erects a wall of opacity between continents and isolates "cultures" in unchangeable oppositions" (ibid.). This is definitely an approach that we may want to avoid in culture teaching and learning.

This leads me to another essential aspect in our renewal of culture learning-teaching that will have to be examined in more depth in the near future. The idea that culture is related to struggles of power has been hinted at earlier in this foreword. In her volume on identity/difference politics, Dhamoon (2009, p. ix) proposes to analyze and critique "how and with what effects power shapes difference." Through this approach, Dhamoon problematizes an important aspect of "doing culture": discourses of culture can serve as a way of reinforcing certain supremacies, such as (neo-)colonialism, (neo-)racism, etc. (ibid.: 2). As such, many scholars have examined how culture often serves as a proxy for such things as the concept of race and leads to disguised forms of racism (Bayart, 2002). Dhamoon lists a number of questions that I believe can help practitioners to problematize these issues in their teaching-learning activities (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 56):

> How are meanings of difference constituted relationally through discourse (historically, institutionally, and practically)? How do the forces of power constitute subjects differently and differentially, why, and with what effects? How are meanings of difference constituted in different historical social contexts, and how do these meanings constitute social-political arrangements? How can penalizing and privileging meanings of difference be disrupted?

The notion of intersectionality is also central in Dhamoon's approach. Intersectionality represents the crossing of different identity markers when analysing interaction between e.g. individuals from different countries. So instead of concentrating solely on the old and tired concept of culture, which tends to "wrap us in its suffocating embrace" (Prashad, 2001, p. xi), one should also look into systems of race (or racialization), gender, class, ethnicity, disability, etc. (Dhamoon, 2009, p. 63) and how they *intersect*.

To summarize the approach to culture learning and teaching as it is put forward in this volume, I would like to refer to the ethnopsychiatrist Georges Devereux's distinction between two different approaches to research (1968). He uses the metaphor of holding a stick to describe these approaches. The first approach, which corresponds to culturalism and essentialism (or simple and naïve approaches to culture as described earlier), forces the researcher-practitioner to hold a stick very rigidly in the sense that s/he restrains her/himself from infusing any of the following aspects in her/his work: instability, *mélanges*, intersubjectivity, and individuality. The second approach suggested by Devereux, which is constructivist, contextual, intersubjective, and reflective in relation to culture teaching-learning, consists in holding the stick loosely (ibid.) and letting instability, anxiety, and negotiation enter our teaching-learning. This is, I believe, what the editors and authors are doing with brio in this volume, by moving beyond the fantasies that the rigidly-held stick approach imposes on its holder and those around her/him.

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MADS JAKOB KIRKEBÆK, XIANG-YUN DU &
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1. THE POWER OF CONTEXT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Culture is not taught in a vacuum or learned in isolation; an ongoing dialogue and negotiation takes place between teachers, students, subjects, and context. This happens both explicitly and implicitly, and the implicit dialogue and negotiation is especially in focus here. Teaching and learning are influenced by many factors both inside and outside the classroom and, at the same time, also influence the context. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss and analyze all possible factors that may influence teaching and learning, or to identify all influences that teaching and learning may have on the context. However, we have chosen five factors that we find important, including: (1) views on globalization and culture, (2) concepts of culture, (3) teaching and learning approaches, (4) the teacher-student relationship, and (5) the creation of a supportive learning environment. It is not the intention of this chapter, or of the book as a whole, to make teachers change their views on such things as culture or teaching methods as starting points for their course planning, but only to make them aware of factors, including tacit knowledge, non-formulated beliefs, and embedded values, that may direct and guide their teaching and the students' learning even without a conscious decision being made. In this way, we hope to help teachers see what they ought to consider when planning courses in culture. More specifically, we end up asking five questions that we believe teachers of culture need to answer for themselves before beginning class.

THREE DIFFERENT VIEWS ON GLOBALIZATION OF CULTURE

Globalization

Globalization is not something new, although its present form has its own distinctive features. Steger (2003, p. 19) believes that globalization "is as old as humanity itself" and identifies five historic periods corresponding to five phases of globalization. Robertson (2003) talks of three "waves" of globalization, the first starting with Spain and Portugal's maritime expeditions to India and China in the sixteenth century, the second wave, rushing in over the Third World in the nineteenth century as a result of the industrial revolution led by Britain, and the third wave of globalization, beginning after 1945, being marked by the competition between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to win followers for their causes around

the world. Terminology differs, but scholars seem to agree that the current phase of globalization is characterized by shrinking space, shrinking time, and disappearing borders. Beck (2000) writes that globalization is "the processes through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks" (p. 11). Friedman (1999) makes the point that globalization, more than anything else, shapes the domestic policies and foreign relations of virtually every country. Globalization is thus seen as a driving force that creates flows of money, ideas, and people and, to an increasing extent, interconnects and links continents, regions, nation states, and individual people's lives economically, politically, and culturally. Here, our primarily interest is the question of how globalization influences culture.

One Big Family

In his book *Cultural Globalization and Language Education*, Kumaravadivelu writes that three different views on globalization and culture exist (Kumaravadivelu, 2008), and he terms the advocates of these views hyper-globalizers, localizers, and glocalizers, respectively. The hyper-globalizers believe that "some kind of cultural homogenization is taking place in which the American culture of consumerism constitutes the dominant center" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 38). According to Kumaravadivelu, hyper-globalizers tend to make a simple and direct equation between globalization, Westernization, Americanization, and McDonaldization (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 39), the latter of which Kumaravadivelu explains as being "processes by which the basic principles of the fast-food industry – creation of homogenized consumer goods and imposition of uniform standards – shape the cultural landscape in America and elsewhere" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 39).

Advocates of the cultural homogenization thesis seem to believe that American culture has proved best and that it will therefore spread to the rest of the world. According to this view, cultures are not equal, but placed into a hierarchy with American culture at the top. Anyone is welcome to join, but not to question the dominance of American culture; in order to be part of it, one needs to get in line. Such a view on culture is not new; eighteenth century French intellectuals also thought of culture in the singular. Culture was seen as a hierarchical structure in which the peoples of the world were placed according to their perceived phase of development. Not surprisingly, the French put themselves at the top. It is also very similar to the view of culture in pre-revolution China. In China, it was believed that there was only one culture of any value, namely Chinese culture. However, anyone was allowed to participate and be part of the hierarchy as long as they recognized the superiority of the Chinese emperor and Chinese culture.

Two Worlds: Us and Them

Cultures can also be thought of in the plural. In his famous book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, political scientist Samuel P.

Huntington (1997, p. 32) reminds us that "The tendency to think in terms of two worlds recurs throughout human history … us and them, the in-group and the other, our civilization and those barbarians." This tendency may at least partly explain the reactions to American culture by a group of people that Kumaravadivelu terms the "localizers." The localizers believe that

> … a multitude of local cultural identities are being revived and revitalized owing to real or perceived threats from the process of globalization. They reject the proposition about the cultural dominance of the West over the rest, and about the pre-eminence of the American cultural field… (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 42)

The localizers further believe that

> … globalization has contributed only to the contraction of space, time and borders and not to the expansion of communal harmony or shared values among the peoples of the world. In fact, it has only strengthened the forces of fundamentalism … [and any kind of fundamentalism] … is premised upon a deep desire to protect and preserve local traditional beliefs and practices that are perceived to be threatened by global cultural flows… (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, pp. 43–44)

As was the case with the hyper-globalizers, the localizers' position can also be traced back into history. In response to the increasing cultural influence from an economically, politically, and militarily stronger France, the German philosopher, theologian and poet Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) formulated a systematic theory of culture, according to which each people had its own culture and the right to defend it. Today, the localizers seem to share similar views.

The hyper-globalizers and localizers agree that an increase in global interaction will influence culture, but they do not agree on how this will come to pass. Hyper-globalizers argue that it will lead to cultural homogenization, and localizers argue that it will result in cultural heterogenization. In addition to these two positions, however, a third position exists. This is the position of the glocalizers.

Cultural Transmission Is a Bidirectional Process

The glocalizers believe that "cultural transmission is a two-way process in which cultures in contact shape and reshape each other directly or indirectly" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 44). In the view of the glocalizers, no dichotomy exists between "us" and "them," or our culture and yours. They admit that the local is modified to accommodate the global, but also insist that the global, as part of the very same process, also assimilates with the local. Kumaravadivelu uses the American fast-food chain McDonald's as an example of how this works in practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 45). In order to sell burger menus worldwide, McDonald's accommodates local food habits and serves Kosher food in Israel, Halal food in Islamic countries, and vegetarian food in India, where most people do not

eat meat. Another American fast-food chain, Kentucky Fried Chicken, does the same in China, where *dòujiāng*, hot soy milk, has been made part of the local KFC menu.

In this chapter, we will not argue for one or another of the three views on globalization and culture introduced above, but limit ourselves to putting forward the first question that culture teachers may benefit from asking themselves:

Question 1: Am I a hyper-globalizer, localizer or – maybe – a glocalizer?

The first question a culture teacher needs to consider and critically reflect upon is where he or she places him or herself within one of these three categories: hyper-globalizers, localizers, or glocalizers. Where do society, school, students, and parents expect him or her to be, and where does he or she feel at home?

VIEWS ON CULTURE

Culture is a word with a long history and many meanings, including high culture (film, theatre, poetry, and more), lived culture (cultures-within-cultures), and national culture (Chinese or Danish culture). Therefore, it is not surprising that it has proven difficult to agree on a definition of culture. In the early 1950s, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) compiled and analyzed more than 150 different definitions from a variety of disciplines before they proposed a definition of culture that contained elements of what they considered the main types of definitions. More recently, Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, and Lindsley (2006) have published a book with more than 300 definitions of culture in order "to provide the reader with a resource of extant definitions" (Baldwin et al., 2006, p. XVI). Baldwin et al. divide the definitions into seven different types or themes: (1) structure/pattern, (2) function, (3) process, (4) product, (5) refinement, (6) power or ideology, and (7) group-membership (Baldwin et al., 2006, 27–52). We will leave it up to the readers of this chapter to consult these volumes and make their own choice of definition. Here, we will limit ourselves to one aspect of the discussion on culture. This is the question of whether culture is to be understood as a collection of stable, slow-changing systems of values and behaviors that groups of people share, or if, on the contrary, culture is constantly negotiated, constructed, and shared between individuals in different social contexts. This question is of particular interest and importance for teachers of culture because it has great implications for the choice of teaching methods a teacher will use.

Like Pearls on a String …

Different views of culture will influence teaching and learning. Cultures can be regarded as closed systems, which contain a number of people who resemble one another and are different from all those belonging to other cultures. Cultures co-exist like islands in the sea or pearls on a string, but each of them are clearly defined, relatively homogeneous, and change very slowly. As Kirkebæk indicates in chapter 2 (Kirkebæk, 2013) and Marchetti describes in chapter 9 (Marchetti, 2013), this

descriptive view of culture may have implications on teaching and learning. Culture is understood as a product teachers can offer students and treated as a number of static entities or facts that may be collected, put into proper order, and presented to students one by one.

Culture as Negotiated Co-constructions

Culture may also, however, be seen as a set of more open structures, lacking clear borders and constantly changing. This understanding of culture as something more complex has to do with process, development, and transformation. Individuals do not only belong to one culture, but to several, and the number of cultural communities they are part of is not fixed, but may increase or decrease over time. Culture is constantly created and negotiated between individuals and consists of many cultural communities that one shares with some, but not with all. The contributors to this book all belong to Danish academic culture, but some differ when it comes to food and sports culture. The contributors all belong to the English-speaking community, but where some of them are actively involved in the community of those with small children, others have already left for the community of those parenting teens. This may be used as an illustration of the ways in which individuals share many, but not all cultural communities, and that the ones they share may change over time.

As was the case with the descriptive view, the complex view of culture may also influence the way teachers plan and conduct their teaching. If culture is not fixed, but something created and negotiated between individuals and between individuals and context, a teacher-centered, lecture-based approach to teaching culture yields very little meaning. On the other hand, if one believes it is possible to present learners with a precise description and clear-cut picture of Chinese culture, an experience and participation-based learning-by-doing approach to teaching may be considered a waste of time. Therefore, the second question we would like culture teachers to consider and reflect upon is:

Question 2: Do I subscribe to a descriptive or a complex view of culture?

This question demands contemplation because it may have great implications for the planning and conduction of teaching culture.

APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING OF CULTURE

An Informational Approach

Teachers' approaches to teaching and learning are a third factor that will influence the teaching and learning of culture. Kumaravadivelu (2008) puts it the following way:

It is fair to state that the predominant approach to the teaching and learning of culture in the language classroom has been mostly information-oriented. That is,

> learners were given information about the cultural beliefs and practices of their target language community through cultural tidbits about food and festivals, rites and rituals, and myths and manners. In this informational approach culture was treated as no more than static products or facts that may be collected, codified, objectified, and presented to learners in discrete items (p. 178).

This approach leaves little room for learners' active participation and interaction and generally avoids letting learners work with culture spontaneously and independently for fear that it would result in misunderstanding and false knowledge of the target culture.

A Constructivist Approach

In recent years, however, the informational approach has lost ground to a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. Constructivism is embedded in the philosophy that people construct their own understandings of the world in which they live, and that learning takes place in the process of generating meanings and reflecting on experiences. Therefore, the importance of learners' experiences and their interaction with the social and cultural context is highly emphasized in this approach.

The constructivist approach is implemented in diverse forms, including problem-based learning and task-based learning, among others. At Alborg University, Denmark, a task-based, problem-based teaching and learning approach is employed in the teaching and learning of culture, as presented in chapters 2, 4, and 9 of this volume. Unlike the informational approach, this is a student-centered approach that values individual and different learning outcomes. The teaching and learning process takes place in, to use an expression from Marchetti in chapter 9, a trading zone where participants negotiate their understandings of culture, which are rooted in their individual backgrounds, interests, and pre-understandings (Marchetti, 2013). The task-based, problem-based learning approach to the teaching and learning of culture is inspired by a similar approach to the teaching and learning of language (Du, 2012). The use of tasks in language teaching and learning is exemplified in chapter 5 of this volume. Both approaches emphasize student motivation as the essence of learning and use tasks as an effective tool in motivating students. They require clear definitions of learning goals and expected learning outcomes, and highlight the importance of learners' active involvement, participation, and engagement in the teaching and learning process, underlining the vital role of collaborative learning. Using tasks places focus on meaning instead of form and employs teaching and learning activities that are associated with the real world. Finally, it also emphasizes the important role of context in teaching and learning.

The choice of teaching and learning approach depends very much on the purpose of the teaching. If, as Kirkebæk notes in chapter 2, the purpose is to prepare students for a multiple choice test, a lecture-based, teacher-centered informational approach may be the right choice. If, however, the purpose is to develop the students' cultural

awareness, it may not. Therefore, the only thing we can do here is suggest that culture teachers ask and answer for themselves the following question:

Question 3: What approach to teaching and learning of culture should I use?

The answer to this question is dependent on the purpose of the teaching and critical to ensuring that teachers leave their students with a proper understanding of the material.

THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

The Teacher-Student Relationship

A fourth factor that may influence the teaching and learning of culture is the teacher-student relationship. In societies with a relatively large power distance between the two, like China, teachers and students will expect the teacher-student relationship to be highly hierarchical. As Li and Du (2013) write in chapter 6 of this volume, many teachers in China expect themselves to act as experts and masters in class. The teachers believe that they are the ones who hold all the knowledge pertinent to the subject, and it is their job to transfer this knowledge to the students. In return, they expect the students' undivided interest, attention, and respect. Spontaneous questions and discussions during class may be regarded as disrespectful and as a challenge to the teacher's authority. Many Chinese students also expect the teacher to take the leading role and may consider a teacher that invites student participation, discussion, and critique to be weak or less competent. Li and Du (2013) argue that the teacher-student relationship in China is heavily influenced by the social and cultural context. The context to which they refer is the adherence to Confucian thoughts on human relationships, according to which the subjects must follow the ruler, and the ruler has the obligation of taking care of the subjects.

Danish society is characterized by a relatively small power distance, with the teacher-student relationship appearing to be less hierarchical than in China. In Danish society, important embedded values are equality and homogeneity (Kirkebæk, 2013). In chapter 8 of this volume, Zhang and Jensen (2013), illustrate how this makes Danish teachers minimize differences between individual students and between teacher and student. In order to make the student-student relationship more equal, the Danish teachers refrain from publicly stating which of the students performed the best (or worst) on assignments (Zhang & Jensen, 2013). The Danish teachers also work actively to make the teacher-student relationship less hierarchical and more like a relationship between friends in order to make students feel safe and prevent letting fear of making a mistake keep them from speaking out (Zhang & Jensen, 2013). In Denmark, where equality and homogeneity is the norm, teachers will often refrain from positioning themselves as experts or masters, and will instead invite students to ask questions and even challenge what the teacher is saying. Even though a hierarchy still exists, it is a hierarchy in disguise, and it is considered a failure if the Danish teacher has to openly display that he or she is the person in power.

Mismatches between Teacher and Student Expectations and Behavior

As long as teacher and student expectations of the teacher-student relationship match, there is little risk of conflict, but if there is a mismatch between teacher expectations and student behavior, for example, challenges will arise. Mismatches between teacher expectation and student behavior, or of equal importance, between student expectations and teacher behavior, may lead to misunderstandings and even stereotyping. Kumaravadivelu (2008) mentions three common stereotypes about students from Asia: they show blind obedience to authority, they lack critical thinking skills, and they do not actively participate in classroom interaction. However, what in a Western context may often be explained as "blind obedience" and "lacking participation" may, as Li and Du (2013) elaborate on in chapter 6, be interpreted as students' proper respect for the teacher in China.

Asking questions, being critical, and having discussions with the teacher are important parts of the ideal student role in the West, so this kind of behavior is expected and rewarded by the teacher. In China, however, asking questions and beginning discussions during class without first being authorized by the teacher would not always be rewarded. It might, on the contrary, be understood as being disrespectful to the teacher and a challenge to the teacher's authority and position as master. It could even, as Li and Du (2013) write in chapter 6, be seen as a violation of *Li* (礼), a moral principle or standard that is supposed to secure order and harmony in society.

The above illustrates that cultural capital, in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002), is context-dependent. As Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002, p. 22) formulate it: "It is important to remember that cultural capital is not set in stone and universally accepted, either within or across fields." Cultural capital takes different forms in different contexts, and from this follows that the value of the cultural capital teachers and students carry varies very much based on the context. If, to mention one example, a Western teacher goes to China to teach and intends to have an equal and democratic relationship with his Chinese students, the cultural capital that this intention might have earned him in Denmark may prove valueless in China. Li and Du (2013) put it the following way:

> A simple transplant of Western educational thoughts to a Chinese context cannot work well because it neglects the particularity of the Chinese context. Therefore, the effort of transforming the Chinese teacher-student relationship is in need of a genuine understanding of Chinese ethical and cultural tradition in order to properly assess both its strengths and limitations (see chapter 6 in this volume).

It might be possible to avoid many unhappy experiences in the teaching and learning of culture if teachers and students in unfamiliar cultural contexts could stop regarding each other based on the characteristics of roles assigned in their home cultures and instead began looking at each other as teachers and students in

a certain context. Therefore, the fourth question a teacher in culture needs to ask him or herself is:

Question 4: What roles should the ideal teacher and student play in class?

It is needless to say that mismatches between teacher expectations and student behavior, and vice versa, will influence the teaching and learning of culture in a negative way. Therefore, it is important for teachers of culture to ask what he or she expects from him or herself and from the students in class.

A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Many Different Proposals

The different chapters in this volume contain many suggestions as to what may constitute a supportive learning environment. Where some suggestions conflict, others overlap or supplement each other. Based on the belief that learning is constructive and takes place in a social context as a meaning-seeking process, Kirkebæk (chapter 2) suggests a task-based, problem-based approach to the teaching and learning of culture. To him, a supportive learning environment not only allows students to receive knowledge, but also to create knowledge through purposeful interaction, communication, and the solving of problems related to the real world outside the classroom. In chapter 3, Lyngdorf, Egekvist, Du, and Shi, through reflecting on their experiences of designing an intercultural exchange program between Danish and Chinese students, suggest that a supportive learning environment for cultural learning should include interactive activities that facilitate cooperation between the students from each group. The activities should provide a context for participation, observation, communication, cooperation, and negotiation of practice, and also be meaningful to those involved. Ruan and Du, in chapter 4, propose a Problem-Based Learning (PBL) inspired approach to teaching and learning culture within formal curricula. Their study suggests that a supportive learning environment for culture is not to transfer factual knowledge about culture, but to facilitate meaningful learning and help students develop cultural awareness and understanding. In chapter 5, Rui and Kirkebæk, after having investigated Danish students' perceptions of task-based teaching in Chinese, conclude that task-based teaching may be considered part of a supportive learning environment. Li and Du, in chapter 6, argue convincingly that the definition of a supportive learning environment may be different in different contexts. Different views on teacher-student relationships will lead to different views on what constitutes a supportive learning environment. Does an expert-teacher that offers students knowledge in a ready-to-remember format offer a supportive learning environment, or is it, on the contrary, a teacher that creates opportunities for learning and acts as facilitator? In chapter 7, Wang and Jensen, through their study of a group of native Chinese teachers in Denmark, suggest that teachers' perceptions of Danish students and beliefs in

teaching methods have close connection with and impact on the way they construct learning environments for students. In particular, when these teachers are facing challenges of cultural differences by teaching in a Danish context, they are also struggling to balance their teaching practices so as to provide a supportive learning environment for Danish students. Zhang and Jensen, in chapter 8, investigate three Danish teachers' constructions of professional identity and discover that an important part of their identity is connected to their ability to create a friendly, relaxed study atmosphere that make students feel safe, equal, and free to speak. In chapter 9, Marchetti investigates the possible contribution of digital technologies to the teaching and learning of culture in museums, and her conclusion is that it may be enriched by the introduction of mediated play. Digital technologies are thus also found to contribute to a supportive learning environment. Finally, in chapter 10, Bertelsen, Ying, and Solinap emphasize the importance of "learning, when you are not learning," which refers to the importance of an extensive and well-developed informal learning environment at a university, as illustrated by personal narratives from the University of Cambridge, Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, Harvard University, and Tsinghua. This leads to the fifth and final question:

Question 5: What constitutes a supportive learning environment and how do I contribute to it?

IN CLOSING

The intention of this chapter has been to articulate, illuminate, and increase teacher consciousness of five contextual factors that may influence teaching and learning in culture, namely: (1) views on globalization and culture, (2) concepts of culture, (3) teaching and learning approaches, (4) the teacher-student relationship, and (5) the creation of a supportive learning environment. This chapter leaves it to the reader to choose the "right" view on such things as culture or the teacher-student relationship. The chapter's only aim is to remind teachers of the impact these factors may have on the teaching and learning of culture, so that they become aware of them and become capable of making active, well-considered choices in their course planning.

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MADS JAKOB KIRKEBÆK

2. FILLING UP A "CHINA-BOX"

How Task-Based Problem-Based Learning Can Be Applied to Teaching in Chinese Culture

INTRODUCTION

Center for Undervisningsmidler i Ålborg og Hjørring (Center for Teaching Materials in Ålborg and Hjørring) asked the Confucius Institute for Innovation & Learning at Aalborg University (hereafter CIAAU) to prepare teaching material on Chinese culture for primary school students. The teaching material should fit into a wooden box and consist of a number of artifacts representative of Chinese culture. The "China-box" would then be included in the Center's collection of boxes with artifacts from different countries that primary school teachers can borrow and use in their teaching of history, civics, religion and so on. Filling a "China-box" seemed to be a simple task at first. However, the selection of artifacts turned out to be very complicated. Many questions were brought up, including the following: How is culture to be defined? Is culture something that can be fitted into a box? If not, how do we teach culture, and how do we fill up that box? These questions and the tentative answers to them is the primary focus of this chapter.

CONCEPTS OF CULTURE

Origin and Development of the Concepts of Culture

Our first step, when we started preparing teaching material on Chinese culture, was to look at the origin and development of the concept of culture.

In English. The English word "culture" originates from the Latin verb "*colo*" that means "to cultivate, take care of, nurse, work on" and this verb was later substantivized to "*cultura*" – "cultivation". Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–46 BC) and Plutarch (48–122 AD) expanded the meaning of "*cultura*" by adding "*animi*" – a genitive of "*animus*" – "spirit". "*Cultura animi*" – cultivation of the spirit – had a double meaning: (1) Self-cultivation and self-creation and (2) care for the spiritual growth of others. Originally, *cultura* was the name of a process, that is upbringing, cultivation and education, but during the seventeenth century, *cultura* also became the name of the result of the process: Intellectual or spiritual maturity (Fink, 1988).

At this stage, *cultura* might not only be used at an individual level, but also at a societal level as an identity marker, an inclusion and exclusion tool and to create positive self-representation and stereotypes of others. In the West, eighteenth-century French thinkers developed cultural criteria by which other societies might be judged sufficiently "cultured" to be accepted as equals or – more often – lower ranking in a cultural hierarchy with the French inventers of the system at the top. This cultural hierarchy was built on the assumption that there is one single standard for what culture consists of. It expressed the idea of culture in the singular. At the same time, however, others spoke of it in the plural as cultures.

German philosopher Johan Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) introduced the view that there is no universal culture, rather there are many cultures, each of which is 'cultured' in its own way and, therefore, ought to enjoy the same status. Herder saw cultures as well-defined, stable and very slow-changing communities with all members having the same mentality and sharing the same values, rules and language. Each community was – to use Karen Risager's wording – perceived as "a closed national universe of culture, history, people and mentality" (Risager, 2007).

In Chinese. The Chinese word 文化 – *wénhuà* – means "civilization, culture, education and schooling." Kam Louie (2008, p. 14) writes that the word *wénhuà* literally implies a process of transformation by *wén*, or writing, and that the verbalizing particle *huà* in *wénhuà* indicates the transformative effect of culture.

In China, the original concept of culture had some of the same characteristics as the concept in the West. The Chinese concept of culture was based on the assumption that there was only one culture, namely, Chinese culture, and that China – placed as it was in the middle of a perceived world around it – was the natural center of that culture. China earned, from its own point of view, a special position, because it had created the culture and safeguarded the culture and, therefore, had the authority to decide how close or far away from the cultural center other societies ought to be placed.

China placed itself at the center of a perceived cultural universe for the very same reason as France placed itself at the top in Europe. China strongly believed that it was culturally superior to the rest of the world. It ought to be mentioned though, that Chinese culture was open to outsiders. On the condition that Chinese culture was accepted and recognized as superior, outsiders might be allowed to access and be part of it. In China, it was originally believed that *wénhuà* could be achieved by all who aspired to it so that, through cultivation, anyone could become a cultured person or – as it is put in Chinese – "have culture" (有文化 – *yǒu wénhuà*). It was only later, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, that the idea of culture in the singular was seriously challenged in China and gradually replaced by the idea of cultures in the plural, and it was only then that culture, as an integrated part of nationalistic ideologies, began to be defined as fixed sets of meanings that distinguished groups of people from each other.

Both in Europe and China, the original meanings of culture were connected with process, development, transformation and inclusion of anyone who aspired to become

'cultured'. During history, however, the concept of culture has also been used to describe something closed, fixed and static that one was either born into or that one would never be able to be a part of. These two different understandings of culture – as something closed, well-defined and stable or as something open, without clear borders and forever changing – are still very visible in two of today's concepts of national culture: The descriptive concept of culture and the complex concept of culture.

The Descriptive and Complex Concepts of Culture

The descriptive concept of culture. According to the descriptive concept of culture (Jensen, 2007, pp. 17–20), culture is a well-defined entity within national frontiers, culture is stable and while it changes, it does so very slowly, and culture explains why people act as they do. Culture is perceived as homogenous and all members are considered to share the same ideas, values, rules, and norms that they carry over from previous generations and attempt to transmit to the next one. National culture is a question of birthplace, not of personal choice, and one cannot negotiate or change national culture. It is something that you either have or that you will never be able to achieve. A Chinese person can never be fully integrated into Danish national culture while a Dane, on the other hand, can never escape it.

The complex concept of culture. According to the complex concept of culture (Jensen, 2007), culture is not something that one either has or does not have. Culture is created between individuals, culture is always changing, and culture cannot be limited to nation-states or other fixed entities. Therefore, the significance of culture can never be predicted. Jensen (2007, pp. 20–22) writes that culture in this definition is:

> perceived as the knowledge, meanings and values that individuals share and negotiate with others within different social communities.

Culture is thus understood as a number of communities that one shares with some, but not with all. Teenagers in Shanghai may, to mention one example, feel that they have more in common with teenagers in Tokyo and Seoul than they have with teenagers from the Chinese countryside when it comes to taste in music. However, when it comes to language and food, they may still feel closer to the other Chinese teenagers.

A CONSTRUCTIVIST, PROCESS-ORIENTED, TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH

A Task-Based PBL Approach to Chinese Teaching and Learning

The next step, when preparing the teaching material on Chinese culture, was to decide which of the two concepts of culture would guide our steps. The complex concept of culture was decided upon because it went well with our own experience with and view of culture and learning.

As teachers in a globalized university setting, we experience the reality that culture is always changing, cannot be limited to entities and that culture is not something one has, rather, something that is created between individuals through encounters, interaction and negotiation within different social communities. However, it is not only an experience, it is also a challenge. How, then, does the teacher teach, if culture is *not* to be treated as static products or facts that may be collected, put into a box and presented to students one by one? A tentative answer to this question is to apply a constructivist, process-oriented, transformational approach to teaching culture: Task-Based Problem-Based Learning (PBL).

At Aalborg University, Denmark, a Task-Based PBL approach to Chinese teaching and learning is applied (Du, 2012). Task-based PBL is based on three assumptions (Du, 2012, pp. 49–50): 1) *Learning is constructive*. Knowledge is not understood as a product that a teacher can offer students. Through social intercourse, knowledge is constructed in a social, cultural, and interpersonal process between students and between teachers and students. 2) *Learning is individualized in a social context*. Learning takes place between the individual students, but a prerequisite for individual learning is communication with others and purposeful interaction with teachers and fellow students. 3) *Learning is a meaning-seeking process*. Because seeking of meaning is believed to lead to learning, students are engaged in meaningful activities that require them to cooperate and work together to solve problems related to the real world outside the classroom.

The assumptions that learning is constructive, learning is individualized in a social context and that learning is a meaning-seeking process corresponds very well to the definition of the complex concept of culture: Culture is not something fixed, but knowledge, meanings and values are created, shared and negotiated between individuals within different social contexts. Therefore, we chose the complex concept of culture as our point of departure.

AN ANALYSIS OF TWO TEACHING RESOURCES FOR TEACHING CHINESE CULTURE

Step three in the preparation of the teaching material on Chinese culture was to find out if appropriate teaching materials already existed. Teaching materials on Chinese culture are abundant, but we only found two that had the required box-format: *The Stationary Kit of Confucius Institute* and *The Tea Brewing Set from the Tea Culture International Exchange Association*. In order to find out how these teaching materials might serve our purposes, we made an analysis on the basis of the following five questions related to culture and to teaching and learning:

Culture

– Are the teaching materials based on a descriptive or complex concept of culture?
– What kinds of cultural artifacts are included in the teaching materials?
– Is any cultural artifact in the teaching materials – in our view – missing?

Teaching and Learning

– Do the teaching materials imply any specific teaching methods?
– What are the teaching and learning objectives?

Teaching Material 1: The Stationary Kit of Confucius Institute

Descriptive or complex concept of culture?   It seems quite clear that the Stationary Kit of Confucius Institute (hereafter called the culture kit) is prepared based on the theory that cultures are well-defined, homogenous entities that follow national frontiers and that all Chinese people are considered to share the same culture. In the culture kit, there is no indication whatsoever of cultural differences in China and the selection of cultural artifacts is not discussed in the enclosed specifications. It leaves the teacher and students with the impression that the artifacts are examples of *the* definitive Chinese culture, not just parts of Chinese culture generally. All of this indicates use of a descriptive concept of culture.

What kinds of cultural artifacts?   The culture kit contains 24 cultural artifacts and an USB Flash disk with cultural documentaries, popular films and songs, folk music, folk dance and more. The artifacts are classified into three categories according to their usage, including decorative accessories, experiencing products and learning materials. Decorative accessories include, among other things, traditional Chinese painting scrolls, Chinese knots, face-painting masks and handheld national flags. In the specifications of the culture kit, we learn that the decorative accessories are used for decorating classrooms and teaching environments to create a Chinese cultural atmosphere and stimulate students' interests.

Nine experiencing products include a swallow-shaped kite, Chinese chess, ancient-style model weapons, a bamboo flute and more. The intended use of the experiencing products is to play Chinese-style games and experience Chinese sports and cultural activities. Learning materials include an ink brush, *xuan* paper (*xuan* paper is used in fine arts including calligraphy, painting, rubbing, etc.), "gridded magic cloth for practicing calligraphy", Chinese knotting cord and sets of seal cutting tools, five items in all.

As indicated above, the majority of the cultural artifacts included in the culture kit belong to traditional, Chinese high culture: painting scrolls, a bamboo flute, ink brushes and seal cutting tools. With the kite and Chinese chess as possible exceptions, the culture kit does not contain any examples of culture of everyday life.

Is anything missing?   The selected cultural artifacts illustrate, in the author's opinion, more the culture of the Chinese elite in the past than the culture of every-day Chinese people in the present. The selected cultural artifacts leave the teacher and students with the impression that culture is something old, precious and stable that needs to be treasured and preserved and, implicitly, because no examples of modern Chinese culture are included, that old, traditional culture is of greater value

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than modern culture. Alternatively, the selection of artifacts may leave the teacher and students with the impression that China is less modern or even backward. A further indication of "antiquity" as an embedded value is that the words "ancient" and "traditional" appear nine times, "Classical" appears three times, and "old" is found two times, whereas the words "modern", "today" and "present-day" each appear only once in the enclosed specifications.

Does the teaching material imply any specific teaching methods? As an item of teaching material, the culture kit mostly invites a teacher-centered teaching approach. Presumably, the teacher would make presentations, along with show documentaries and films, and play the music. Students are offered games and other cultural and sports items, but in an introduction letter enclosed in the culture kit it is explicitly stated that these items "could be used for students' extracurricular activities." Besides that, the teaching material does not prompt students to participate and take active part in the teaching and learning process. It should be remembered, however, that an item of teaching material can be used in ways other than the originally intended way, and that most of the cultural artifacts in the culture kit, therefore, may also be used for more student-centered, process-oriented, problem-based teaching and learning activities.

What are the teaching and learning objectives? The culture kit seems to be prepared with the intention of giving students general information on Chinese culture and this informational approach to culture teaching is very common (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). However, as indicated in the section "what kinds of cultural artifacts?," focus is almost entirely on high culture, not on culture as everyday life (food culture, greeting culture etc.) or on sub-cultures. The selection of cultural artifacts may indicate a wish to strengthen China's cultural attractiveness. It focuses on artifacts that can be connected to a perceived "Chinese glorious past," and therefore may be thought to help increase China's soft power. Soft power is, in the words of Joseph S. Nye (2004), understood as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments."

Teaching Material 2: The Tea Brewing Set from the Tea Culture … Association

Descriptive or complex concept of culture? The Tea Brewing Set from the Tea Culture International Exchange Association (hereafter called the tea brewing set) also seems to be prepared based on the theory that cultures are stable and change very slowly. All members of Chinese culture are considered to share the same ideas, values, habits and behavior that they carry over from previous generations and attempt to transmit to the next. Therefore, teaching Chinese culture – or the cultural transmission if you like – must also include a century-old tea ceremony. This can be taken as an indication of a descriptive concept of culture.

What kinds of cultural artifacts? The tea brewing set contains eleven different kinds of utensils, including tea tray, electric kettle, teapots, teacups, a lidded teacup

for brewing, cup holders, serving mug, tea filter, tea appreciation dish, cleaning cloth and an accessory set with tea scoops, tea spoons, tea needles and tongs.

In pre-liberation China, the tea ceremony was part of Chinese high culture (Peltier, 2011; Wang, 2005). It was – especially for women – good manners to master the tea ceremony and was considered part of being a well-educated, cultured person. It has changed somewhat since then, but the tea ceremony is still closely connected to high culture.

The tea brewing set does not contain any examples of culture of everyday life. Even though it can be argued that many Chinese people drink tea daily, the way they drink it is very different from the way it is done in the tea ceremony. It may, however, be argued that the tea brewing set is part of a Chinese sub-culture.

Is anything missing?   The tea brewing set is an example of a cultural artifact used in a Chinese sub-culture of dedicated tea-drinkers. The designers' intention cannot be to let it stand alone, but only to be taken as a part of teaching culture. The only thing missing, but it may very well have been left to the teacher, is information that the tea brewing ceremony is conducted in a Chinese sub-culture and not in each and every Chinese family. Like the culture kit, the tea brewing set and the thirteen steps you must follow to use it conveys the impression that culture is something old, fixed and unchanging. Embedded values seem to be ancient history, order and unchangeableness.

Does the teaching material imply any specific teaching methods?   The tea brewing set invites a teacher-centered teaching and a PPP (present-practice-produce) approach to teaching and learning. Presumably, it is the teacher who unpacks and sets up the mobile tea brewing set and introduces its history, meaning, and practical use. Based on the information sheets that accompany the tea brewing set ("About Chinese Tea", "About Tea Ware", "About Tea Brewing"), the teacher may also introduce the six famous kinds of Chinese tea, the tea ware used in the tea ceremony and explain and go through the thirteen different steps in the tea brewing process, starting from "preparation" and "boil water" and ending with "restore the tea set." On the information sheet, the instructions that explain how to conduct the tea ceremony and proceed from one step to another are precise and written in great detail.

What are the teaching and learning objectives?   The main aim is presumably to give students specific information about one part of Chinese culture: the tea ceremony. In addition to that, the aim may also be to let students have a hands-on experience and try the different steps in the tea brewing process themselves.

More than the culture kit, the tea brewing set leaves room for student participation, involvement and interaction. Students need not be restricted to listening to the teacher's presentation, but may also – if allowed by the teacher – experience and explore the tea brewing process themselves.

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The Need to Work Out New Teaching Material on Chinese Culture

Even though the above analysis indicates that both the culture kit and the tea brewing set are based on a descriptive concept of culture, using an informational approach to teaching culture and mostly inviting teacher-centered teaching, it might have still been possible to use the two teaching resources in a way that corresponded with our views on culture, teaching and learning. Use of teaching materials is not restricted to what is planned by the designers, but may be used differently by individual teachers.

In the end, however, we decided to work out a new item of teaching material for at least two reasons. Firstly, because the focus on ancient Chinese high culture in the culture kit and the tea brewing set would make it difficult for us to fulfill the task we had been given: To prepare teaching material on Chinese culture for primary school students. We needed more examples of Chinese sub-cultures and culture of everyday life. Current culture is closer to the real-life worlds of young children. The second reason that we decided to work out a new item of material was that we not only wanted to inform students about Chinese culture, but also – and maybe more importantly – we wanted to foster in the students cultural awareness and competences that would enable them to critically reflect on, respond to and handle cultural encounters in China and elsewhere, and we did not consider the culture kit and the tea brewing set as the most appropriate tools to reach that goal. We did not only want the students to look at cultural artifacts *in* a box, but also to raise their eyes and make them look *outside* of the box and into the diversity of Chinese culture.

A TASK-BASED PBL APPROACH TO TEACHING IN CHINESE CULTURE

After the decision to work out a new item of teaching material on Chinese culture, step four was to design it in accordance with the Task-based PBL approach we normally use. Our aim was to design a teaching material item that not only allowed students to receive knowledge, but also to create knowledge through purposeful interaction with teachers and fellow students and to interact and communicate with each other in order to solve problems related to the real world outside the classroom. Instead of presenting students with a cut-and-dried picture of Chinese culture we did not believe in ourselves, we would allow students to explore different aspects of Chinese culture on their own and give them room to reflect on and discuss their findings as a way to construct learning and increase their cultural awareness and competences. In the following section, it will be illustrated how the Task-Based PBL approach to teaching in Chinese culture was put into practice.

Example Task: Filling Up the "China-box"

Target group.   Students from primary school to university level who have not attended classes in Chinese culture before.

Teaching and learning objective. The aim of this task is to allow students to search and evaluate information on Chinese culture, thus helping them increase their reflective skills and cultural awareness and competences.

Teaching and learning method. An unfocused, shared information task. Students doing the task share the same information and the intended product is open, which means that it allows for more than one correct solution.

Teaching material. A lidded cardboard box, pens, paper and mobile phones or computers with internet access.

Task Structure

As tasks often are, the "China-box task" is divided into three distinct phases: Pre-task, During-task and Post-task (Ellis, 2003).

Pre-task. The teacher writes "China-box" on the sides of a lidded card box and brings it into class.

During-task, step 1. Pens and sheets of paper are distributed to the students and as their first task students are asked to discuss and write down three examples of Chinese culture they imagine that the box contains. The results are shown in the table below.

In the student-generated list, you find examples of three different kinds of culture: *high culture* (calligraphy, rice paper, movies, silk), *lived culture* (rice, chopsticks, tea, food culture, fireworks, Chinese games, documentaries) and *national culture* (pictures of the Great Wall, Spring Festival decorations, Chinese symbols). However, as an indication of how difficult it is to put culture into "boxes", it is also possible to argue for a different distribution of the items on the list.

During-task, step 2. During-task, step two was to open the box and to the surprise of the students it proved to be empty! The teacher explained that instead of filling up the box with Chinese cultural artifacts of his own choice and thus presenting students with a cut-and-dried picture of Chinese culture, he would like to invite students to help.

The teacher also told the students that they would use the students' pre-understanding of Chinese culture – that is, the examples of Chinese culture that they had listed – as a starting point for deciding what to put into the "China-box." Because of time limits, the pilot study ended here, but it may be continued as suggested below.

During-task, step 3. The students may work with the items on the list in several different ways. They may all work with the same item or they may work with different items in pairs or groups. "Chopsticks", that appears no less than seven times on the students' lists will be used as an example here.

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Table 2.1. Students' pre-conceived understanding of Chinese culture

Students' examples of Chinese culture	Number of times listed
Rice	2
Chopsticks	7
Calligraphy, calligraphy pen	2
Chinese symbols, dragons, knots, double happiness	6
Pictures of the Great Wall etc.	2
Spring festival decorations, 春联	2
Chinese cuisine and food culture (pictures, recipes, utensils)	3
Fireworks (samples)	2
DVDs (documentaries, movies)	1
Tea	3
Silk	1
Chinese games	1
Rice paper	1

On their lists, students had put forward the hypothesis that chopsticks are part of Chinese culture and the teacher now asks them to verify or refute it. They are asked to do so by formulating and finding answers to questions about chopsticks.

Student-generated questions could include the following three:

1. *Who Uses Chopsticks?*
   Students would not have to work long with this question to be able to confirm that Chinese people use chopsticks. They would, however, also find out that not all inhabitants of China use chopsticks regularly (Chinese minority groups like the Uighurs do not) and that chopsticks are used, not only by the Chinese, but also by the Japanese and Koreans, among others. Chopsticks are, therefore, not only part of Chinese culture, but of several other national cultures. Students may also find out that chopsticks are not only a part of national cultures, but also of sub-cultures that have little to do with specific nationalities. Use of chopsticks is – just to mention one example – an important feature of a global sushi culture in larger cities around the world.

2. *How Are Chopsticks Used?*
   Students may go onto YouTube to find examples of how to use chopsticks or they may ask one of their fellow students who is able to use chopsticks to act as teacher. In this way, through peer-learning and peer-to-peer assistance, students' involvement and participation will be increased and they will be allowed to take responsibility not only for their own learning, but also for their peers'. The students' investigation may also reveal that there is more than one "correct" way

to hold one's chopsticks and that people who hold their chopsticks differently constitute different, but overlapping cultural communities.

3. *When Are Chopsticks Used?*
Interviews with Chinese students and teachers at their own university and searching on the internet for pictures of Chinese school cafeterias and work canteens would reveal that many Chinese people do not use chopsticks, but a spoon for their daily lunch. Internet searches may also reveal that on some occasions when they go out to dine at a fine restaurant or they are together with foreigners, Chinese people use a knife and fork instead of chopsticks, or that they use their hands when they visit McDonalds. Students may also find examples of Chinese people using chopsticks for purposes other than eating: as a kitchen utensil or as a toy, depending on the situation and context.

During-task, step 4. Students present their findings to each other and, together with the teacher, discuss and decide if chopsticks should be put into the "China-box." After that, the students may continue to work with other items on the list.

Post-task. The teacher sums up the questions and answers, evaluates students' presentations and explains or elaborates on items related to the task when needed. After having completed the task, students would have created a box with Chinese cultural artifacts that does not claim to contain examples of the definitive Chinese culture, but rather, only representations of their perception of it, and it may – at least in our opinion – be as far as one can hope to get.

DISCUSSION

Is a Task-Based approach to teaching culture efficient? The clear and loud answer to this question is: "It depends!" It depends on the purpose of the teaching. If the purpose of teaching Chinese culture is to prepare students for a multiple choice test on Chinese culture, a lecture-based, teacher-centered informational approach may prove efficient. If, on the other hand, the purpose is to give students cultural competences and prepare them for future cultural encounters in a globalized workplace, then a Task-Based PBL approach may prove more appropriate.

The answer to the question also depends on the teacher's view on culture. Teachers that see Chinese culture as a fixed set of ideas, values, rules, and norms may find it efficient to present them for the students one by one. If, on the other hand, culture is believed to be vague and forever changing, a Task-Based PBL approach may be considered more useful, because it allows more than one "truth" about Chinese culture and prompts students to pose questions about culture and reflect on and discuss possible answers as a means of developing their reflective skills and cultural awareness.

Finally, the answer to the question depends on the teacher's view on teaching and learning. Teachers that see themselves as experts that offer learning to novices and

as knowers that transfer knowledge to receivers of knowledge may prefer teacher-centered, lecture-based teaching, whereas teachers that see learning as constructive and a meaning-seeking process in a social context will probably be more in favor of Task-Based PBL.

The main argument for the use of Task-Based PBL in the teaching of Chinese culture is, as opposed to teacher-centered, lecture-based teaching, in our view, that it makes it possible to teach and learn about Chinese culture without constructing a fixed, static picture of Chinese culture that has little to do with reality outside the classroom. Task-Based PBL lets students experience that Chinese culture is more than one thing, and it may, therefore, better prepare them to cope with the cultural diversity of the real world. Nevertheless, the required box-format of the teaching material we were asked to prepare may still have restricted the students in the ways they approached Chinese culture.

An argument against the use of student-centered Task-Based PBL in teaching of Chinese culture might be that it makes it difficult for the teacher to control the learning outcome. A response to this could be that it is always hard to control what students learn even if you apply a lecture-based, teacher-centered approach. No teaching method guarantees that students learn what the teacher teaches. Another argument against the use of student-centered, Task-Based PBL in teaching of Chinese culture might be that it involves a risk that certain important aspects of Chinese culture would be left out because students do not choose to focus on them, and it is a risk that the teacher, as facilitator of the teaching and learning process, must be aware of.

CONCLUSION

The Confucius Institute for Innovation & Learning at Aalborg University was asked to prepare a teaching material on Chinese culture consisting of a box containing cultural artifacts. Since an analysis showed that two of the existing boxes with Chinese cultural artifacts were based on a descriptive concept of culture using an informational approach and inviting lecture-based, teacher-centered teaching, it was decided to introduce a new box without cultural artifacts that took a complex concept of culture and a student-centered Task-Based PBL approach as its point of departure. The purpose of applying a Task-Based PBL approach to teaching Chinese culture is not only to give students information about aspects of Chinese culture that the teacher finds interesting, but to use students' curiosity, interests and cultural pre-understanding as a starting point for the teaching and learning process. Instead of presenting students with information about culture, they are required to create knowledge and share it among themselves. A pilot study indicates that curiosity, interest and cultural pre-understanding create a need-to-know mindset that fuels students' search for answers to the questions they have formulated. Additionally, it encourages them to evaluate and reflect on the possible answers they may find. It is hoped that this student-centered, task-based PBL approach will allow students to

develop cultural awareness and competences that make it possible for them to, not only know about, but also notice, respond to and handle cultural encounters outside the classroom in a balanced, reflective way.

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Teaching Materials Analyzed in the Study

The "Stationary Kit of Confucius Institute" (孔子学院文化用品套装 – *Kǒngzǐ xuéyuàn wénhuà yòngpǐn tàozhuāng*).

The "Tea Brewing Set from the Tea Culture International Exchange Association" (中国茶文化国际交流协会 – *Zhōngguó chá wénhuà guójì jiāoliú xiéhuì*)

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3. LEARNING FROM DESIGNING AND ORGANIZING AN INTERCULTURAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, China's rapid development has drawn attention in all parts of the world. This has happened in a time when globalization and internalization are terms that frequently occur in the Danish educational context, and several ministerial reports call for more internationalization and an expansion of international activities to go beyond the borders of Europe and the West (The Danish Government, 2006; Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalization, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c).

In the North Denmark Region many primary and lower secondary schools (*grundskoler*) have shown a growing interest in offering courses in Chinese language teaching, even going so far as to arrange student exchange programs (Du & Kirkebæk 2012). In response to this, the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at Aalborg University (CI AAU) initiated a student exchange program between Danish and Chinese schools in early 2012. Two visits to Danish schools from Chinese schools were conducted within half a year, with the aim of facilitating both institutional development toward internationalization and individual student development toward becoming global citizens for both participating schools. In addition to benefitting the students and schools involved, the design and operation of the student exchanges provided learning opportunities for the designers[1] of the program. We will discuss these learning opportunities in this chapter, drawing inspiration from John Cowan's reflection theory.

The design of the student exchange program was inspired by Etienne Wenger's concept of the community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998). In this chapter, a theoretical framework is developed by linking the concept of culture to communities of practice in order to understand and analyze the cultural and intercultural issues of cultivating a CoP. In order to understand, reflect on, and evaluate the program, we, the designers, documented the process using multiple empirical methods: interviews, video recordings, participant observations, student portfolios, and student diaries. These different pieces of documentation will be included in our analysis.

After the implementation of the experimental program, we reflected on the methodology of the design and the research conducted during the program. In this

chapter, we present our reflection by addressing two research questions: What are the challenges and possibilities involved in facilitating the creation of an intercultural CoP via such a student exchange program? What did the designers learn about culture in the process of designing and conducting an intercultural CoP?

In this chapter, we aim to present the design and conduction process of the exchange program, and reflect upon the methods that were used. The framework of culture and learning theory will be employed to analyze and discuss our empirical work, including methodology and process as well as the outcome of the program. Based on this information, we developed several recommendations on how to improve similar student exchange programs in the future. However, we begin with a brief introduction of the background of the student exchange program.

THE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The student exchange was an unexpected opportunity that arose in December 2011 and left us, the designers, with less than two months to prepare. Originally, the CI AAU had not planned to initiate any student exchange programs until later the following year, but after a successful delegation trip of 26 Danish primary and lower secondary school principals to Beijing earlier that year, there was a mutual interest in arranging a student exchange program. As a result, when a school in Hangzhou, China, planned a study trip to the northern part of Germany for 22 students of ages 13 and 14 and found that there would be time for them to spend four days in Aalborg, Denmark, no one hesitated to make the arrangements.

As this was a pilot study for the CI AAU, the short duration of the visit was considered ideal for an experiment, and we were quickly able to make agreements with a Danish partner school that would be willing to find 22 same-age host students and suspend regular schooling for the visiting days. The entire student exchange program turned out to be a meaningful learning experience not only for the students and schools involved, but also for us the designers, due to the data we were able to collect in relation to the student exchange and the reflections that took place during every phase of the program.

LEARNING FROM REFLECTION

To dig deeper into the analysis of our own learning processes, we will focus on reflective learning, inspired by ideas of Donald Schön (1983) and John Cowan (2006). This will act as a meta-level analysis of our own learning in the designing and conducting of the exchange program as a CoP. Thus, we regard ourselves as what Schön (1983) would call "reflective practitioners" and see the entire process of designing and conducting the exchange program as a learning cycle in itself.

The concept of reflection for learning has been developed and discussed intensively by Chris Argyris, Donald Schön and John Cowan, all of whom supplement and build on each other's work. Based on the ideas developed with Chris Argyris (Argyris &

Schön, 1978), Schön continued developing his concept of reflection in *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön, 1983). Likewise, Cowan (2006) builds on ideas from Schön. We took inspiration from both of their works to look at our own learning process.

Reflective learning is often described as following a certain pattern with different reflection phases. Certain elements seem to reappear in most theories on reflective learning, while the role and placement of reflection changes. The reflection is most frequently centered on an experience, activity, or action, and the reflection related to this leads to a conceptualization or generalization that can be described as learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Schön, 1983; Cowan, 2006).

In order to structure this chapter in a chronological way, we find inspiration in Cowan's theory that describes the intervals of reflection as *reflection-for-action*, *reflection-in-action*, and *reflection-on-action*. Reflection-for-action is an anticipatory kind of reflection that takes place prior to an action. It is based on prior experience and knowledge related to an impending task or action. Reflection-in-action is, as implied, found in the process of operating or conducting an action and covers reflection that can lead to improvisation for solving challenges as they occur. This kind of reflection consists of both anticipatory and retrospective thought. Finally, reflection-on-action describes reflection taking place after a learning experience. It includes thoughts on what was done in the situation and tries to analyze and summarize the past experience and extract generalizations which will be of future use (Cowan, 2006, p. 36).

These three phases of reflection will be connected to different stages of our learning process from the student exchange, which are: theoretical considerations of learning and culture for the design of the exchange program (reflection-for-action), the design and conduction of the exchange program (reflection-in-action), and evaluation of the program (reflection-on-action). We go through each phase in detail in the following sections.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON LEARNING AND CULTURE FOR THE DESIGN OF THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

In the *reflection-for-action* phase, we discussed what we knew from previous experiences and what could be brought into future student exchange activities. We discussed our anticipations, needs, and expectations, and invited the two schools involved to do the same, particularly the Danish school. We also reviewed and discussed learning and culture theory in order to strengthen our standpoint and prepare for the future. These theoretical considerations will be the main focus of this section.

Culture

To begin, we find it important to clarify our concept of culture since this should correlate with how one would choose to design the contexts in which it is learned.

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Our understanding of culture in relation to learning is clearly reflected in our choice of learning design for the exchange program.

Definitions of culture vary; we found many different views and understandings of what culture is. In an attempt to connect this to a learning program, one will quickly realize that keeping to only one school of thought can be problematic. Classrooms and student exchange programs each provide different contexts and opportunities for learning about culture, and we believe that different culture understandings fit different contexts. Iben Jensen (2007) categorizes two types of culture concepts, which can be described as two opposing ideals: the descriptive and the complex concept of culture. We can use these two concepts in mapping how we use different elements of culture understandings for providing contexts in which to learn about culture.

The descriptive concept is characterized as the more static understanding of culture where the individual is part of a larger cultural holistic system, which, to a large extent, determines the individual. Culture is, in this sense, a homogenous group of people with a similar cultural identity, which is formed and reproduced in every individual through his or her socializing and growing up in a specific culture. In contrast to the descriptive concept of culture, the complex concept does not perceive culture as a self-reliant system to which all values and meanings can be referred, but instead one that is much more dynamic. The individual agent is not determined by culture, but plays an active part in the negotiation and creation of culture. Culture is created between people rather than inside people, as is the case in the descriptive concept (Jensen, 2007).

In reality, most culture theories have elements of both concepts. Geert Hofstede and colleagues (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), for example, have a very descriptive approach in their analysis and description of national cultures, but they also follow the more complex understanding of culture in distinguishing between cultures, subcultures, and intercultural meetings. Both Hofstede and Danish culture theorist Hans Gullestrup (2006) understand culture in layers with different grades of dynamics. Hofstede illustrates this using an onion shaped figure with a core and outer layers, while Gullestrup uses a bucket with core culture layers in the bottom and manifest culture layers in the top. Both consider culture in its core (including such things as fundamental world conception and basic values) to be hardly changeable, and in its peripheral or upper layers (including such things as manifest and perceivable culture aspects) to be highly dynamic and constantly in negotiation (Gullestrup, 2006; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

In our design of contexts to facilitate learning about culture, we consider both concepts. We acknowledge, like Gullestrup and Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, that the complexity of the culture concept makes it difficult to delineate a sharp division between the two culture concepts in practice. We find student exchanges apt for designing learning based on the complex understanding of culture. The actual meeting can facilitate a context-based environment with cultural negotiation and practicing of culture as described in the complex culture understanding. However,

we also found ourselves reverting to a more descriptive understanding of culture in the process of designing the exchange program, trying to anticipate possible cultural reactions and differences. This understanding and practical approach to culture will be connected to our standpoint on learning in the following section.

Learning – Constructivism and Situated Learning

There is a great deal of variance in approaches to exploring what learning is and how learning happens. A constructivism standpoint is employed in both the design of this program and our research process. This approach does not only focus on how individuals learn through interaction with other people and their environment, but also gives attention to the social dimension or context for learning. John Dewey (1938), one of the well-known representatives of this approach, gives specific weight to the social nature of learning. By focusing on 'doing' and 'experiencing' things that create meaning, Dewey believes that learning takes place mostly through communication and purposeful interaction with others.

Dewey's theories on learning through problem-solving and experiences have been further developed by scholars on learning and implemented in diverse educational practices. Echoing Dewey's propositions, Lev Vygotsky (1978), from a sociocultural learning perspective, further suggests that individual learning and development takes place through participation in cultural practices and interaction with others in the social contexts.

Inspired by these works, this study is based on the belief that learning is an interactive process that occurs in interpersonal, social, and cultural contexts. Learning is constructive rather than reproductive. We also see social interaction as an essential aspect of learning; thus, learning takes place in situated activities (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, participation, activities, contexts, and culture are important elements in making learning happen; as Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) propose, learning is a process of participation in communities of practice.

Situated learning gives more weight to contexts, interactions, activities, and social construction of knowledge instead of decontextualized, abstract, and general knowledge. This perspective of understanding learning is often related to learning activities outside of a formal curriculum. In relation to the design of a culture-learning program, it is important for students to be engaged in meaningful activities so that they can learn about other cultures through intercultural experiences.

To summarize, in this study, we take the standpoint that learning is not only transferring knowledge, but more importantly, transforming lived experiences into knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs (Wenger, 1998; Jarvis, 1992, 2003, 2009). Therefore, in relation to culture learning, we depart from the complex culture concept, creating an environment in which learners actively participate in the process of creating knowledge and building up practices, beliefs, and values, which are complex and context-dependent. In order to provide students with this sort of

culture-learning opportunity, it is essential that the designers create the right context for facilitating learning by creating cultural experiences and practices.

Designing a Reflective Intercultural Community of Practice for Culture Learning

Our design for the culture learning exchange program is connected with our understanding of the concepts of culture and learning, both of which are associated with social practices and contexts of negotiating and creating new knowledge (and culture). In effect, the learning of culture becomes the practicing of culture. Originally, Wenger did not implement thoughts on culture in his CoP theory, but there are times in which meetings of CoPs are also meetings of different cultures, which is why culture matters to those involved in these meetings. Wenger's theory on CoPs is based on a sociocultural understanding of learning. According to this understanding, learning is not merely the transfer of knowledge in decontextualized spaces, which are contexts differing from those in which the knowledge originated, such as most classrooms. Instead, Wenger argues that learning takes place everywhere and at all times, including in classrooms – in which the intended content is not necessarily all that is learned – and is related to social contexts and processes found in communities of practice.

Through our design, we wanted to give the students the opportunity to experience and practice culture. People participate in a variety of social practices and communities all the time, whether at a playground, in families, or in work teams. Membership in these different communities shapes who we are and what we learn (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger, 1998). Our design promotes a community focused on the practice of culture and learning. For the individual, this means that learning is participating and contributing to the CoPs of which you are a member. For designers of programs like ours, the task at hand is to facilitate the right conditions for the development and cultivation of a CoP. This entails providing resources and tools for the participants of the CoP to develop and immerse themselves in the practice (Wenger, 1998).

To summarize what took place in this phase, was that we learned that theoretical knowledge of culture and learning are important resources in the creation of meaningful and ideal intercultural contexts for learning. Thus, based on the theories discussed above, an ideal, reflective intercultural program was designed, and in order to document the Danish and Chinese students' culture learning process[2], multiple methods were employed for data generation, including interviews, video recordings, participant observations, portfolios, and student diaries. Before starting the program, we had expected there would be a great deal of complexity in learning and culture theory, but this complexity became even more apparent as the actual organization and conduction of the student exchange program unfolded.

ORGANIZING AND CONDUCTING THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

In the *reflection-in-action* phase, we both planned activities for the students, particularly in cooperation with the Danish school, and carried out the actual student

exchange. We took positions as participant observers throughout this phase, making adjustments based on the students', schools' and designers' reactions to the program as it progressed.

The events from the student exchange program selected for this analysis will be presented in chronological order under headlines presenting different scenarios. We tell two stories detailing events that happened in the process of preparing for and conducting the student exchange. Each story includes scenes showing highlights of culture learning from the designers' point of view. They are presented with the following focuses:

– What did we, the designers, learn in the process of designing? What did we have in mind about our own and other's culture?
– How did the student exchange program unfold, especially with regard to intercultural interaction?
– How might we improve future student exchange programs?

The style of the narrative will be rich in descriptions and interpretations, and the points of analysis will be descriptions of selected scenes as they were experienced and interpreted by the designers. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) inspires this style of presenting data, for which he coined the term "thick description". This is useful from a methodological point of view since it allows the researcher to present data from a cultural context to the reader in a meaningful way. By presenting the events and reflection processes together, we aim to provide a meaningful way of presenting our data and analyses to the reader, and also to use these examples to illustrate our own learning as designers.

Let Us Go Ice Skating

In the time leading up to the Chinese student exchange, many practical details had to be addressed, and most of the planning of and communication about the program between the Chinese and Danish sides went through the CI AAU. During the planning process, we held several internal CI AAU meetings to discuss the planning of the activities. In this process, the CI AAU's own cross-cultural composition often became apparent and was put to good use since the Danish and Chinese colleagues had different takes on what would be possible to plan and how the Danish and Chinese schools would react to the proposed program. The proposition of an ice skating activity can serve as example.

The two Danish CI AAU designers and the Danish school had come up with the idea of taking the Danish and Chinese students ice skating since the visit would take place in the winter months. This idea was intended to create an opportunity not only for the two groups of students to gain a better understanding of each other by participating in the same enjoyable activity, but also for the Chinese students to experience the local culture of ice skating since many of them are from Southern China where snow is rare. The Danish designers felt no anxiety in response to this

activity and were relieved to have found an outdoor activity despite the fact that it was winter. The idea of going ice skating was later presented at an internal CI AAU meeting, and the Chinese colleagues quickly voiced their concerns. They explained that as hosts, the CI AAU and the Chinese school would have a great responsibility to the Chinese students' parents. The physical safety of the students would be of utmost importance while travelling, particularly in a situation without parents around. Safety concerns are especially crucial when the students are from single-child families, since they carry many concerns from parents and grandparents while travelling.

It was difficult for the Danish colleagues to understand these worries because ice skating is a somewhat normal leisure activity during winter in Denmark, and it did not pose any risks in their mind. Thus, the debate took more than half an hour during the meeting, which was unexpected given the meeting's agenda. Although it was difficult for the designers to reach a common understanding on this matter, it was eventually agreed to adopt a conservative and flexible strategy. It was ultimately decided to temporarily remove the activity from the program and planned to ask the Chinese teachers of their opinion on it upon their arrival.

However, it happened that the Chinese teachers did not have any concerns regarding this activity. In fact, the Chinese students had already gone ice skating in Germany, and it was therefore decided not to include the ice skating activity in the final version of our program (see Table 3.1).

This event is a clear example of the complexity of culture and the unpredictable nature of cultural behavior and thinking. We were incapable of predicting reactions and attitudes about ice skating because culture and human nature are complex, and this was the case both for the Danes and the Chinese. Also, the episode illustrates the prejudices that can exist towards one's own culture, as was the situation for the Chinese, which demonstrates that although everyone has prejudices and expectations that are based on past experiences, it is necessary to remember that these are not always useful for predicting future experiences.

Workshops

For the day of the Chinese students' arrival, we cooperated with the Danish teachers to plan three different workshops: Two with a Chinese theme and one with a

Table 3.1. Final version of the program

Day 1 (Thursday): Arrival at noon. Workshops during the afternoon and communal eating at the school in the evening.

Day 2 (Friday): Regular Danish school day in the morning. Then visit the CI AAU's Learning Centre[3] in Aalborg and go on a GPS-run in the afternoon.

Day 3 (Saturday): Spend the day with the host family. Dinner at a Chinese Restaurant for students and host families.

Day 4 (Sunday): Departure in the morning.

more Danish theme. The students were divided into groups and assigned different workshops.

The idea behind the workshops was to create an intercultural CoP learning context. The workshops were designed to incorporate meaningful activities stimulating mutual engagement and creating joint enterprises and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998) that were easy to take on and could lead to interaction by, for example, creating tutoring roles for part of the group. Room for an open dialogue was considered equally important. The workshops would also give the participants the opportunity to shape their own learning experiences by exploring together and inspiring each other.

The Danish-inspired workshop involved letting the students cook dinner for everyone in the school's home economics kitchen. Danish and Chinese cooking traditions vary greatly, and participation in and experience with the cooking process was considered a good theme and an opportunity for knowledge sharing.

We expected most Danish students to have cooking experience both from home and from home economics classes at school, and most Chinese students to have little or no experience; to our knowledge, the intense Chinese school curriculum leaves no room for non-academic classes such as home economics, and many Chinese students do not play an active part in cooking at home since their job is to study hard. Thus, we expected the workshop to be an interesting experience for the Chinese students in particular.

The workshop played out with the Danish students taking the lead in the kitchen and helping to instruct their peers in the cooking process based on the tasks given by the teachers. Typically, the Chinese students worked in pairs with their Danish hosts, who would explain to them how to use the kitchen tools with which they were unfamiliar and the general rules of being in a kitchen and handling different kinds of food. Thus, the practicing of the workshop theme created the culture meeting and facilitated a learning context for the students to interact and inspire each other, while also developing basic cooking skills. In practice, this resulted in a number of workstations preparing various parts of the menu, with the teacher managing the overall process.

When dinner was ready, the Chinese students were surprised to find that one of the dishes was plain, raw carrots. The Danish teachers had prepared a menu that they believed was very Chinese-inspired (rice, stew, and raw vegetables on the side) to make sure it would be to everyone's liking; however, they soon realized that the Chinese guests were not used to eating raw vegetables. As a result, only a few Chinese students politely tried eating the raw carrots.

The second workshop was about Chinese paper cutting, which is a very old, traditional art in China and is regarded as a part of the national culture. For this workshop, we expected the Chinese students to have a great deal of experience and to be able to instruct the Danish students, allowing interaction and communication to take place. However, it turned out that most of the Chinese students did not have any experience, especially the Chinese boys, who lacked interest in the activity. They

appeared a bit puzzled, asking the teachers why they needed to do this and saying they did not know how to do it. This came as a surprise to us and we realized that paper cutting might not be as common an interest among Chinese students as we expected, so we had to come up with a solution. At first, we tried to let the CI AAU's Chinese language teachers do the instruction instead, but while the Danish students appeared to enjoy the activity, it seemed that the workshop theme simply was not of interest for the Chinese. Ultimately, we decided to redistribute all the students to the two other workshops.

Most of the students from the paper cutting workshop went to join the other Chinese inspired-workshop, which worked better both overall and in promoting cooperation between the Danish and Chinese students. The students were to paint something related to the Chinese New Year (which was to occur shortly) on a wall in an "international corridor" inside the school. They were not told what to paint, but through creativity, knowledge sharing, communication (mainly using English as lingua franca), interaction, and the use of Google Images as inspiration, the two groups reached a decision on something with which they wanted to decorate the wall (Chinese zodiacs and a dragon). The Chinese students helped the Danish students choose the right colors for the objects painted, explained to them the story and meaning behind them, and helped them write their names in Chinese characters. Having seen this, we tried to expand the task based on the large amount of student interest in the activity and asked the students to discuss the composition of the painting and what other elements should be included.

To summarize, during the *learning-in-action* phase, we made use of the descriptive concept of culture in our attempt to predict how the various workshops would unfold, despite us being well aware that culture is highly complex and difficult to predict. In some cases, we received the results we expected, while the complexity of culture was made clear in others.

We had designed workshops as situated CoPs in order to provide the students with contexts to learn about culture through interaction and practice, and we learned that the students' participation and negotiation in the workshop was the actual nexus for culture learning rather than the content of the workshop. This was clear in the design of the Chinese New Year workshop, which provided a good framework for intercultural communication, knowledge sharing, intercultural cooperation, negotiation, meaningfulness, creative thinking, and active participation for everyone involved.

The unsuccessful Chinese paper cutting workshop lacked many of the CoP elements mentioned above and was unable to stimulate a common interest among the students. Instead of working together to reach a goal, the students worked on their individual paper cuttings. Thus, despite intercultural communication, knowledge sharing, active participation, and creative thinking being possible, this workshop lacked the possibility of intercultural cooperation and negotiation since everyone was working on his or her individual paper cutting. Moreover, the workshop activity

lacked meaningfulness; where the others would prepare dinner for the group or create a painting on a wall for the school's students to enjoy in the years to come, this workshop group was only making some paper cuttings to put on a notice board.

EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

In the *reflection-on-action* phase, we invited the schools and students to reflect on the experiences of the student exchange program, asking them what they had learned, what was successful, and what could be improved in the future. We made use of a variety of evaluation and reflection tools: We had the Chinese students' journals and Danish students' portfolios, and we carried out focus group interviews with the Danish students. Additionally, we organized a self-evaluation process with the schools involved. And, finally, we held several meetings to discuss and reflect on the entire process; these took place both immediately after the student exchange and in the months afterwards.

From the Chinese students' journals, we found that most students chose to describe their experience with reflections on an activity rather than the activity itself. For example, on the second day of the program, the Chinese students spent a regular day in school together with their hosts, and the experience left a big impression on the Chinese students. They attended different classes and therefore had different experiences, but nearly half of them specifically chose to describe the atmosphere in the classrooms, whereas only a very limited number of the Chinese students mentioned the actual teaching content. The mere participation in and experience of the atmosphere in the classroom gave the Chinese students an understanding of the Danish classroom atmosphere, Danish student-teacher interaction, and Danish teaching and learning culture.

For the Danish students, the focus group interview situation also provided a framework for culture learning. The diversity in the students' experiences yielded insight on the complexity of culture. Often, the phrase "all the Chinese" was used initially, but in many cases it was changed to "some of the Chinese" as more information and other experiences were shared by other students.

Based on more in-depth talks with the Danish teachers, we learned that numerous Comenius projects[4] had given them valuable experiences which could be transferred and/or used as inspiration to an even greater extent in future international projects and student exchanges between Danish and Chinese schools. These teachers were able to offer information on how to deal with the host situation, thoughts on prompting cooperation between the students involved in the time leading up to the student exchange, and more ideas for designing learning contexts for the students.

To summarize, through the students' reflections, we learned that the experience of an activity left a greater impression than the activity itself. This could also support our learning from the workshops; that it is not so much the content, but more the experience and participation that is the nexus for culture learning.

From the Danish teachers' reflections, we learned that their international experience from European contexts is a valuable source of inspiration which needs to be included in the design of learning contexts and in the student exchange program in general.

OUTCOME

A few things become clear upon looking back on our experiences. Firstly, a descriptive understanding of culture based on previous experience and learning can be useful for anticipating how the future cultural meeting could develop in the designing phase. For us, this activity of anticipating and designing based on a descriptive culture concept is also a reflection process in which preconceptions of cultures, both others' and our own, are articulated and discussed, and thus the individuals' own knowledge and preconceptions are submitted to reflection (reflection-for-action). However, because of the complexity of culture and general human behavior, one can only prepare and design the practicing of culture to a certain extent. Different motivations lie behind human actions and decisions and culture is merely one of them. In practice, humans do not strictly follow certain cultural templates, but these theoretical templates can still be useful in designing and planning. The design and expected outcome will not always be consistent with how the actual events unfold, but this only provides a learning experience for the designers.

Secondly, we have learned that culture in its complex form, in the actual meeting between cultures, is an apt context for generating learning. The learning of culture comes with the practicing of culture. In the actual conduction of our learning design, we met unexpected situations. These situations had to be dealt with and triggered us to reflect on how to understand and resolve them. The workshops we had designed as situated CoPs gave the students a context to interact and practice culture, both in the sense of practicing activities related to the general national cultures and in the sense of working together and negotiating the activities. As designers of the activities, we learned that the simple participation, observation, and negotiation in practicing were the actual nexus for culture learning rather than the activity itself. This is reflected in both our own observations and in the Chinese students' journals.

Limitations

During the different phases of the program, we became aware of certain limitations that affect the possibility of a successful outcome for a Chinese-Danish student exchange. Firstly, communication via English as lingua franca posed more difficulties than anticipated. Despite the fact that the Chinese students were attending a Foreign Language School, their English was rather limited, and for many students even very simple conversation was challenging. Feedback from the host parents to the Danish teachers emphasized communication problems, and the international coordinator at the Danish school suggested putting two Chinese students in each host family in

the future, or at least putting students with limited English together with students with more well-developed English communication skills. Also, in relation to CoP-designed workshop activities, communication problems caused difficulties in terms of creating joint enterprise. In an ideal setting, joint enterprise is the result of a collective negotiation process among members of a CoP, but it is difficult to negotiate without effective communication.

Secondly, the Danish teachers noticed a huge difference in the interaction level between Danish and Chinese students compared to previous student exchanges with European countries via Comenius. More research is needed in order to explain this behavior, but possible explanations are: The Chinese students' more limited English skills, the non-existent communication between the two parties in the time leading up to the actual student exchange, and the fact that a maximum distance exists between Western and Eastern cultures, which increases the acculturative stress on the students involved (Burnett & Gardner 2006). No matter the reasons, there was, with a few exceptions, a tendency for the Chinese and Danish students to stay with their own groups. This speaks to the importance of designing a framework for the students to interact and communicate to an even greater extent in the future in order to facilitate intercultural learning.

Lastly, it is important to be aware that intercultural meetings can potentially confirm existing or establish new stereotypes about others (Stangor, Jonas, & Hewstone, 1996). Whether or not short-term sojourns between Denmark and China are likely to confirm or disconfirm such thinking also needs further research.

Future Exchange Program Designs

For the future designing of exchange programs, we will build on a similar framework of culture and learning theory combined with knowledge learned during the pilot study. We cannot predict cultural behavior or foresee intercultural clashes, even though some behavior may happen more frequently than others. What is important in future student exchanges between Denmark and China is the refining of our work in creating contexts to facilitate culture learning.

Based on these pilot study experiences, we will focus more on designing activities that require interaction and cooperation between the students, putting special emphasis on ensuring that students do not limit their interactions to their own group. The activities should provide a context for participation, observation, communication, cooperation, and negotiation of practice, and also be meaningful to those involved.

With all of this in mind, this reflection loop has ended and will be the foundation for the next exchange program in this growing international cooperation between Denmark and China at the school level.

CONCLUSION

For the purposes of learning and writing this chapter, we have taken a very practical approach to culture and culture theory. We found value in both the descriptive

and complex concepts and made use of them respectively in our own process and learning design. Looking back, using Cowan's understanding of reflection has explicated our own cultural backgrounds. In daily life, we are often unaware of, or pay little attention to, our own preconceptions of people from either foreign or shared cultures. In the course of cultural negotiation, these become clear, and in this chapter we try to stress the importance of always looking back and reflecting, as this will provide footing for future negotiations. Writing this chapter and reliving the situations through discussion and data analysis has generated as much learning as the conducting of the exchange program itself. In that sense, our quest of facilitating learning for others has been a good opportunity to take a closer look at our own process, and Cowan's reflection phases have been most useful in structuring this chapter as well as our experiences.

NOTES

1   The designers are the four authors of this chapter: Two have a Chinese and two a Danish ethnic background.
2   Findings of data concerning the students are reported in another on-going article
3   The CI AAU's Learning Centre is open to schools and the public and is a facility to provide Chinese language teaching and experience Chinese culture.
4   Comenius is part of the EU's Lifelong Learning Program and aims to boost the quality of European school education and provide individuals with skills and competences necessary for personal development and future employment (European Commission 2012:2).

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4. A PBL-INSPIRED METHOD FOR FACILITATING CULTURE LEARNING

INTRODUCTION

In a globalized age, culture is increasingly regarded as an important concept for knowledge mastery and competence development in the fields of language education, cultural studies and intercultural communication, among others (Byram, 1989; Seelye, 1993; Martin & Nakayama, 2007). In recent years, an increasing number of educational activities are being offered for teaching and learning culture and in particular about foreign cultures within formal curricula. Since culture can be understood and defined in a wide range of ways, it also allows for diverse methods when learning about another culture and developing cultural awareness.

At Aalborg University (AAU), a Chinese culture course has been provided as part of a bachelor's program in the Faculty of Humanities since 2009. According to the study guidelines of the course, students are expected to learn about Chinese religion, philosophy, aesthetics, history, etc. and to acquire independent analysis skills in regard to a discussion of relevant cultural aspects of Chinese society from a comparative perspective. For two years, the course was delivered in the form of lectures with a focus on culture-related theories and China-related information. In 2011, the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at AAU (CI-AAU) was invited to take over the teaching of this course. For the CI-AAU team, the existing course objectives implied a "descriptive concept of culture" (Jensen, 2007), which tends to believe that culture is fixed and teaching a culture consists of transferring knowledge about the culture. On the other hand, the CI-AAU team holds the belief in a "complex concept of culture" (Jensen, 2007), which emphasizes the complex and dynamic nature of culture and focuses on active participation as the key to culture learning. In the autumn semester of 2011, one CI-AAU teacher delivered the course by following the existing objectives and the previously used teaching methods. During this experience, the teacher observed a lack of student motivation and interest in the class mainly due to the theory-focused and context-independent content as well as the lecture-based teaching method. Due to the philosophical disagreement with the previous teaching team over how to acquire knowledge of a culture and bearing in mind the unsatisfactory teaching experience, the CI-AAU team decided to reform the Chinese culture course in both content and teaching methods. For this purpose, starting from spring semester 2012, a teaching team with diverse backgrounds was organized and a Problem Based-Learning (PBL)-inspired

approach was employed for the course design and delivery with an aim to encourage student-centeredness via interaction and participation in activities. The teaching content was designed to focus on theory and real-life connections through practice.

This article investigates the design, operation and evaluation of the culture course and discusses the questions: 1) How do students and teaching staff perceive culture learning in general, and especially via a PBL-inspired method? 2) What are the challenges and possibilities for successfully implementing a PBL-inspired approach to culture teaching and learning? Theoretically, this study departs from a complex concept of culture and PBL-related learning theories. The empirical findings are drawn from multiple methods of data generation that include observation, questionnaires, official evaluation forms and interviews with both teaching staff and students involved in this course.

A PBL INSPIRED APPROACH TO CULTURE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Understanding Culture

Definitions of culture vary according to their application in different disciplines such as education, linguistics/communication, cultural studies, anthropology, organizational psychology and management, etc. (Baldwin et al., 2005). To structuralists, culture can be artifacts, beliefs and customs, or everything which is non-biological in a society, including behavior and concepts. To functionalists, culture is about group identity, which expresses value and establishes stereotyping (Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner, 2005). These two dimensions form part of what Jensen (2007) refers to as the descriptive concepts of culture which is also the traditional view of national culture. It is understood that everyone in a group shares the same culture and is what gives a collective identification to a group. However, it leaves a fixed image of the group while the culture itself continues to shift and change. Thus, it obscures the dynamic nature of culture and the diversity within the group (Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner, 2005).

In contrast, the process theorists see culture as an active process of meaning-making. They focus on change, development, practice and procedures of culture (Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner, 2005), which presents the complex concept of culture. With this concept, culture is seen as something that is temporal, emergent, unpredictable, constantly changing and is seen as consisting of knowledge, meanings and values shared with one another. Meanwhile it also recognizes that not everyone in a nation may share these same elements of culture (Kahn, 1989; Jensen, 2007). This concept encourages a complex view that considers events longitudinally instead of statically and captures the dynamic nature of culture. However, it may "miss the very elements that create the process (the structures) and neglect the purposive nature (function) of an activity" (Hecht, Baldwin & Faulkner, 2005, p. 57).

In relation to the educational practice, a process perspective seems to allow for possibilities to emphasize change, development, practices and procedures of

culture – not only to see what culture is, but also to see how culture operates. It is therefore employed as a theoretical standing point from which to understand culture in this study. If culture is dynamic, complex and multidimensional with rich meanings, how can culture be taught and learned in meaningful ways, in particular, within formal curricula which are often established within certain frameworks?

Culture Teaching and Learning Approaches

In order to explore answers to the aforementioned question, we find it important to first understand how people learn a culture. Many scholars agree that a culture is passed on from one generation to the next by learning (Hatch, 1985; Bonner, 1980). The ways that a person acquires a culture is "from contact with other persons or from such things as books or works of art, knowledge, skills, ideas, beliefs, tastes, sentiments" (Baldwin et al., 2005, p.43). That is, one can learn his/her own culture in everyday life through contact with other persons and products. From this, one may ask how it is possible to learn another culture, in particular, a foreign culture.

In a globalized age, people are exposed to a world with different cultures. They can learn a foreign culture through an acculturation process (Berry, 2005) or through intercultural relationships (Martin & Nakayama, 2007). Since culture is being paid more and more attention, foreign culture leaning is also included as learning contents within formal educational settings. At the university level, foreign cultures are often subjects in second/foreign language education and cultural study programs. The teaching and learning of foreign cultures normally aims at developing the learners' cultural awareness and understandings (Byram, 1994; Byram et al., 1994, Aktor & Risager, 2001).

In foreign language education, to deliver the knowledge of the target culture, foreign language teachers often focus on three "P"s of culture[1]: products, practices and perspectives, where products are elements of the traditional view of culture as theatre, music and dance; practices are cultural elements such as bowing, shaking hands, etc.; and perspectives are the underlying values and beliefs of a people. The three "P"s of culture present the descriptive aspects of a foreign culture. However, more and more researchers and teachers are paying attention to cultural experiences and real-world contacts to explore the complexity of culture (Byram, 1989; Steele & Suozzo, 1994; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Thus, some real-world sources or activities, such as authentic materials, role play and ethnographic studies (activities involving the target-language community), are also often used for presenting the target culture in the language classroom. A comparative approach is frequently used to develop the students' cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom (Byram et al., 1994).

Relevant literature shows that in current cultural study programs at the university level, the teaching and learning content often focuses on knowledge of the target culture and/or culture theories from relevant research fields such as anthropology, sociology, communication studies, cross-cultural psychology, etc. (Byram, 1994; Singelis, 1998). A wide range of alternative approaches are conducted in cultural

study programs such as the lecture-based approach, task-based and problem-solving approaches and the problem/project-based approach, etc. (Byram et al., 1994; Risager, 1993; Singelis, 1998). Risager (1993) studied a two-year International Cultural Studies program (1991–1993) by using a problem-oriented project-based learning approach at Roskilde University, Denmark. Each semester the students worked on a large group project to solve a certain problem. They were required to write a project report for each semester and then had a compulsory final oral examination in a group discussion form at the end of the program. The teachers worked as supervisors for the groups in relation to the project report writing. This program emphasized student-centered learning, group work and problem-solving. The rationale of this program is similar to the background of this study, and its characteristics were found inspiring in the course design of this study.

Therefore, culture learning not only takes place in one's daily life but can also be facilitated in formal educational settings. In relation to a formal curriculum context, based on the complex concept of culture, this study suggests that culture learning requires a supportive environment where learning can take place in a meaningful way, in particular, when the focus is on developing cultural awareness and understanding. Important elements to facilitate the meaningfulness of culture learning include: 1) a student-centered learning environment where sufficient attention is given to learners' interests and motivation, 2) teaching content should provide opportunities for learners to see how theories can be linked to real life in a meaningful context and to see the dynamic and changing nature of culture, and 3) diverse methods must be employed to facilitate learners' active participation in activities and reflection upon their experiences through communicating and collaborating with others. In such a learning environment, the role of teachers is also shifted from that of transferring factual knowledge to facilitating learning through creating learning opportunities and assisting with reflection.

A PBL Approach to Learning

As discussed above, culture can be taught within formal curricula, but learning does not take place unconditionally. To make learning meaningful, a well-thought out methodology is essential.

The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method is an educational philosophy as well as a methodology emphasizing student-centered learning. Rooted in constructivism, it advocates a holistic approach to learning and focuses not only on learning outcomes, but also on a meaningful learning process with learners' active participation. In the past half a century, PBL has been implemented globally in diverse social cultural contexts within a wide range of disciplines such as medicine, engineering, business studies, law, administration and language studies, among others. In practice, PBL can be carried out in many forms, such as project, case, scenario, etc. The International Cultural Studies program at Roskilde University provides an example of foreign culture learning through project work-organized PBL. In general, PBL is seen as

an effective and efficient approach to facilitating student-centered learning (Du, 2011; 2012).

Worldwide, the application of PBL in language education (where cultural studies are often part of the curricula) started in the 1980s, and it has mainly taken the form of project-based learning. The project work in language teaching focuses on: 1) learners' participation in new knowledge gaining and exploration through communicative work with outside curricula, 2) learners' outcome production and 3) written or oral reports and presentations (Wrigley, 1998; Eyring 2001). So far, PBL in language learning is mainly implemented in the curricula for above-beginner level learners in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. Nevertheless, recent interest has led to its application in other language teaching and cultural studies such as French, German and Spanish language and culture (Cancino, 2004) and Chinese language and culture (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012). Micro-level studies on PBL within language and culture programs have reported students' satisfaction with their own motivation, participation and learning outcomes (Savignon, 1991; Wrigley, 1998, Eyring, 2001; Kemaloglu, 2010; Du & Kirkebæk, 2012); research in the area, however, remains limited.

In relation to the aforementioned supportive environment for culture learning, a PBL methodology shares similar characteristics: a belief in learner-centeredness, focus on learning processes with learners' active participation and experiences, meaningful content and contexts, and facilitation as the major role of teaching. With these commonalities, PBL can be employed as a methodology for designing and delivering a supportive environment for culture learning (in this study, a Chinese culture course).

A PBL-inspired Approach for Culture Learning

In relation to the PBL methodology, due to the complex concept of culture and the advocated learning environment necessary for culture learning, a PBL-inspired approach can be suggested for use in culture teaching and learning. Inspired by the principles for teaching and learning with a task-based PBL concept (Du and Kirkebæk, 2012), the following principles have been established to serve as a guideline for the design and delivery of a PBL-inspired approach for culture teaching and learning.

1. A PBL-inspired approach emphasizes learners' motivation as an essence of learning. In relation to culture learning, a PBL-inspired approach focuses on encouraging learners to learn the target culture by participating in meaningful activities in a motivating context.
2. A PBL-inspired approach stresses learning culture through experiences. Learning is a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experiences (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 1998; Kolb, 1984). In a classroom setting, learners will gain knowledge about the target culture as well as develop cultural awareness and understanding through reflecting upon their experiences.
3. A PBL-inspired approach requires learners' active participation in the learning process. In order to achieve a certain learning goal, it is important for an individual

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to participate actively in activities and interact with others in the situated context (Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998; Lave, 2009). To better understand the target culture, it also requires the learners' active participation and interaction with others in the learning process.

4. A PBL-inspired approach underlines the importance of collaborative learning. It can make maximum use of cooperative activities involving small groups of learners in the classroom (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Learning a foreign culture in a collaborative context, the learners can learn to exchange opinions with others, compromise or support each other when solving certain problems in groups. They not only gain knowledge about a culture, but they also develop their learning skills and a culture of learning is promoted.

5. A PBL-inspired approach highlights the association with the real world due to its focus on meaning-making instead of the structure and function of culture. The link between theory and real-world practice is presumed to be of help to the students' cultural awareness and motivation.

6. It emphasizes the important role of the social learning context on culture learning. Both teaching staff and learners are expected to handle concrete problem analysis by solving problem and solution argumentation in accordance with their situated contexts.

These proposed principles are mainly based on culture learning beliefs and theoretical assumptions and thus remain tentative. They will serve as a guideline in designing educational practices while remaining open to revision based on the empirical experiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study focusing on a particular case was conducted to implement the idea of the aforementioned proposal of a PBL-inspired approach to culture learning. Based on the principles discussed in the previous section, PBL-inspired teaching and learning activities were designed and delivered in a Chinese culture course at the university level. In this paper we report the design, operation and evaluation of the course.

An investigation was conducted during the spring semester[2] 2012 to study how this method works with regard to students' participation, motivation and learning experiences. This study also aimed to evaluate the course design and the PBL-inspired methodology in culture learning. Multiple methods were used for data generation:

– Observation of the process for the whole course duration.
– A questionnaire designed by the CI-AAU team for the course participants (students) to evaluate the course.
– An official evaluation form distributed to the course participants (students) by the study program.
– Interviews with course participants (students) and the involved teachers.

Table 4.1. Teaching team's background

Teacher	Nationality	Age	Field of work	Role in this course
A	Chinese	Late 30s	Educational research	Design and research
B	Chinese	20s	Language education and research	Design, delivery and research
C	Danish	40s	Language education and research	Design, delivery and assessment
D	Danish	Early 30s	Cultural studies	Design and delivery
E	Danish	20s	Project manager	Design and delivery

Observation is viewed as a satisfying technique to use in investigation (Simpson & Tuson, 2008). Its key strengths are that it can give direct access to social interactions and enrich and supplement data gathered by other techniques. In this study, the observer was also a member of the teaching team (see Table 4.1). In addition to participating in the course design and delivery of two teaching units, the observer also participated in the course through note taking, keeping a research journal, doing interviews and participating in informal talks with course participants and teaching staff, as well as collecting evaluation forms.

Questionnaires were used to conduct student evaluation of the six team-based activities. Course participants were asked to give their opinions on how relevant the activities had been for them on a scale of one to five (where one is of almost no relevance and five is most relevant). Space for free comments or suggestions was also included. Copies of this questionnaire were distributed to the five (out of the total eight students in the class) who attended the last teaching unit of the course.

The official evaluation form was distributed online by the study program after the course. Course participants were asked to choose an answer to eight multiple choice questions about the students' opinions regarding content and learning outcomes. The CI teaching team received a report of the evaluation form from the study program.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted after the conclusion of the course with two teachers and four students who participated in the course with an aim to further understand their perceptions of the new teaching experiment. One of the teachers was the main teacher and coordinator of the course. The students were interviewed regarding their 1) motivation in the study of Chinese culture , 2) opinions on the teaching method used in the course, 3) learning experiences in the course, 4) challenges and suggestions for the course etc. The teachers were interviewed regarding their 1) perception of culture teaching and learning, 2) opinions on the teaching method and the motivation and performance of the students, 3) challenges and reflections. The length of the interviews varied from 18 minutes to 65 minutes. They were transcribed in early 2013. The transcription was coded using a "meaning condensation" approach (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview was also used as a way to verify the results of the observation and questionnaires.

The study uses multiple methods of generating data in order to give an in-depth understanding as well as an overview of different perspectives.

THE CASE: A PBL-INSPIRED TEACHING DESIGN IN A CHINESE CULTURE COURSE

Course Background

Aalborg University (AAU) is one of the pioneer universities in the world for implementing PBL at an institutional level. Since its establishment in 1974, Problem and Project-based Learning has been well employed in all disciplines. In the AAU-PBL Model, a problem is the starting point of the learning process, which grows out of students' wondering within different disciplines and professional environments (Barge, 2010). The problem-solving process is organized by group project work lasting five months. Lecture-based courses go hand-in-hand with the project work. Courses are assessed independently of project assessment.

China Area Studies (CAS) is a specialization within a bachelor degree study program in the Faculty of Humanities. This specialization is offered in the third year and final year of the degree program and includes the fifth and the sixth semesters of study. The course consists of four different modules: Chinese civics, Chinese culture, Chinese written language and Chinese oral language. The Chinese culture course is a 10 ECTS[3] course in the fifth semester and a five ECTS course in the sixth semester of the CAS program. The formal overall teaching and learning objectives of the sixth semester are the following, as stated in the study guideline[4]:

During this teaching unit, students should acquire:
Knowledge and understanding of

– selected areas within Chinese religion and philosophy.
– selected areas within Chinese aesthetics.
– interaction in a Chinese context.
– theories and methods related to the fields of the subject.

Skills in

– independent analysis and discussion of cultural aspects of Chinese society within areas such as religion, philosophy and aesthetics from a comparative perspective by means of theoretical and methodological tools.

Competencies in

– placing knowledge of Chinese cultural conditions in a global perspective.
– structuring one's own learning in relation to a given assignment.

In the fifth semester of the Chinese culture course, students are requested to conduct a group project worth 10 ECTS. Parallel to the project work, students are offered 10 teaching units (two hours per unit) that are often delivered through a lecture-based

method. There is no group project in the sixth semester due to time constraints brought on by students' thesis projects necessary for graduation. Instead, students are required to pass an external, written two-day examination consisting of a written assignment at the end of the semester. Parallel to the exam, students are also offered 10 teaching units on Chinese culture. This Chinese culture course has been offered since 2009. With the exception of the group project in the fifth semester, the course has mainly used a lecture-based method. Normally 10 independent lectures are delivered on different topics every semester. An essay is then submitted by each individual student as the assessment method at the end of the sixth semester.

In spring 2012, the Confucius Institute for Innovation and Learning at AAU (AAU CI) took over the responsibility of teaching the Chinese culture, written language and oral language courses. A team of five faculty members decided to conduct collaborative teaching and made changes in the teaching method in the Chinese culture course. The five faculty members had diverse backgrounds in terms of nationality, age, fields of study and roles in this course, which was assumed to bring different perspectives of a complex Chinese culture. They designed the course using a PBL-inspired approach and four of them participated in the actual course delivery. For the teaching staff's backgrounds, see Table 4.1.

Course Design

The teaching team expected the students to achieve the following learning goals:

– To acquire the basic knowledge of the relevant aspects of Chinese culture.
– To develop cultural awareness and understanding through meaningful team-based activities.
– To establish a complex understanding of Chinese culture.
– To develop learning skills such as problem-solving skills and self-directed learning skills.
– To analyze and discuss cultural aspects of China independently from a comparative perspective by means of theoretical and methodological tools.
– To critically reflect on the usefulness and possible limitations of the texts, lectures and real-life experiences they are exposed to.

The teaching team designed the content and method of the course cooperatively. They designed four topics based on their own interests and experience. The topics and who the responsible teacher for each topic was as follows: 1) cultural theories overview (teacher C), 2) Understanding Chinese educational culture (teacher D), 3) Chinese business culture (teacher E), 4) Chinese family culture in a cross-culture context and acculturation (teacher B).

Each teacher was responsible for a topic. Every topic was given at least two teaching units, except the first lesson which was only given one teaching unit. Each teaching unit lasted two hours. Teachers were required to prepare relevant theories for each topic and upload them to Moodle (a system for communication between teachers and students at AAU) for the students to read before reaching the classroom.

With the principles and objectives, the course departed from a PBL-inspired concept. Team-based activities were at the center of the course. For the overall course design, see Table 4.2.

At the end of the semester, an assignment was designed by teacher C (see Table 4.1) using a case closely connected to real life:

> A Danish machinery company has started cooperating with a Chinese industrial firm and plans to send two employees to China. One is going to work in Shanghai in the research and development unit of the Chinese company. The other is going inland to set up new production lines in two of the Chinese partner's factories in Shanxi province. The Danish company has hired you to introduce the two Danish employees to Chinese (business) culture and prepare them for their first trip to China.

The students were required to analyze this case through an external, written two-day examination. The design of the examination paper reflected the following teaching and learning goals: students were not only asked to reproduce knowledge from texts they had read during the semester, but were also expected to reflect critically on these texts and show how they would use their theoretical knowledge about Chinese culture in a real-life situation.

Course Delivery

Eight students registered for this course, five female and three male. All of them were Danish. Most of the students were studying both International Business Communication and Chinese Area Studies, while one of them was a high school teacher. They were beginners to Chinese language courses.

Here, three of the activities are presented as examples to show how the course was delivered. The third topic was aimed to facilitate learning about the educational culture in China by teaching it to others. Students were divided into two groups and asked to conduct a mini project consisting of organizing a two-hour teaching activity in two local schools (a lower secondary school and a high school). Three teaching units were included (see table 4.2, teaching units two to four). In teaching unit two, students spent 40 minutes working in teams discussing how to teach Chinese educational culture to school students, what content they should include and how the content should be presented in order to maximize learning outcomes. After the discussion, they presented a teaching plan as a group. Group A chose to present the Chinese one child policy to the lower secondary school students and group B decided to present their fifth semester project about Chinese food in Aalborg to the high school students. They were also expected to relate the teaching practices to relevant culture theories. After teaching unit two, students had one week to prepare for the teaching practice as a team. During their preparation work, both groups made adjustments to their original plans. Group A designed a team-based activity for school students to participate in in order to teach and learn about Chinese youth culture

Table 4.2. The overall course design

Topic	Teaching unit	Activity	Methods	Facilitator
Topic 1 Cultural theories overview	1	Discussions	Learning by reviewing and discussing cultural theories	Teacher C
Topic 2 Understanding Chinese educational culture	2	Preparing teaching and discussions	A mini project of teaching practices	Teacher D
	3	Student teaching practices at schools	Learning by doing	Teacher C, Teacher D & Teacher B
	4	Students' presentations and discussions	Reflecting on experiences	Teacher C & Teacher D
Topic 3 Chinese business culture	5	Discussions	Learning by discussing relevant theories	Teacher E
	6	Guest lecture (a chief surgeon from Aalborg hospital) and problem-solving task	Learning from real-life cases and Problem-solving	Teacher E
	7	Students visit a local company	Learning by experiencing	Teacher C
	8	Student presentations and discussions	Reflection	Teacher C
Topic 4 Chinese family culture in a cross-culture context and acculturation	9	Student interviews with Chinese mothers from immigrant families in Aalborg(one from mainland China, one from Hong Kong)	Learning by questioning and exploring answers via communicative experiences	Teacher B
	10	Student presentations and discussions	Reflection	Teacher B

because they assumed that this topic would be more interesting to school students and the method would be more motivating than giving a presentation. Instead of a presentation of their previous project report, Group B introduced interesting Chinese food by showing pictures from their previous trips to China. By doing so, they hoped to give their audience, the high school students, a glimpse of real Chinese life. Both groups omitted the presentations about culture theories because they did not think that theories in this context would make sense to their audience. During the process, the course participants showed an increase in their concern for the learners and the learning goals. Based on these concerns, they tried to develop meaningful methods to make their teaching interesting and useful to their audience.

The third topic was learning about Chinese business culture though two example cases planned for the course participants. The first was meeting with a representative from the public sector who was experienced in collaborating with Chinese organizations, and the second was visiting a Danish company who had business contacts in China. CI-AAU had previously facilitated collaboration between Aalborg hospital and several local companies and Chinese partners. Through these contacts a chief surgeon from Aalborg hospital was invited to present his experiences, in particular, the difficulties and barriers he experienced in cultural encounters. Students were expected to discuss these challenges and issues and provide their proposed solutions in the discussion with the course facilitator. They identified that a list of culture-related theories could be linked to interpret the case provided by the guest lecturer. For the second case, students visited a local Danish company who had their production lines in China. The company had experienced rather different cultural experiences than those discussed in the hospital case. In this case, the real-world experience did not match the theories in the books. The two different cases helped students learn the complexity of real-life problems and develop their own understanding of Chinese culture as well as their own culture (Danish culture).

Course Evaluation and Reflection

The following sections discuss the students' and teachers' reflections and evaluations on the implementation of the PBL-inspired method in the Chinese culture course. The aims are to discuss 1) how the PBL-inspired course design and delivery is perceived by the students and teaching staff involved, 2) what the students and teaching staff think of culture learning in general and, in particular, using the PBL-inspired method, 3) what the challenges and possibilities for successfully implementing a PBL-inspired approach to culture teaching and learning are.

Empirical data mainly comes from the following resources: 1) observation of students' performance during the course, 2) questionnaires and official evaluation forms from the students after the course, 3) semi-structured interviews with the students after the course, 4) reflection discussions and meetings held with three out of the five teaching staff after the course and interviews conducted with the other two teaching staff who were not present in the meeting.

The results of the questionnaire, official evaluations, interviews and observations showed that the students were, generally highly satisfied with the topics, content, activities and methods as well as their learning outcomes from the course. The teachers were also satisfied with the students' performance and the teaching design and delivery process. The course motivated students in the learning process and helped them to develop their cultural awareness and understanding – not only of the target culture, but also of their own culture and other cultures. These results indicate that the experiment of using a PBL-inspired method in this context fulfilled the expectation of facilitating culture learning in a meaningful way.

Perceptions of the PBL-inspired approach.   The students appreciated the teaching methodology change in the course. They had many of positive comments and suggested that the teaching team continue to apply the methods. They thought the methods were "interesting", "practical" and "diverse" because they included both lectures and team-based activities. Furthermore, it involved different teachers who brought different cultural perspectives. They pointed out that the activities provided them opportunities for "solving some problems in groups cooperatively for a certain goal" and relating "theories to real life" which they thought was very important for culture learning. Compared to the project work-organized PBL method in the International Cultural Studies program at Roskilde University, as Risager (1993) describes, the course design in this study shares many commonalities such as the emphasis on student-centeredness, encouragement of students' active participation in problem-solving activities and collaborative learning, among others. In these ways, the students not only learn about the foreign culture itself, but also learn how to take responsibility for their own learning. Nevertheless, experiences from this course also reflect certain differences from the program that Risager (1993) presents. Although there was no report on the effectiveness of their program, we can assume that students had more time to formulate real-life problems on their own when conducting a semester-long (5 month long) project. In this study, we employed a PBL-inspired method within a 5 ECTS course, which allows for approximately two hours of teaching for each unit. This course length limits the space in which students can identify programs on their own, and it also limits the breadth of the problems.

The students and the teachers were positive about many different angles of the learning outcomes. The students emphasized the development of their cultural awareness, cultural understanding and their knowledge mastery in the interviews. They stated that they were more confident in regard to a future career after participating in this course. On the official evaluation form, when they were asked if the course had given them good learning outcomes in relation to the learning objectives, the students only ticked "totally agree" and "agree." The teachers focused on the development of the students' problem-solving skills and self-directed learning skills. The teachers highlighted that in this course the students not only gained knowledge of Chinese culture, but also developed their learning skills in team-based activities. For example, when the two groups designed their teaching task in schools

(see teaching unit three in table 4-2), they held meetings in their spare time and tried to solve problems concerning the content and method in a collaborative manner. This was exactly what the teaching team had hoped for.

Compared to the teaching units with lectures, the teachers found that students showed a different degree of engagement in the team-based activities. Teacher E (see teaching unit five and six in table 4-2.) described it as follows:

> The first time we just had the traditional lecture, in which the students had read some texts, and I gave a presentation, and then we discussed the presentation of the texts. It was okay, but it wasn't fantastic… Two or three of them were quite active and six of them were not very active. The second time, I think three of them were really active and the other six also joined in more. They were more engaged. (The total number of students is actually only 8, not 9.)

The "first time" in the description was referring to teaching unit five and "second time" meant teaching unit six, where a Chief Surgeon from Aalborg Hospital gave a guest lecture. After the lecture, the students were required to analyze the problems from the real-life setting and where asked to find solutions to the problems. The students learned the Chinese culture through other people's real experience. This also provided motivation and engagement.

Perceptions of culture learning. The teaching team designed the course based on their perception of culture and culture learning. They believe that one cannot only learn about culture through books and lectures. Real-world experience (see teaching unit three, six, seven, and nine) and active participation are the essence of cultural learning because the dynamic and complex nature of culture can be understood more directly through real-life experiences and through a high degree of participation. The teaching team expected the students to better understand the cultures and develop their cultural awareness by using these methods.

The students had an understanding of culture and culture learning in harmony with that of the teaching team. They believed culture is complex and "is changing constantly and evolving into something different all the time." Thus, one "cannot just read a lot of books and then think 'I know what Chinese culture is'". The complex and dynamic nature of culture made it challenging for them to learn about Chinese culture. However, it was also a motivating element of their learning. They emphasized the importance of culture learning and voted the Chinese culture course to be the most important course within the program. They argued that the culture course had developed their cultural awareness and understanding. After participating in the activities, they found themselves more open to other cultures and felt they better understood "how culture works, not only Chinese culture", "why cultures are different", "how to behave in another cultural context" and "how to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds." They believed that what they gained from this course would be useful in their future career. In this course, the teaching team also delivered some relevant cultural theories to present the descriptive

aspects of culture. The students also found them to be important and helpful. They described how the theories prepared them for the team-based activities and they used the theories "quite a lot" in their reflection report. When explaining why the theories are important, they pointed out that "you need some kind of background (knowledge) before you just go out and talk about it." This indicates that the descriptive aspects of culture are also important and necessary for culture learning.

In this course, the teachers and the students shared the same understanding of culture and culture learning, and both highlighted the diverse methods and learning outcomes. From the observation and assessment, it was noticed that the students, to a great extent, achieved pre-defined learning goals. They gained the knowledge of both descriptive and complex Chinese culture, developed their own learning skills and cultural awareness, grew capable of critically reflecting on their own learning process and were able to analyze certain aspects of Chinese culture independently. These learning outcomes may indicate that the design of the course focusing on student-centeredness, diverse methods and real-life experiences is a meaningful way to help with culture learning in a PBL environment.

Reflections. In general, this study draws similar conclusions as previous studies with regards to students' performance achievements being linked to students' interest and motivation, eagerness to learn, active participation and engagement in the teaching and learning activities, high level of self-satisfaction, etc. However, in addition, the authors of this chapter have the following reflections.

Firstly, communication between the teaching staff and the students concerning expectations of the course content and methods needs to be improved. Although the students were all very satisfied with the course design, their understanding of the method was not necessarily PBL as the teaching team claimed. This was not observed until the students were interviewed. According to the students, in some situations, the unclear instructions seem to have led to some misunderstandings and confusion about the learning goals. For example, some students did not understand why they had needed to teach culture in a school and write a short reflection paper afterwards since they did not plan to work as a school teacher in the future. However, during the interviews they realized that all the activities could be very useful for their own development and future career. With a better understanding of the expectations of the course, the students may have participated in the activities in an even more active and self-directed manner. This reflection indicates that when implementing a new teaching method, it is essential to communicate effectively with students to provide them with the knowledge and skills to manage the methods. Likewise, agreement and support from students can be of great help for the success of the implementation. In the case of the teaching team, communication between teaching staff is also highly important throughout the process of course delivery so that the later stages of facilitation can be tailored and reshaped according to lessons learned in the beginning.

Secondly, assessment methods remain a challenge. Although the students' performance and participation in the activities demonstrated their interest and

motivation as well as abundant capabilities, an effective method to assess culture learning is needed. It is also challenging to assess the effect of PBL in such a context. In particular, in this study, the course reform was due to the divergent understandings of culture, which challenged the assessment design of the course. The assessment method developed for this course was also an attempt to experiment with evaluating students' learning via their own written reflections. However, this paper did not address the discussion of this assessment method due to limited space. This study argues that in future courses, it is important to implement efficient assessment methods that are aligned with the teaching methods and learning objectives. Inspiring methods that can be tested include peer – assessment learning and process-focused method. Implementing appropriate assessment methods that aim to maximize learning is also challenged by institutional policies and facilities, among other issues.

Thirdly, this study intends to emphasize the complex and dynamic nature of culture. With this assumption, the teaching team designed the course by employing diverse methods and involving teachers with diverse backgrounds which the students highlighted both in questionnaire, official evaluation form and interviews, by saying the diversity brought different perspectives to the course. Students' high motivation and active participation in the activities demonstrated their understanding of the complexity of culture as well as their capabilities of handling the dynamic nature of culture. Especially in the practice of designing Chinese culture teaching at Danish schools and interviewing Chinese mothers from different regions of China, the students adjusted the way of doing the tasks/due to their awareness of complex culture and their intention of delivering the dynamic culture. Nevertheless, our findings also show that the descriptive aspects of culture have been an important learning interests and outcome to these students, in particular, for those who had limited prior knowledge about Chinese culture. This indicates that it is difficult to divide descriptive and complex culture in a learner-centered educational setting, because individuals are different from each other in their learning needs.

CONCLUSION

This paper presents and discusses a study of designing and implementing a PBL-inspired approach in culture learning at a course level. The pilot study was conducted in a Chinese culture course at Aalborg University. Results of this study showed that both students and teaching staff appreciated a supportive environment to learn culture. Preferred characteristics include 1) relevant contents including not only descriptive culture but also complex and dynamic aspects of culture, 2) motivating activities that apply theories to practice and give real-life experiences, 3) diverse learning methods and sources that emphasize student-centered learning. The following conclusions can be drawn from the study. Firstly, culture can be learned in a formal educational setting when appropriate methods and contents are provided so that learning takes place in a meaningful way. Secondly, PBL can be a positive and meaningful method to support culture learning in a formal educational setting; however, it demands

proper understanding of the methods from both teaching staff and students. Finally, facilitating culture learning is not transferring factual knowledge about descriptive culture, but more about facilitating meaningful learning by developing the students' cultural awareness and understanding.

NOTES

1. It can be found in American National Standards for Foreign Language Education (ACTFL, 1999). See http://www.actfl.org/publications/all/national-standards-foreign-language-education.
2. In Aalborg University and the rest of Denmark, one academic year consists of two semesters: spring semester is from February 1 to June 30; autumn semester is from September 1 to January 31.
3. ECTS: European Credit Transfer System. Each student is expected to earn 30 ECTS per semester and each ECTS is equivalent of 30 hours' work.
4. This study guideline is sent to the teachers in a Word file by email. The general guidelines for the students contain some similar descriptions and can be found at http://www.studyguide.aau.dk/programmes/postgraduate/55759/.

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RUI BAO & MADS JAKOB KIRKEBÆK

5. DANISH STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF TASK-BASED TEACHING IN CHINESE

INTRODUCTION

In foreign language education, the term *task-based teaching* (TBT) has been defined in many ways. In our study, we use the term 'task-based teaching' to refer to the context in which tasks are used to drive classroom activity and increase interaction (Samuda & Bygate, 2008). TBT has earned the reputation of 1) promoting student participation in the classroom, 2) facilitating interaction between teacher and students, and 3) increasing students' level of production of the target language, all of which is believed to help foreign language acquisition (Long, 1981; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Swain, 1998; Gass & Mackey, 2006). However, research indicates that this often does not happen when TBT is applied in places with a traditional teacher-centered, lecture-based teaching and learning culture such as Hong Kong (Carless, 2003, 2007; Li, 1998), Thailand (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol , 2007), and Japan (Burrows, 2008). This cultural factor highlights the importance of contextual variables in the successful implementation of TBT. Two important variables are the teachers' attitude towards TBT and students' perceptions of the same. Studies on teachers' concerns regarding TBT and their evaluations of its implementation in foreign language classrooms have been conducted (Carless, 2004; Li, 1998), but thus far, very little has been done to investigate students' perceptions of TBT. This study aims to remedy that situation.

Previous research has shown that students may approach a language task differently (Horwits, 1987) even when they come from the same social background or have a similar language proficiency. Therefore, in order to maximize the learning outcome, it is of great importance to understand students' perceptions of teaching and learning, how they approach language learning and how they reflect on their learning experiences. As Kumaravadivelu (1991) puts it:

> The more we know about the students' personal approaches and personal concepts, the better and more productive our intervention will be (p. 107).

Even though students are considered to be an important variable in the teaching and learning process, research on students' perceptions of TBT is limited and a major argument for conducting this study is that it may contribute to understanding students' perceptions of TBT and lead to further improvements to TBT in foreign language education. More specifically, this study intends to answer the following research questions: 1) How do Danish students perceive TBT? and 2) How do they consider

and evaluate the use of language tasks in a beginner level Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) class? To this end, we collected data from a one-semester Chinese class at Aalborg University and after transcribing the data, we analyzed them to find out students' perceptions of TBT. Before presenting our findings, a brief overview of students' perceptions of language learning and research on TBT is provided.

<div align="center">REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS</div>

Studies on students' perceptions may be grouped into four broad categories: (1) students' evaluation of learning activities, (2) students' perceptions of learning outcomes, (3) students' attitudes toward language learning and (4) mismatches between students' perceptions and teachers' intentions.

Students' Evaluation of Learning Activities

Alcorso and Kalantsis (1985) investigated students' perceptions of what the most useful parts of their language lessons are, and they demonstrated that students prefer so-called 'traditional' learning activities to 'communicative' activities. Willing (1985a) who carried out a survey and statistical analysis of the learning preferences of over five hundred students reached the same conclusion. In a follow-up study, Nunan (1986b) found clear mismatches between students' and teachers' perceptions of what is important in the learning process.

Students' Perceptions of Learning Outcomes

In order to find out students' perceptions of which writing skills they found most useful, Leki and Carson (1994) investigated students' perceptions of the relationship between the writing instruction they received in ESL writing classes and the actual writing tasks they were given in courses across different disciplines, and they found a mismatch between teachers' and students' expectations of the learning outcomes. Zimmerman (1997) compared the effects of two vocabulary teaching methods and concluded that the most effective instruction is that which is in harmony with students' perceptions of it.

Students' Attitudes toward Language Learning

Research on students' attitudes has mainly been conducted in the field of second language acquisition. Gardener (1983) investigated individual difference variables underlying the language learning process within the framework of a socio-educational model. He identified language attitudes and motivation as important variables in the learning process as they are able to promote active involvement and influence active choice behavior regarding participation in acquisition contexts. Furthermore, he argued that students' attitudes determined their level of motivation, which meant

that a positive attitude towards language learning can boost the level of motivation for practical action and vice versa.

Mismatches between Students' Perceptions and Teaches' Intentions

A number of studies focus on mismatches between students' perceptions and teachers' intentions, including those laid out hereafter. Block (1994, 1996) argues that teachers and students describe and ascribe different purposes to instructional tasks and further suggests that teachers should take students' perceptions into consideration and make an attempt to align their orientation to that of the students since students are aware of what goes on in class. Wright (1987) demonstrates that students from a secondary class worked on the given tasks from their own perspectives, while deviating from the expected outcomes of the task. Kumaravadivelu (1991) argues that mismatches between teachers' intentions and students' perceptions may be multi-dimensional and describes ten sources of mismatches between teachers' intentions and students' interpretation when L2 oral tasks are applied in the L2 classroom.

As discussed above, research proves that it is of critical importance to the success or failure of teaching and learning activities to take students' perceptions into consideration. Therefore, in order to further improve the implementation of TBT in Danish beginner level CFL classes, it is considered important to study students' perceptions of this method.

USE OF LANGUAGE TASKS IN VARIOUS CLASSROOM CONTEXTS

In recent years, an increasing number of studies on TBT have been conducted in genuine language classrooms in different sociocultural contexts such as China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan, and Venezuela (Zhang, 2007; Carless, 2008; Mustafa, 2008; Burrows, 2008; Chacón, 2012). Nonetheless, to date, research findings are inconclusive and at odds with each other.

On the one hand, several studies demonstrate that TBT brings vitality into the classroom and has a positive influence on both language learning and personal development. Ruso (2007), for example, finds that the use of language tasks can increase students' participation. Lee (2005) reports that TBT not only supports students' personal development and helps improve their self-esteem, creativity and social skills, but also increases the level of enjoyment in the class. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) experiment with doing a task-based course in a Thai university, and find students enjoy it. Rahimpour (2008) proved the capacity of a task-based syllabus to produce positive learning outcomes by comparing the learning outcomes of a task-based syllabus and a structural grammar-translation-based syllabus.

On the other hand, various challenges to the implementation of TBT in real classrooms have been put forward, especially in an Asian context (Bruton, 2005; Burrows, 2008; Littlewood, 2007; Li, 1998). Due to limitations of space in this chapter, we will not go into details; rather, we will confine ourselves to citing Adams and Newton (2009), who

have ascribed these challenges to three main factors: the institutional factor, the teacher factor, and the student factor. The studies of the challenges to TBT in different teaching and learning contexts indicate that teachers and students with different teaching and learning cultures may respond differently to use of language tasks.

In summary, the use of language tasks has been expanded to a wide range of teaching and learning contexts and different geographical settings. The number of studies on TBT has also increased. Nevertheless, the findings of the studies imply that it is too risky to transfer language tasks unreflectively from one context to another without modifying them. How students react to the use of language tasks may, among other things, influence whether or not they can be applied successfully.

THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

The Concept of Perception and the Definition of Language Tasks in this Study

The concept of perception. The concept of perception in our study needs to be clarified. As stated above, students' perceptions of learning and teaching activities can be investigated from different perspectives. In this study, we interpret and explore four different dimensions of students' perceptions: (1) students' evaluations, (2) students' perceptions of learning outcomes, (3) students' attitudes and (4) mismatches between the perceptions of students and teachers on language tasks they encountered in their CFL class.

The definition of language tasks. Language tasks have been defined in various ways in research literature on L2 acquisition and pedagogy (Ellis, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to clarify the definition of language tasks in this study. In line with the purpose of the study, we frame language tasks within a pedagogical context. Based upon this, we have chosen to follow the definition proposed by Bygate et al. (2001) who defined pedagogical language tasks as follows:

> A task is an activity which requires students to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective, and which is chosen so that it is most likely to provide information for learners and teachers which will help them in their own learning (p. 11).

Following this definition, we designed language tasks that, for the most part, are closed, two-way tasks based on the belief that closed two-way tasks provide the most opportunities for negotiation (Pica, Kanagy & Falodun, 1993).

Research Context

The current study was carried out at Aalborg University (hereafter AAU), Denmark. AAU offers a two-semester BA study program in China Area Studies. The study program consists of a two-semester course in oral Chinese, Chinese culture and

Chinese civics and a one-semester course in written Chinese. The program is an elective for the students and consists of one 120 minutes teaching session per week in each of the four courses mentioned above. The courses run for ten weeks and add up to 40 hours of teaching in oral Chinese, culture and civics and 20 hours of teaching in written Chinese. In this study, we will only focus on oral and written Chinese; the oral Chinese is taught by a native Chinese speaker who has been teaching Chinese in Denmark for three years and who is the first author of this paper (Rui Bao), and the written Chinese is taught by a Danish teacher in his second year of teaching who is also the second author of this paper (Mads Jakob Kirkebæk).

Previously, a structural grammar-translation approach was adopted in the oral Chinese class, while a teacher-centered, lecture-based approach which focused on rote learning was used for written Chinese. Based on the teachers' reflections on their own teaching practice, however, these methods were seriously challenged by a lack of student participation and involvement and, consequently, poor student intake and retention. Considering the apparent limited success of the traditional teaching method, the teachers felt the need to rethink their teaching methods and look into language acquisition theories for inspiration. Finally, they decided to adopt TBT as they had become convinced that firstly, the use of language tasks is conducive to student participation and motivation, secondly, that TBT helps language acquisition because it provides more opportunities for students to interact with each other than traditional teaching, and thirdly, that TBT maximizes the time students have to experience the target language in a limited number of teaching hours.

Teaching Materials

The textbook used in the oral Chinese class was *Integrated Chinese Level 1*, *Part I. Integrated Chinese* is a series of books developed for four-year BA programs in Chinese. The teaching material is not only designed to develop students' oral Chinese proficiency, but the topics of the first book in the series (e.g. Greetings, Family, Hobbies, Visiting friends, Making appointments, School life, etc.) are of great relevance to students' daily life, and they gives students plenty of opportunities to develop conversation skills in Chinese. Based on the topics in the teaching material, the teacher designed tasks, most of which require students to work in pairs (see Appendix A).

In the written class, the teacher chose a Danish text: Bech and Nielsen (2011) *Kinesiske skrifttegn for begyndere* (Chinese characters for beginners). This teaching material is based on a traditional presentation-practice-production approach to teaching and learning. All lessons in the textbook follow exactly the same pattern: First, new characters are *presented* to the students, including stroke order, pronunciation and meaning(s). Then, students are required to *practice* the characters by imitating and drilling them. Students are not, however, required to *produce* anything in writing, by using the characters more freely. Based on the first 120 characters in the teaching material, the teacher designed language tasks for the students to solve in pairs or groups (See Appendix B).

METHOD

Participants

A total of ten students signed up for the courses in oral and written Chinese. Eight of the students were females and two were male. But after two lessons, one boy dropped out without knowing the reasons. The left nine students had an average age of 23. None of the students had received any formal education in Chinese language before, but two of them had been to China on a three-month student exchange program and another two had travelled in China as tourists.

Data Collection

Data for this qualitative study was collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews and post-course evaluations.

Participatory observation. The active participant observation method is used in this study. It means that researchers collect data at the same time as they are interacting with learners in a teaching and learning context (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In this study, the teachers were also the researchers, and it allowed us to participate in the entire teaching and learning process. Moreover, this double role enabled us to look closely at and achieve an in-depth understanding of students' reactions to the use of language tasks in the classroom (Johnson, 1992). We wrote field notes about students' reactions to TBT and had informal discussions with students during class, and both elements contributed to this study. Information obtained from the teachers' observations was used to generate an interview guide for the semi-structured interviews done later and the field notes were used as a main reference when designing language tasks for next semesters' classes.

Semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured format was used in the interviews with six open-ended questions, the intention of which was to achieve a deep and comprehensive understanding of the research questions in the study. The focus of the six questions was on 1) students' previous experiences with foreign language learning (i.e., what teaching methods they had experienced and what methods they preferred), 2) their perceptions of the language tasks used in the CFL class (i.e., what they thought of the language tasks used and to what extent the language tasks influenced and/or contributed to their learning process) and 3) their evaluation of the language tasks (i.e., the teaching methods they had expected to have in the CFL class before they started, the extent to which the use of language tasks lived up to their expectations and how the teaching in the CFL class could be improved). The oral Chinese teacher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with the nine students at the end of the second semester's teaching and before their oral exam. Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes and was audiotaped and transcribed.

The written Chinese teacher conducted a semi-structured group interview with six students at the end of the first semester.

Course evaluation.   A course evaluation was used to obtain information on students' overall perceptions of the language tasks used in the CFL class. The evaluation included one open-ended question and six single choice questions with elaboration about various aspects of students' perceptions of the language tasks. Moreover, the evaluation was conducted after students' oral exam in order to obtain their in-depth reflection on language tasks and to avoid the possibility of students saying something positive in the interview in the hope of impressing the teacher and getting good grades on their oral exam.

Data analysis.   Data reduction and data display were used to analyze the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In our study, after all the data had been collected, we went repeatedly through field notes obtained from observation, interview transcripts and course evaluation replies. In the early stage of this process, we closely examined the data by editing line by line, segmenting, and summarizing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After this, we put labels with the names of initial topics both on individual pieces of the data and on chunks. Then, in a later stage, we revisited the data and compared similarities and differences between the initial topics, adopting an inductive approach in order to categorize the initial topics and refine them as final topics before putting them under headings of the four dimensions of students' perceptions investigated in this study. The four dimensions that will be presented in greater detail below are: students' evaluation of learning activities; students' perceptions of learning outcomes; students' attitudes toward language learning; and mismatches between students' perceptions and teachers' intentions.

FINDINGS

The qualitative analysis of data reveals students' perceptions of language tasks with regard to the four dimensions mentioned above. The following sections present the findings related to each dimension.

Students' Evaluation of Learning Activities

Students' evaluations of language tasks are mostly positive, and it can be ascribed to two factors: Language tasks create a motivating learning environment and language tasks make learning easier to acquire.

Language tasks create a motivating learning environment.   As their positive comments below indicate, all students agreed that the use of language tasks in their CFL class was very effective. Some students thought the use of language tasks made the learning process more interactive; other students thought that learning through

these tasks was very interesting. For example, one student stated that "…I didn't expect learning to be as interactive as it has been. It is very interactive; I think that is really good. That is the good thing about it." Another student said "I think it is really good, we were very engaged and involved." In addition, some students expressed how much they enjoyed their CFL class. One student, for instance, thought the way she learned Chinese was very interesting. As she said:

> I can't say anything bad about it, because it was good. But I remember last semester I was very surprised that you had prepared [the classes] so well. There were texts with pictures and it was very fun; it made it fun for us to learn Chinese. Having those activities was very nice.

Similarly, another student said:

> At the beginning, I thought that I was back in primary school, but it was so fun. This year it was the most fun I had at university, because you started from scratch, you did these stupid assignments/tasks (hand gesture for quotation marks). It is so fun, the time goes by just like that… just so quickly.

Results from students' course evaluation replies and notes from teachers' observation also demonstrate students' good impressions of the use of language tasks in the CFL class.

Language tasks make learning easier to acquire. In addition, one student explained that working on these tasks also made learning easier to acquire. As she said:

> I think working with tasks, if something is a little bit of a difficult word such as 'tai' (it means 'too' in English), you will get a good understanding of how you actually use it by solving a task related to its usage, because you get to use it in different sentences, instead of the teacher just explaining it to us. The teacher explains this is how it is going to be used in the sentences, because something is difficult when you first hear it. But you work a little bit with the tasks, and then you begin to understand how it is used. So if you just spend five or ten minutes on the task, you will get it. I think it [task] is very good, because it means that, before you think it is too difficult you have this task and then you see how easy and logical it actually is. I think they [tasks] are very good.

Another student gave similar comments on the benefits of language tasks in her learning process. Even though students were mostly positive, they also gave suggestions with regard to task design and task implementation.

Adding variation to content and form of language tasks. Some students asked for a greater variety of tasks. One student stated that "… maybe you could organize different exercises/tasks. You know, change it around a little bit more, but I think it is good." Another student suggested that adding pronunciation training in the tasks could be helpful for them to master the Chinese language. Furthermore, a few

students suggested that making presentations as part of a task should be used more frequently. One student commented:

> More presentations, like you give me a sentence to describe my family, for instance. Then I go up and stand in front of the class and just make a presentation that should take 2 minutes but not like 15 minutes because there are lots of students. I think it would be a good idea. Presentations are very good. Presentations are good together with written assignments, but I also think they are good together with an oral exercise.

Adding some individual tasks. Several students would also have liked to have had some individual tasks that they could work on alone. For example, one student commented that "… I think we could do the exercise first, and then you can ask what is bothering or confusing to us and then you can lecture on that point next. Then I think some individual tasks would be also a good idea." Another student also explained that "I think you could have an individual task that you spent ten minutes, for example, concentrating and focusing on by yourself. That way you would have some time not to be bothered by the others." Students' course evaluation replies also demonstrate their desire for some individual tasks. Field notes from the teacher's classroom observations also indicate that students sometimes focus on their own thinking and writing before talking to their partner when they are given a task that they are expected to solve together. This could indicate that they prefer to work individually before working in pairs.

Talking to native-Chinese speakers. Students also suggested that they should have more time to talk with native-Chinese speakers. One student said that:

> Maybe we could use more Chinese conversation practice. It's difficult because we don't have big vocabularies. Yes, maybe this method would be good. … You should do more of that. You did it once; I think it would be good if you used this exercise more. If we have ten classes, maybe in four of them we could talk with Chinese speakers for ten minutes. Maybe it could be every time we change to a new chapter. We could meet with some Chinese students and just discuss that chapter before starting it.

Students' Perceptions of Learning Outcomes

Students were generally satisfied with their learning outcomes because the learning outcomes exceeded their expectations and their self-confidence with regard to speaking and writing Chinese increased.

Expectations were more than fulfilled. With regard to learning outcomes, all students expressed satisfaction. One student commented that

> Yes, I am very surprised by how much Chinese I have learned. I was thinking there were only twenty classes; I am not going to speak any Chinese by the

end. I was thinking how we normally learn a language and I really didn't think I would be able to speak. But I think I can speak much better than I expected I would be.

Another student stated that his/her expectations were more than fulfilled:

I thought I only would learn to say my name, say what I like to eat, that I am Danish, and so on, but now I think we learned much more than I expected.

Yet another student gave this comprehensive comment on her learning outcomes:

I think I have learned a lot more Chinese by doing tasks than I would have without them. I have had English for many years, but I don't feel like I am good at it. In this Chinese course, I think I know I can read some of the texts you have given us, and I can read them without opening my dictionary, I can read them, and understand what they say without a problem.

Similar views were repeated over and over again in interviews with the students.

Increased self-confidence. In addition, interview data implicitly showed that learning through language tasks helped build students' confidence in speaking and writing Chinese. As one student said:

I think the tasks are really good. I think now we can just say something without looking at the paper because we are forced to say things without looking at the answer for the whole semester. I think if you didn't force people to say things, I think they would feel shy to say anything. So it's [using tasks to enable students to speak in Chinese] good.

However, from the teachers' classroom observations it also became quite clear that students do encounter challenges when they work with language tasks. There were a few times at the beginning of the course when students were nervous and struggled when the teacher asked them to present the results of the tasks they had worked on. However, it occurred less and less as the course progressed and as students became more confident in speaking Chinese.

Students' Attitudes Toward Language Learning

Positive attitude toward Chinese language learning and Chinese culture Generally, students expressed a positive attitude toward learning the Chinese language. One student said:

We can have more Chinese language class because I think the Chinese language will be very beneficial to us out there in the work world. I need to do my masters, and in the end, I will find a program in Copenhagen. Hopefully I can find an intermediate class in Chinese, or maybe a beginner's class, then I can continue learning.

Similarly, another student indicated that:

It [the class] has been very great and very useful. After I finish my BA, of course, I will definitely study more Chinese by continuing to learn in some way at Århus University or privately.

Students also indicated their interest in Chinese culture. As one student commented in her course evaluation:

I feel that I am able to understand the Chinese culture better now. I understand some of the language. Furthermore, I feel like I could travel to China and manage just fine with everyday Chinese. So I think we have learned good basic knowledge of Chinese.

The last two comments may hint that students have a more open and positive attitude not only to the language itself, but also to the Chinese culture.

Complaints about the limited class hours. Limited class hours make both teachers and students feel pressured. Most of the students expressed their desire to have more time for the language classes. One student said:

I really think we should have three or four hours [for class]. That would be much better. The classes could be held twice a week and there would be time for a two hour Chinese class. In your head, you just feel "Aaah" (painful expression)… because it would be so intense, but you really learn something every day. If we had it two times a week, it would be so much better and we could learn so much more if we had one more hour class.

Another student expressed the view that learning the Chinese language is more important than the other courses they have in the China Area Studies program:

I would rather have two hours of Chinese language, because culture and civics is …. I don't know…if you read the news about it, then you get all the civic stuff. It was frustrating because we couldn't have more Chinese, because I think that it is more important. We use the language more than the other areas we study.

In addition, students also complained that there was no Chinese written class in the second semester of the program because they believed it would have been a great help and support for them to master the Chinese language if they had been able to attend both a written class and an oral class at the same time. One student commented that:

…I really thought we could have gotten more out of this if we had continued with the written class.

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Not only the students, but also the teachers felt pressured by the limited class hours. The limited time led to the teacher having to reply hurriedly to student questions, and also forced the teachers to teach the class at a fast pace. As one student commented:

I think it was good, but sometimes it all happened very fast. Then I just sat there. Yes, I become very confused sometimes because it happened so fast. You [the teacher] also talked a little fast.

A similar comment from another student was:

I think sometimes for me things can go too fast. I think that sometimes I need to try language out and get used to it. And sometimes I felt I got too much information.

These findings are consistent with classroom observations and the results of course evaluation replies, all of which demonstrated that both the students and teachers were pressured by the limited class hours.

Mismatches between Students' Perceptions and Teachers' Intentions

Through analyzing the data, one mismatch between students' perceptions and teachers' intentions of language tasks was identified. The mismatch was between the focus of the teacher and students.

All students commented that they need more time for taking notes because writing was a really helpful aid to understanding and memorization. For example, one student said:

Sometimes we have to write. I am not very good at listening. I have to write it down. I learned from my hands, I think.

Similarly, another student stated that:

Sometimes it has been quite fast because lots of us would like to write things down and let it go through our fingers, which is the way I learn a language. Just by writing it down.

From the students' perceptions, taking notes was necessary for digesting what they had been taught and what they had practiced during the tasks. In addition, taking down notes was also a good resource for those who did not fully understand what was delivered in the classroom, but reviewed their notes later when they were alone. As one student commented:

When preparing for the exam, it was so good for me to have those notes because they helped me a lot. When I write, I really don't know what I am writing, but can find out later.

It seems that students have good arguments for their focus on taking notes. Nevertheless, the intention of the teachers to use language tasks is to create

opportunities for students to stretch their speaking skills instead of writing during the limited class hours. From the teachers' observations, however, students spent a substantial amount of time writing before beginning to talk. Although the teacher pinpointed the intention of using these tasks throughout the course, some students still insisted on writing their notes before beginning work on their tasks.

DISCUSSION

First, this study suggests that students' perceptions should be taken into consideration when designing tasks in order to maximize their value for language learning. As discussed above, we were very surprised to find out that firstly, students prefer to write before speaking, and secondly, that students want to have some individual tasks as well, both of which are not in total harmony with the teachers' intentions. The interview data indicates valid arguments for their preference: writing is an effective way for students to learn and individual tasks enable greater concentration than collective tasks where they depend, in part, on their partners. In addition, students also suggest adding variety to the form and content of language tasks used in their CFL class, such as integrating visual materials into the classroom and providing more opportunities for them to present. However, we, as teachers, are used to acting as a decision-maker on teaching and learning activities employed in the classroom, not taking into account students' perceptions on this process (Bada & Okan, 2000). If the teachers were aware of these perceptions from students, the mismatches between students' perceptions and the teachers' intentions discussed above in this study would have been avoided or at least minimized. In other words, if we, as teachers and task designers, had been aware of students' perceptions of language learning, we would have been able to appropriately design language tasks and promote the learning process and ultimately reach the desired learning outcomes in the classroom for both teacher and students (Barkhuizen, 1998).

Secondly, the study provides further evidence that the local cultural context does play an important role in whether or not TBT can be applied effectively. Some research has evidenced that a variety of contexts, such as curriculum and teaching methods, influence school practice (Graue & Walsh, 1998). As discussed earlier in this study, TBT has been weakened by the lack of appropriate attitudes and passive participation when it was adopted in some Asian school contexts (Carless, 2007; Li, 1998; Burrows, 2008; Littlewood, 2007). However, the implementation of TBT in a Danish context seems to have been effective as demonstrated above. In addition to the benefits of TBT in language learning, we believe its success may have something to do with the Danish educational culture, which emphasizes student cooperation and student initiative in the learning process (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012). This educational culture can be traced back to Danish day-care education. Ellegaard (2005) argues that relaxed time structures in the day-care institutions in Denmark provide abundant opportunities for child-initiated activities and playing with their peers. This educational tradition has been extended to all educational phases, which

are shaped by group and project work as commonly used learning methods and are characterized by students-centeredness rather than teacher control in the learning process. Learners educated in the context of group and project work are accustomed to cooperating and negotiating with each other when either dealing with a problem or solving a task. Therefore, students are not resistant to working together, but rather, accept the challenge of solving a task in their CFL class, which, as well as favoring students-centeredness rather than teacher control (Skehan, 1998), also values learners' participation and cooperation in the task's completion (Lantolf, 2001). Hence, the principle of using language tasks is in accordance with the local learning culture, and it does not result in cultural conflicts as was the case when language tasks were applied in some Asian contexts mentioned above.

Lastly, time issues become one of the major challenges for the use of language tasks. This study corroborates the assertion that the use of language tasks should enable teachers to have time to fully respond to students' questions (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). Likewise, students should have been given enough time to assimilate their teacher's instructions before being asked to complete a task. McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) argue that teachers may not be able to address students' needs encountered in a task-based course if several tasks are needed to be finished in each lesson. As reported in the context of this study, the teacher felt pressured by the limited class hours, and as a result, she found herself answering students' questions in a hurried manner. Not only could this cause frustration and confusion to students in the learning process, but it may also influence the implementation of TBT because students may feel disturbed if they are pushed to move onto the next phase of a task without a complete understanding of some linguistic points generated from the previous task. From the students' perspectives, they expect teachers to give them enough time to write and digest what they have been taught. And they also expect educational institutions to allocate more teaching hours for their CFL class.

In summary, this study indicates that the success or failure of TBT in Chinese language teaching and learning is related to students' perceptions of the learning activities, and the students' approach to learning. There is also a correlation to the local cultural context. In addition, institutional support is needed to offer teachers and students enough time to work through the language tasks in their classroom.

CONCLUSION

This small-scale study demonstrates that students' perceptions are of great importance to successful implementation of task-based teaching in Chinese language classes. Therefore, teachers should take students' perceptions of language learning and their cultural background into account when language tasks are applied in the language classrooms. Task-based teaching was a new method for Danish students, but the principle behind it resonates well with Danish students' perceptions of foreign language learning and their educational culture. The study shows that students perceive language tasks as an effective tool in their CFL learning in terms of

1) increasing students' engagement, 2) creating an interactive and enjoyable learning environment, and 3) bringing about satisfactory learning outcomes. In addition, this study may also contribute to the research on the use of language tasks in foreign language learning because it was conducted in a CFL context with beginners, as opposed to previous research which mainly focused on English as the target language with non-beginners. However, students' perceptions of task-based teaching also showed their concerns with task design and task implementation due to its lack of variety. These concerns will become valuable recourses to help CFL teachers to better design and implement task-based teaching in their future teaching practice.

However, this study is situated in a Danish university context, making it difficult to generalize. Further research is needed to fully understand how task-based teaching may facilitate the teaching and learning of the Chinese language, and what roles the teacher and students play in the learning process when applying TBT. To do so, it may also prove valuable to look into these issues from both a psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspective. Furthermore, besides audio-taped data used in this study, video-taped data may provide an opportunity to understand other aspects of the teaching and learning process, including gestures and facial expressions. Despite the limitation, this study may serve as an inspiration for other researchers who are interested in implementing task-based teaching and learning for beginner-level students in a CFL context.

APPENDIX A

'Getting to Know Each Other'

1. How many people do you have in your family?
   □4   □5   □6   □3   □7
2. Do you have an older brother?
   □Yes   □no
3. How many older brothers do you have?
   □1   □2   □3
4. Do you have a younger brother?
   □Yes   □no
5. How many younger brothers do you have?
   □1   □2   □3
6. Do you have an older sister?
   □Yes   □no
7. How many older sisters do you have?
   □1   □2   □3
8. Do you have a younger sister?
   □Yes   □no
9. How many younger sisters do you have?
   □1   □2   □3
10. Does your mom have a job?
    □Yes   □no

APPENDIX B

Combine and Create

Combine the character components in Circle 1 with the character components in Circle 2 and list the nine characters meaning "to speak", "early", "late", "to know", "bright", "language", "harmony, peace", "to call", and "middle" in a table

Circle 1   Circle 2

日，讠，
口，

禾，十，丨，
月，免，兑，
人，吾，屮，
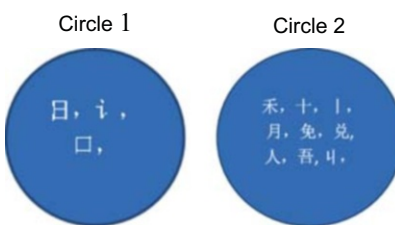
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HUICHUN LI & XIANG-YUN DU

6. CONFRONTING CULTURAL CHALLENGES WHEN RECONSTRUCTING THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP IN A CHINESE CONTEXT

DIFFICULTIES IN MAKING AN EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Traditionally, the Chinese educational system is shaped by teacher-centeredness, meaning that the teacher directs and controls the design of the overall educational objective and the educational process. However, in the past three decades, Chinese educational institutions have gradually made initiatives to transform their teacher-centered educational approach into student-centered learning in order to enhance student learning motivation and learning outcome. For example, China Medical University, a Chinese medical university with strong lecture-based learning tradition, has recently been in the process of transforming some of its courses from lecture-based learning to Problem-Based Learning, the latter of which requires students to take responsibility for their own learning affairs. Ideally, students are encouraged to make decisions on their own learning objectives, to design their learning activities, and sometimes even to assess their own learning outcome. This method also requires changing the role of teacher from that of a traditional instructor presenting knowledge content to students to a facilitator responsible for offering students a hospitable environment in which to learn. However, in practice, the process of instituting this significant transformation meets many challenges. For example, the students are not initially eager to challenge their teachers and engage in dialogue with them. Some students still expect "strong instruction and guidance" from their teachers and find it difficult to learn on their own since they insist that they could learn much better under the instruction of their teachers. Meanwhile, the teachers are quite reluctant to accept the idea that their traditional position should be challenged. Some teachers who see their students as immature and lacking in learning experience favor a dominant role in teaching and learning, as opposed to the more passive role taken by letting students make explorations on their own. They tend to think that teachers have accumulated many years of teaching experience and thus they know how to teach in a more efficient way. So, how do we understand these challenges?

The story of China Medical University is not unique, but is rather quite common in the educational domain in China (e.g. Wang, Tai & Huang, 2008). In general, the establishment of a more student-centered educational approach requires restructuring the traditional, teacher-directed teacher-student relationship. As for the teacher-student

relationship, we should be aware that it is not formulated simply in an educational context, but is heavily embedded in a particular social and cultural context. Cong (2005) suggests that the teacher-student relationship can be seen from both a pedagogical and social perspective. Whether the teacher-student relationship is equal and democratic is largely dependent on the dominant situation of the interpersonal relationship in society rather than the educational context. Furthermore, Hofstede (1986) makes it explicit that the interaction between the teacher and the student is closely linked to a particular national context. Despite these efforts to clarify the meaning of the teacher-student relationship, little has been discussed on the macro social and ethical framework which plays a significant role in defining the basic structure of the teacher-student relationship. In this study, we assume that the teacher-student relationship cannot be readily reduced to a pedagogical matter, but should instead, due to its close relationship with the social and ethical dimensions, be examined in a broader context to identify its relevance to social and ethical implications.

The traditional teacher-student relationship has received many critiques (Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1916). It is considered by Freire (1970) as highly oppressive since the teaching practice becomes a monologue and there is little interaction between the teacher and the student. Here, teachers are authorities who represent wisdom from the past and they convey this wisdom to students in a unidirectional manner. The conduct of this educational approach is detrimental for the growth of the student since it oppresses and denies the subjectivity of the student in the educational practice. Therefore, it reduces education to a banking model in which students become a container waiting for the teacher to deposit the learning content into their minds. However, the critiques against the teacher-centered teacher-student relationship have a tendency of considering the traditional teacher-student relationship as largely ineffectual, and therefore neglect its benefits. In this sense, they tend to view an equal, democratic teacher-student relationship as an ideal type of teacher-student relationship. Although this makes sense for an educational transformation, these critics, to some extent, underestimate the benefits of tradition and the risks of altering it. Therefore, this study will consider the risks that we might face when we transform the teacher-student relationship from being teacher-centered to being equal and democratic. Two research questions are thus formulated as:

– What is the meaning of the traditional relationship between the teacher and the student within the Chinese social and ethical context?
– What are the possible costs and losses when transforming the traditional teacher-student relationship?

When addressing these research questions, a further concern of this research is that when we transform the teacher-student relationship, it will have complex impacts upon the teacher. So far, there has been little discussion regarding the teacher's gains and losses in a particular teacher-student relationship. Since the teacher is a crucial component of the teacher-student relationship, it is necessary to include teachers in such a discussion in order to offer a more comprehensive picture.

CHINESE INTERPRETATION OF THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

Much has been discussed on the relationship between the Chinese teacher and his or her students (Spencer-Oatey, 1997; Zhao, 2003; Wu, 2010; Shao, 2007; Li & Yun, 2010). There is a general recognition that the teacher-student relationship is highly hierarchical; teachers dominate educational processes and students tend to conform to the direction and the guidance of their teachers. For example, in one of Hofstede's (1986) articles, he characterizes several basic principles of the teacher-student relationship in societies that have a great power distance:

– stress on personal "wisdom" which is transferred in the relationship with a particular teacher
– a teacher merits the respect of his/her students
– teacher-centered education (premium on order)
– students expect teacher to initiate communication
– students expect teacher to outline paths to follow
– students speak up in class only when invited by the teacher
– teacher is never contradicted nor publicly criticized
– effectiveness of learning related to excellence of the teacher
– respect for teachers is also shown outside class
– in teacher/student conflicts, parents are expected to side with the teacher
– older teachers are more respected than younger teachers

These items describe a hierarchical teacher-student relationship profile which highlights teacher-centeredness and students' obedience to their teacher. Although this description is successful in depicting Chinese teacher-student relationships, it does not provide any explanation as to why the relationship develops in this way.

In practice, transforming the relationship between the teacher and the student requires a change of the conception of the teacher-student relationship. Traditionally, the teacher plays a dominant role in the whole teaching and learning process due to the overall societal respect for tradition and authority in both western countries and China. However, the emphasis on the teacher's directive role in pedagogical practices in China can also be attributed to China's special ethical and cultural tradition. The relationship between the teacher and the student is quite complex since it contains far more meaning than the pedagogical relation that we usually expect. In general, the relationship between the teacher and the student is not purely pedagogical, but also involves a series of ethical, emotional, and managerial considerations. From the viewpoint of the students, conforming to teachers' direction and guidance is regarded as being of great virtue for students because it is in accord with the Chinese traditional ethical system which aims to maintain social order and harmony. In conjunction with this, teachers are expected to act as ethical models. They are not only expected to teach, but also to accomplish a series of parental and managerial missions.

Ethics

The hierarchical structure of the relationship between the teacher and the student in China has been a source of much discussion (Zhao, 2003; Wu, 2010). Generally, the teacher-student relationship in China is largely influenced by the Confucian thoughts confirming the dignity of the teacher. When discussing the relationship between teacher and student, Confucian thoughts do not treat it as merely a pedagogical relationship, but as one having crucial social implications.

The notion of Li (礼, similar to rites) is a core concept in Confucian philosophy. Li has both societal and individual implications. The ideal of a society requires all social members to act in accordance with the principle of Li. At the individual level, knowing the meaning of Li and conducting the principle of Li is a primary method for one's character growth towards sage. When one has completely internalized Li and conducts himself by it, he can be considered a sage.

Basically, Li includes a set of principles to direct and provide norms for one's behavior. It places special concern on how to conduct oneself in relationships with other individuals, such as ruler, father, husband, etc. These principles assign different roles with different ethical requirements. All social members are required to conform to these ethical rules and guidelines in order to build up a harmonious society. Three core principles are (also known as San Gang, 三纲): ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife. The ruler, father, and husband have the responsibility to care for the subject, son, and wife, who should, in turn, obey the guidance of their ruler, father, and husband. Within this ethical framework, one's behavior has to conform to one's particular role. For example, as a father, one has to take care of his sons, while as a son, one has to respect and conform to his father's directions. The social order and harmony is believed to be maintained if everyone in the society can act according to his/her particular role and fulfill his/her responsibilities. The ideal of a society requires each individual to conform to:

> the relations of humanity: between father and son, there should be affection; between sovereign and minister, righteousness; between husband and wife, attention to their separate functions; between old and young, a proper order; and between friends, fidelity (Mengzi: Teng Wen Gong 1).

Although the function of this ethical framework is expected to lead to societal virtue, the relationship between different social members within it is very hierarchical, which means that those who belong to the ethically lower status should be subjected to those with higher ethical status. The ruler (father, husband) is always superior to the subject (son, wife), who should always show his or her respect and submission to the ruler. Based on this, loyalty to the ruler, or filial piety, is considered to be great virtue for anyone. Those who violate Li would be considered as uneducated or even savage since Li represents social order and harmony.

The relationships between the teacher and the students are embedded in the ethical framework regulated by Li. In general, the teacher-student relationship should be

similar to that between father and son. A student should treat his teacher as his father; as a popular Chinese saying states, "he who has been your teacher for one day can be regarded as your father for your whole life (一日为师, 终身为父)." In this sense, the teacher is placed at the same position as the father in the society's ethical framework, which implies that students should conform to their teachers' directions and guidance.

The principle of conforming to the teacher's expectations is independent of space and time (also confirmed by Hofstede), which implies that one should respect one's teacher irrespective of time, location, or social status. For example, even a ruler should respect his teacher. Normally, the position of the ruler makes one superior to anybody else in any context, but the teacher-ruler relationship is an exception; when the subject acts as a teacher for the ruler, the ruler should not treat him as his minister or subject, but should instead treat him as father and conform to his guidance and direction (Books of Rites: Record on the Subject of Education). Furthermore, when the teacher has instructed a student, the student should take him as his teacher in all educational or non-educational settings throughout his life. Therefore, the dignity of the teacher is quite important for the society. Emphasizing the dignity of the teacher, regardless of the teacher's identity and situation, is important not only because according respect to the role of teacher would make people more likely to respect education (Books of Rites: Record on the Subject of Education), but also, and most importantly, because respecting one's teacher is a way of conducting Li.

The teacher is the representative of Li not only because he is conveying the rules of Li to students, but also because he is in a position to set himself as an example of conducting Li from which the student can learn. Therefore, conforming to the expectations of the teacher is an indication of conforming to Li and respecting social ethics.

Traditionally, to challenge a teacher has always been considered as a challenge to authority and tradition, or even Li, which is believed to be the primary bond unifying people with different levels of social status. Therefore, challenging a teacher is considered to be detrimental to the stability to the social norm and therefore should not be encouraged. As stated,

> Speaking without conforming to the teacher is disrespectable, educating without conforming to the teacher is a betrayal. Those who are disrespectful and treacherous are not welcomed by the wise ruler and his subjects. (Xunzi: Dalue)

Currently, although the classical ethical framework guiding the relationship between ruler and subject has been abolished, the traditional ethical guidelines directing the teacher-student relationship are still, to some extent, prevailing in schooling practices, albeit with some modifications. In short, the hierarchical structure between teacher and student still remains in modern China. Teachers are no longer regarded as the embodiment of the truth, but students are still required to respect their teachers and the elders in all educational settings.

The Chinese educational system does, to some extent, tend to reproduce the traditional ethical framework. Chinese teachers generally combine classroom

teaching with the cultivation of good learning attitudes and good conduct while their Western counterparts tend to focus on the facilitation of and interest in learning (Gao & Watkins, 2002). Lau et al. (2000) note that respect for authority is regarded as a significant learning outcome in China. A good student is someone who knows how to behave in an appropriate manner in a relationship with his or her teacher. In fact, "Respects teacher" could be considered one of the major characteristics of a good student. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) note that Chinese students will "follow what teachers say out of respect."

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TEACHER

Many researchers criticize the traditional teacher-student relationship for being oppressive and suppressing student autonomy. However, teacher-centeredness also implies a huge responsibility for the teachers because they have stringent requirements imposed on them by society. Particularly, in the Chinese context, a teacher has to act as an ethical model for students, as well as taking some degree of parental responsibility for them.

Ethical Model

The aim of education in ancient China was not to accumulate the learning content but to put it into practice in order to conduct Li and cultivate one's character until it reached the level of the sage. "To teach" means that "teachers instruct the students who later emulate their teachers." From the Confucian tradition, someone trying to conduct Li needs a model to emulate. To some extent, learning refers to that notion of trying to emulate a person who can guide us to realize our good nature (Shim, 2008). China has a long tradition of holding that a teacher should act as a model of conducting Li in order for the students to have a model to emulate. Since the teacher is the agent for conducting Li, his/her behavior will have a significant influence on students' learning behavior. Intentionally or unintentionally, students tend to mimic their teacher's behaviors. If teachers fail to act in an appropriate manner, they will have a negative effect on students' personal growth. Therefore, the teachers are required to pay attention to their own behavior since they are expected to direct their students through their actions. As Confucius stated,

> When a prince's personal conduct is correct, his government is effective without the issuing of orders. If his personal conduct is not correct, he may issue orders, but they will not be followed. (Confucious. Analects: Zilu)

There is much discussion regarding Confucian ways of teaching (Low, 2010). A critical principle is that the teacher needs to provide an exemplary model for the students to emulate and thus devote themselves to the conduct of Li. In general, the teaching profession is viewed as a selfless, sacred, self-sacrificial one in which no reward is expected. In principle, the teacher should dedicate all of his knowledge

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and energy to bettering his students in order to facilitate their character cultivation. It is only through this exemplary practice that students would be motivated to approach Li.

Currently, the national guidelines for teachers still emphasize the teachers' modeling function as being necessary for the students' growth and development. Teachers are given requirements intended to prompt them not only impart the knowledge content to students, but also to guide students to "act appropriately" and "become a morally perfect person." These requirements include: being dedicated to their careers and the students, showing professional expertise, having the courage to explore the unknown and maintain the truth, being tolerant to different viewpoints, etc. These requirements are conveyed thusly:

> Learn, so as to instruct others, Act, to serve as example to all... Build up excellent teaching and learning atmosphere. Influence students by noble ethics, personality and charisma. Conform to social public ethics. Secure social justice and lead social custom (Ministry of Education, & National Committee of Education, Health and Sports, 2011).

To some extent, the teacher becomes the representative of societal virtue. As the teacher becomes a model which the students are expected to follow, students tend to consider the teacher as representing the ideal, and they therefore cannot treat the teacher as being equal to them.

Parental Role

As mentioned, the student is encouraged to treat the teacher as his father, and in Chinese educational settings, this results in the teacher-student relationship carrying far more meaning than the educative, pedagogical relationship in China because it means that teachers are not only responsible for teaching and instructing students; by creating a teacher-student relationship resembling the familial relationship, it falls on the teacher to take care of the children in the same way that a parent would, while also mandating that the children conform to the expectations of the teacher in the same way that they would adhere to the wishes of their parents.

As a parent-like teacher, the teacher should be dedicated, committed, or sometimes even self-sacrificial. In China's ethical tradition, the parents would sacrifice for their children without expecting any return or reward from them. This tradition also has a reflection on the teacher-student relationship in that the teachers are expected to sacrifice themselves for the students. The prevalent metaphor of the candle is always employed to describe the ideal spirit of the teacher in the Chinese educational field; as a candle is to burn itself to illuminate its surroundings, a teacher is to sacrifice for and devote himself to the students.

In conjunction with the spirit of sacrifice, a teacher should be responsible for students' academic behavior, emotional stability, safety, and so on. They should take the students' affairs as their own. When students are at a campus where their parents

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are absent, teachers are sometimes expected to act like parents, superintending the students' performance and behavior and guaranteeing their appropriateness. This is not the case when student autonomy is respected; here, students should take care of their own learning affairs and the educational system should encourage students to make their own decisions and manage their own responsibilities. However, within the Chinese ethical framework, since the teacher views the student as his son, the teacher tends to think that he should be fully responsible for the student's learning performance and habits. It is always a professional virtue when the teacher is committed to his students' academic performance. The teacher is likely to be critiqued if he gives students too much freedom in making their own decisions. Consequently, parents and students tend to attribute students' poor academic performance to the teacher's lack of commitment rather than considering it to be some fault of the student. As stated, "To feed without teaching is the father's fault. To teach without severity is the teacher's laziness (养不教, 父之过; 教不严, 师之惰)." (Three Character Classic, 三字经) In this sense, the role of the teacher at the campus is required to simulate the role of the students' parents, who should take full responsibility of their children. Chinese teachers can also rely on parents to support them in their attempts to make students self-disciplined (Peng, 1993; Goa, 1998). It is considered proper for the teacher to teach the students discipline so as to assist in the formulation of their learning and living habits. Students have to follow the teacher's direction in order to internalize the social norms and regulations. Apart from these, the teacher is also responsible for students' psychological development, emotional stability, and safety. At every educational institution, whether it is a primary school or a college, there is a particular group of teachers whose major mission is to take care of students' mental and physical health, as well as make note of the security situation. Basically, teachers should act like managers to ensure that students' behavior is in line with social norms.

To some extent, teachers also have to play the role of babysitter and look after the students. This role is also confirmed by the national policy (Ministry of Education, 1989; Ministry of Education, & National Committee of Education, Health and Sports, 2011). The notion of teachers' responsibility of caring for students is perpetuated by the social mass media and students' parents. Teachers and the schools are always critiqued by the public and by parents whenever there is any problem with the individual students. The basic assumption is that the school is similar to a family; a teacher is expected to take care of his students at school, just as parents should take care of their children in the family. A teacher is more likely to be critiqued if he cannot act as his students' parents. Therefore, the relationship between the teacher and the students is a reflection of that between the parents and their offspring in the family. As the parent-child relationship in China is still hierarchical, the teacher-student relationship also, to some extent, features the hierarchical power structure present in the family. The students are also accustomed to developing under the guidance of their teachers, becoming highly dependent on them as a result.

THE IMPACT OF TRADITION ON CURRENT EDUCATIONAL
PRACTICES IN CHINA

The aim of the modern Chinese education system differs significantly from that in ancient China. In ancient China, educational activities were to help students to learn and internalize Li, with the aim to encourage them to perform Li rather than just memorize it. In current society, though the ancient educational objectives are mostly abolished, the ethical tradition is still influential in educational practice. To a great extent, the relationship between teacher and student remains similar to that in ancient China, and this fact has significant influence upon the educational practice. Here, we are mainly concerned with how the ethical tradition impacts current pedagogical practice in China.

According to the ancient belief system, the responsibility of a teacher is not to be conducting dialogic activities alongside the students, but to be "transmitting the doctrine, imparting professional knowledge content, and resolving doubts and confusions" (Hanyu, 1986). As an ethical model, the teacher is also supposed to know more and be better than the student, as seen in Hanyu's criterion for selecting a teacher: "where the Dao (道, doctrine) lies, the teacher is" (Hanyu, 1986). Since the role of the teacher is relatively similar to that of the parents, the teacher should take full responsibility for the students' academic affairs. The trends of instructing too much, dominating the whole educational process, and limiting the freedom of the students are partly because of the conventional conception of learning, which is that learning is the acquisition of knowledge, but it occurs because the teacher is committed to taking responsibility for the students. From the perspective of the teacher, students are immature, and a student-directed learning approach cannot secure the desired learning outcome and promote students' self-development, making it necessary for the teacher to take the responsibility for guiding students and ensuring that they learn in a correct and efficient manner. From the viewpoint of the students, due to their unfamiliarity with the learning content and their lack of learning experience, they also feel insecure when they are encouraged to explore on their own. Some students even expect authoritative guidance from the teacher and are unsure of what to do without it.

Today, communication is an integral part of the pedagogical practice since learning is widely believed to happen during the interaction between the teacher and the student. Traditionally, the teacher-student interaction in the Chinese educational context has often been reduced to the teacher instructing the student or the student following the teacher's guidance. Chinese students are quite unlikely to argue with or challenge their teachers. While students may occasionally encounter problems and confusion, they always expect the teacher to give them a direct solution or answer. Ideally, communication is far more than the exchange of information, but is instead an instance in which both participants enter each other's world, understand each other's viewpoints, and eventually broaden their own horizons. However, although students are encouraged to engage in dialogue with their teacher in some cases,

they typically have not actively participated in the communicative practice. In a course which is deliberately designed to encourage the communication between the teacher and the student, the researcher notes that the traditional Chinese teacher-student relationship makes it difficult for students to suspend their conceptions of the teacher and engage in the simulated communicative activities (Ting, 1987). In general, students are relatively passive in the teaching and learning practice, with their major responsibility being to memorize the information presented by the teacher; in this scenario, there is limited interaction between the teacher and the student. In some cases, the communication between the teacher and the student is reduced to the teacher's simply providing the information to the students in lecture form, allowing for little to nothing in the way of dynamic interaction.

A crucial element in the interactive process is questioning, which allows all participants in the learning process to clarify their thoughts. However, questioning plays a different role in Chinese pedagogical practice; here, students ask questions for the sole purpose of obtaining a direct answer, while teachers ask questions to evaluate students' learning status, which can sometimes serve as a basis for them to further design their teaching activities. The function of questioning thus becomes a method to obtain concrete answers, acting as a closed end rather than as a method that might trigger a conversation between the teacher and the student.

CHALLENGES FOR TRANSFORMING THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP

Modern China is witnessing many educational innovation initiatives aimed at transforming the traditional teacher-student relationship. At the national level, educational innovation initiatives are intended to grant students more freedom in the learning process. At the institutional level, many universities and colleges are in the process of building up a student-directed learning approach, such as China Medical University's introduction of Problem-Based Learning. Despite their different aims, they share a common desire to encourage students to take ownership of their learning processes. Students are encouraged to make choices in identifying their learning objectives, selecting learning content, and choosing their own learning activities. The formulation of the student-centered educational approach is always coupled with the establishment of an equal, democratic teacher-student relationship.

Any educational innovation initiative is conditioned by its particular social, cultural, and ethical context. In order to establish a democratic, dialogical relationship between the teacher and the student, we should be aware of the particularity of the cultural context in which the teacher-student relationship is embedded. It can be noted that there is a clear tension between the Confucian ethical tradition regarding the teacher-student relationship and the essence of the democratic teacher-student relationship, which respects student autonomy and the equality between the teacher and the student. In China, the relationship between teacher and student is traditionally not democratic, but hierarchical. Though traditional educational ethics are being

gradually deconstructed by the Western philosophy, they still have notable influence upon the current educational practice in China.

The notion of "the dignity of the teacher" (师道尊严) still prevails, but it is gradually becoming weaker. This notion puts the student in a humble position where he or she should always respect teachers' authority and conform to their instruction and guidance. In this situation, teachers have the idea that their status of authority figure should be maintained and not be challenged by the student. The teachers are more likely to think students are being impolite and feel offended when they are challenged by them. They also tend to think that the challenging questions posed by the students are a threat to their authority. Furthermore, they are supposed to take the full responsibility for the students' development, including both academic performance and character cultivation, as well as other non-educational affairs, therefore making it extremely difficult for them to see the students as equals. Consequently, students maintain that they are ethically inferior to their teachers. They are supposed to respect and conform to their teachers' directions and instructions not only because the teachers are educational authority figures, but also because the teachers function as ethical models and perform the same function as parents. Therefore, in educational settings, students tend to behave in a passive role since proposing arguments and negotiating with the teachers are behaviors viewed as rude and disrespectful (Rao, 1996). In a context where respect for the teacher is highly emphasized as a basic value of education, it is quite difficult to equalize the relationship between the teacher and the student.

A democratic teacher-student relationship requires shrinking the distance between the teacher and the student. However, in the Chinese context, since the educational system still highlights respect for the teacher as an educational outcome, there is an internal tension between the intention of making students respect their teachers and that of placing students in an equal and democratic discussion with their teachers. For one thing, respecting the teacher implies a power distance between the teacher and the student. To be more accurate, teachers should, to some extent, maintain an authoritarian profile so as to secure the educational process and order. In this sense, keeping the teacher's authority has a practical value. Song (2009) and Zhao (2011) suggest that maintaining a certain distance with students and thereby keeping the teacher's authority is a practical method of securing the educational process and maintaining order.

Furthermore, the teachers tend to think that they know more about what to learn and how to learn efficiently, and therefore believe that students have to obey to their instructions in order to learn correctly and effectively. This argument is somewhat valid since the teachers do have more teaching and learning experience than the students, making it likely that they know more about learning efficiently and avoiding mistakes. However, the problem with this argument is that it views learning as simply a way of receiving information. If learning is nothing more than receiving transmitted knowledge, then it makes sense that there would be a way to improve the methods by which knowledge is conveyed. However, if learning is far more than the transmission of knowledge (and perhaps even the development of skills), then we should refute the assumption that the teacher is more advanced than

the student. If we want to conduct dialogic learning, we should not view learning as a process of knowledge flowing from the person with "more knowledge content" to the person with "less content," but should instead conceive of learning as a mutually constructive process involving bidirectional evaluation, critique, and challenging.

Many teachers have not realized the value of dialogue in the educational process. For them, any communication in education is primarily focused on lecturing and addressing students' academic concerns, which are usually expressed in the form of questions posed by the student. The main objective of student-teacher communication is neither to build up a democratic relationship between the student and the teacher, nor to carry out real conversation by entering into each other's worlds, but only to offer learning content and answers. Therefore, the communication between the teacher and the student in modern China cannot be regarded as real dialogue.

Based on this, it can be noted that establishing a democratic, dialogic teacher-student relationship is quite challenging in a Chinese context. There are currently many Chinese scholarly works discussing the relationship between the teacher and the student (Zhao, 2003; Zhou, 2007; Zhao, 2011). In general, it is believed that the traditional teacher-centered relationship should be transformed to an equal relationship between the teacher and the student. As for the meaning of the new teacher-student relationship, it could be noted that Chinese educational theorists and practitioners are largely bound by the ethical tradition. Many researchers in China highlight the importance of establishing a democratic relationship between the teacher and the student, taking a more student-centered approach, while some still insist on the importance of the teacher's dominance in the teaching and learning process (Shao & Liao, 2007). From their viewpoints, education should emphasize both the students' subjectivity and the teacher's dominance; teacher dominance is indispensable for education because teachers have a better understanding of the learning content and process, and therefore it is only through the guidance of the teacher that the whole educational process can be in order. It is widely believed that without the guidance of the teacher, the educational process may become chaotic and unable to lead to the intended learning outcome. Teacher instruction is necessary since the communication between the teacher and the student is not the same as an interaction between two different subjects; rather, the "teacher has to play an instructional role in student cognitive process" (Shao, 2007). The implication is that the teacher still has the authority to direct or even control the student since it is only through a teacher's guidance that students are able to grow in a direction that is both healthy and correct.

WHAT WE LOSE

Hofstede (1986) characterizes the culture in China as having a large power distance. Within this hierarchical framework, there is a huge power distance between a teacher and a student in the Chinese educational context. Much has been discussed on the hierarchy inherent in the teacher-student relationship in China, focusing on the possible consequences of an equality-based relationship in terms of the traditional

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trend of students conforming to rather than challenging the teacher. However, what is generally missing in these discussions is the fact that the power distance between the teacher and student, together with the teacher's moral and parental role, has significantly shaped teacher identity, moving the role from only instructing students to taking full responsibility for student wellbeing. One consequence of teachers being treated as fathers by students has been students tending to develop a special emotional attachment or close relationship with their teachers. In another sense, the power distance somehow leads to a close relationship between the teacher and the student, which is quite unique in the Chinese educational context. This is in contrast to the prevailing assumption that a power distance will result in a distant interpersonal relationship. Within the Chinese context, a power distance may occasionally secure a close interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the student, a phenomenon which comes about as a result of the subject possessing more power being supposed to take responsibility for the less powered one.

A general misunderstanding is that when we discuss on the transformation from a teacher-centered to a student-centered relationship, we tend to overemphasize the value of the new relationship and thus underestimate the value of the traditional one. Therefore, this sort of educational discussion would be less likely to remind us of the possible challenges and risks that we encounter in the formulation of the new teacher-student relationship. In this sense, some discussion is necessary regarding what we will lose with the transformation of teacher-student relationship.

A general strength of traditional teacher-student relationship is that it brings both teacher and student a sense of security. In a traditional model, teachers have firm control of the entire educational process and the learning outcome, so their authority is maintained. Students do not need to face the unknown or deal with any uncertainty since their teachers are ready to offer direct answers to their questions and provide explicit clarification for their confusions. Teachers' presence, alongside their sense of commitment and parental obligation, gives students sufficient protection. Students are thus accustomed to being instructed, guided, protected, and secured by their teachers. As long as students mature and receive education in such a context, a teacher-centered educational system becomes the students' "primary tie" (Fromm, 1941). Once students are left alone to carry out exploration on their own, they will become quite uncomfortable and feel insecure.

Furthermore, transforming the traditional teacher-student relationship implies restructuring the social and ethical dimensions of that relationship. Traditional teacher-student relationships are shaped by the large power distance between the teacher and the student; this power gap affirms the teacher's dominance and frustrates the student's learning motivation and participation. However, from a social perspective, such a relationship in China strengthens the teacher's sense of commitment and responsibility and facilitates the formulation of a closer relationship between the teacher and student. An equal, democratic teacher-student relationship would challenge the teacher's role as a moral model, manager, parent, etc., which is largely determined by social structure, government policy, and public expectation.

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From the teacher's perspective, a democratic teacher-student relationship is a destructive force for his identity, not only as a teacher, but as a social character. For the society, transforming the teacher-student relationship is a potential threat to the current social order. Therefore, the implication of restructuring the teacher-student relationship is that it is at the expense of something, such as the parent-like, considerate teacher who takes care of his or her students' whole wellbeing, the close emotional attachment between the teacher and the student, the possible dissatisfaction from the public, the strictness of the social order, and the sense of security for both teacher and student. When we are in the process of making the transformation, we need to keep this in mind.

CONCLUSION

From the above sections, it can be noted that the particularity of Chinese ethical and cultural tradition poses significant challenges for the establishment of a democratic and dialogic teacher-student relationship in China. Ideally, such a relationship requires the teacher to respect the student's autonomy and treat him or her as an independent human being. The teachers should treat themselves not as ethical models or parents, but as equal participants alongside students in the educational process. However, in practice, students are treated as immature and in need of guidance. Furthermore, conforming to the teacher's direction is regarded as a virtue to students since it indicates that students respect the teacher, the educational system, or even social norms and traditions. Additionally, students are also used to relying on their teachers both for instruction and other non-educational issues, and are thus unwilling to make their own decisions and develop their own autonomy. In short, the emphasis on the teachers' superiority in educational practice may undermine the effort of restructuring the relationship between the teacher and the student since it is contradictory to the principle of a democratic and dialogic teacher-student relationship. Currently, though the traditional educational thoughts have weakened to some extent, they remain influential in all educational settings in China, as we note in this study. Therefore, it will be a tremendously challenging task to transform such a relationship between the teacher and the student in the long run. A simple transplant of western educational thoughts to a Chinese context cannot work well because it neglects the particularity of the Chinese context. Therefore, the effort of transforming the Chinese teacher-student relationship is in need of a genuine understanding of Chinese ethical and cultural tradition in order to properly assess both its strengths and limitations. The combination of Chinese tradition and Western thoughts is a subject area that still requires a great deal of research.

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LI WANG & ANNIE AARUP JENSEN

7. CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS IN A DANISH CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Recently, research focused on teachers' perceptions and beliefs has gained increasing attention in both general education and language teaching fields. It is believed that teachers' overall views of teaching and learning will influence their teaching approaches and how they give instructions in class (Pajares, 1992; Ho et al., 2001; Kane et al., 2002), thus influencing students' learning and achievement (Pajares, 1992). Moreover, teachers' beliefs are closely connected to the coping strategies they apply to challenges encountered in their daily professional lives. Therefore, understanding teachers' beliefs and the factors influencing them is of vital importance for future teachers' training and development. However, existing research on language teachers' beliefs are mainly in the field of English Language Teaching and little attention has yet been drawn to TCFL (Teaching Chinese as Foreign language). Ben-Peretz (2011) notes that most studies on teachers' beliefs share a common scholarly language and are based on Western cultures, and some researchers in the field have responded to this by issuing a call requesting that the scope of research be broadened (Borg, 2003; Ben-Peretz, 2011; Sun, 2012).

In response to these needs, this paper will broaden the range of research on teachers' beliefs to include immigrant Chinese language teachers teaching Chinese in Danish secondary schools, where more and more Chinese courses are being offered to meet the growing demand for Chinese classes. A large percentage of these courses are taught by newcomer native Chinese teachers and immigrant Chinese teachers (Du & Kirkebæk, 2012). As a result of moving from a familiar environment to an alien cultural context, Chinese teachers' perceptions and beliefs on teaching and learning may still be influenced by their previous teaching experiences and cultural background in China, which is likely to influence how they perceive students and how they approach teaching. In the process of interacting with the new school context and the students therein, immigrant Chinese teachers are often confronted with competing educational cultures and pedagogical beliefs as a result of having brought with them a set of teaching instructions that differs from those used in the new context (Feuerverger, 1997; Myles et al., 2006), such as "Danish ways of teaching" and "student-centered methods." Previous research on the topic has been limited to immigrant Chinese teachers teaching abroad in a cross-cultural context, and this study will try to fill the

knowledge gaps left by those studies. By taking the Chinese and Danish educational cultures and the clash between teacher and student-centered belief orientations as a point of departure, we will explore both how teachers perceive the Danish students and Danish teaching methods, and how they speak of their beliefs and belief changes relating to educational and professional experiences. In addition, we compare the two educational cultures that compose the teachers' perceptions in order to better understand the teachers' beliefs. To be more specific, our research questions are:

– What are the teachers' perceptions and beliefs in relation to Danish student characteristics and teaching methods?
– How are teachers' beliefs and practices influenced by educational cultures?

We hope the answers to these questions can help researchers understand teachers' views on students and teaching in a new context, facilitate refinement of and/or transformation of teachers' beliefs and practices (Bryan & Atwater, 2002), and help teachers develop their coping strategies when teaching abroad.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding the Complexity of Teachers' Beliefs

In the field of research on teachers' beliefs, there is a "bewildering array of terms" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Similar concepts and terms have been used in different ways, with some researchers referring to teachers' beliefs, conceptions, personal knowledge, orientations, and intensions (Pajares, 1992). The term "conception" is the most frequently used in exploring academics' and lecturers' views on teaching and learning, while "teachers' beliefs" is another term often used to investigate teacher thinking in both the general education field and in subject-specific contexts. Due to the use of a variety of terms in many diversified fields, researchers have found it difficult to define these terms, resulting in very few studies giving precise definitions in their research (Pajares, 1992). Fang (1996) defined teachers' beliefs as a large store of personal knowledge with implicit theories of objects, people, and events. According to Kember (1997), the definition of conception is largely synonymous with that of belief, which refers to implicitly held understandings, premises, or propositions about the outside world (Richardson, 1996). Therefore, in our research, beliefs and conceptions are used interchangeably, indicating teachers' assumptions, values in teaching and learning, and beliefs about students, teachers' roles, classrooms, subject-matter knowledge, and the material to be taught (Thompson, 1992; Wu et al., 2011). These beliefs can be descriptive, evaluative, and prescriptive (Rokeach, 1968; Pajares, 1992).

Beliefs teachers hold may focus on many aspects, some general and beyond the classroom and others referring to educational beliefs more specific to the educational process, including beliefs about the nature of knowledge, teaching methods, students' characteristics, and the process of teaching (Pratt, 1992a). The important

role of teachers' beliefs has been highlighted by many researchers who assume that teachers' beliefs greatly influence their classroom practices, teaching instruction, decision making, and course planning, all of which may affect students' learning outcomes and perceptions of themselves (Ho et al., 2001; Kane et al., 2002; Pajares, 1992). Nespor (1987) argued that teachers' beliefs influence the ways in which they conceptualize tasks and learn from experiences, so he pleaded for more research attention to be directed to the function of teachers' beliefs. In addition, beliefs may not only color which previous experiences and beliefs teachers recall but also how they recall them (Pajares, 1992).

The complexity of sociocultural and institutional factors such as teachers' lives, educational and professional experiences, and cultural backgrounds, may exert influence on their beliefs. Moreover, beliefs people acquire early in their life and during the educational process have been found to affect their perceptions and strongly influence how they process information (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, we can understand teachers' beliefs on teaching and learning through working to understand their perceptions of students and teaching methods.

Teachers' Beliefs in the Language Teaching Field

The relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practices has received attention in both mainstream educational research and in language teaching (Borg, 2003; Borg, 2007). Many researchers have done empirical studies on the consistencies and inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practice (Phipps & Borg, 2007; Phipps & Borg, 2009a; Richardson, et al., 1991) in the language teaching field. They largely acknowledged that teachers' beliefs on teaching and learning:

– could be either consistent or inconsistent with their practices (Karavas-Doukas, 1996; Karathanos, 2009; Phipps & Borg, 2009a; Wu, Palmer, & Field, 2011).
– are shaped largely by culturally shared experiences, including prior living, learning, and teaching experience, and the intervention of teacher education (Richardson, 1996; Borg, 2003; Borg, 2007)
– will exert very long-term influences on teachers' instructional practices (Crawley & Salyer, 1995; Phipps & Borg, 2009)

Some of the few existing studies focusing on native or immigrant Chinese teachers' beliefs show that educational and cultural backgrounds exert great influence on teachers' views on teaching and teaching practices (Wu, et al., 2011; Sun, 2012). Many researchers link the development of English language teachers' beliefs to teacher education, using this to draw implications for potential professional development and teaching improvement (Ballantyne et al., 1999; Ho, 2000; Ho et al., 2001; Kane et al., 2002; Entwistle & Walker, 2002). For example, a study by Richards, Ho, and Giblin (1996) on five teacher trainees in a TEFL training course in Hong Kong illustrated that belief change could relate to their perceptions of their role in the classroom and their concern for keeping continuity in a lesson.

Teachers' Belief Orientations

The research on orientations of teacher belief emerged earlier in the 1980s (Calderhead, 1988; Borg, 2003). Since then, different ways of classifying beliefs and conceptions have been proposed (Kember, 1997; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001). Most researchers have preferred to organize conceptions into a linear sequence, within one of two contrasting orientations (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). For example, Entwistle and Walker (2000) noted that there were two poles in belief hierarchy: one was teacher-centered and content-oriented, emphasizing the production of correct information, and the other was student-centered and learning-oriented, focusing on students' conceptual development. The bipolar belief hierarchy was described as the least developed and most sophisticated conception (Entwistle et al., 2000; Entwistle & Walker, 2002). Furthermore, the OECD (2009) did a comparative study on teaching practices and teacher beliefs and attitudes in many European and Asian countries. Focusing on teachers' beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning, they divided teachers' beliefs into two dimensions: "direct transmission beliefs about learning and instruction" and "constructivist beliefs about learning and instruction." These belief dimensions have received support in educational research performed in Western countries.

There are different teaching approaches corresponding with these two belief orientations, but certain belief orientations and teaching practices are obviously favored by researchers (Entwistle, 2009). Consequently, teachers are encouraged to develop more sophisticated beliefs on teaching and learning in order to achieve better teaching quality and professional development (Entwistle et al., 2000; Entwistle & Walker, 2002).

Educational Cultures

In order to better understand teachers' beliefs, we need insight into the complex factors that have shaped and continue to shape their belief systems. In this paper, we focus on the influence from two educational cultures: the Confucian-influenced Chinese educational culture and the Danish educational culture. The primary purpose of this section is to set a scene which will facilitate interpretation and analysis of the findings. According to Hofstede (1991), national cultures are:

> part of the mental software we acquired during the first years of our lives in family, in the living environment, and in schools; they contain most of our basic values.

Therefore, the core source of cultural difference between countries and regions are the value differences, including beliefs, which people acquire early in their lives, meaning that the cultures in educational settings serve as mental programs that determine how teachers perceive everything happening inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers' beliefs regarding teaching are deeply rooted in

specific cultural antecedents, holding cultural, social, and personal meanings (Pratt, 1992; Pratt et al., 1999).

METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

A qualitative pilot study was conducted in this research with ethnographic interviews used as the main data collection strategy to conduct an in-depth exploration of the particularities of the four participant teachers (Merriam, 1998). We expect the results of this study will cast light on the follow-up study on Chinese teachers' specific beliefs on language and culture teaching and how these beliefs came to be. An interview protocol was designed to explore participants' educational and professional backgrounds, experiences relating to perceived cultural conflicts and challenges in Danish educational settings, and perceptions and beliefs regarding student characteristics.

Participants and Context

The participants in this study were chosen from a pool of volunteers in order to find representatives of immigrant Chinese teachers in different places within Denmark. There are four participating teachers, labeled A, B, C, and D, from three different cities who participated in the research. Their backgrounds have some commonalities, which can be seen in the table below.

Table 7.1. Participants' information

Participant	Age	Context	Length of living experience in DK.	Length of teaching experience in DK.	Educational background
A	40s	secondary schools	15 years	7 years	Mathematics education at Normal University in China; teacher education in Denmark.
B	40s	secondary schools	28 years	5 years	University education in Denmark.
C	40s	secondary schools	8 years	4 years	Teacher education in China, university education in Denmark.
D	40s	secondary schools	21 years	15 years	University education in China, teacher education in Denmark

Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews ranged from an hour and a half to three hours in duration. Teachers B and D, who had interpretation experience, chose to speak English, while the other two spoke Chinese during the interview. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the two Chinese interviews were translated into English. After a coding process which involved unfolding, comparing, and conceptualizing the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008), codes were created such as "educational experiences in China", "educational and professional experiences in Denmark", "comparisons of Danish and Chinese educational and school systems", "comparisons of student characteristics", "perceptions of Danish and Chinese teaching methods", "teaching practices", "beliefs on teaching and learning", "challenges and adjusted practices," etc. Next, we categorized the codes into more systematic conceptualizations of the statements (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008) and then matched them with teachers' perceptions and beliefs on teaching and learning in relation to "students' characteristics" and "teaching methods and practices." The analysis of the transcriptions gradually moved from more descriptive narratives to more theoretical interpretations when we related the central themes of teachers' perceptions and beliefs to educational and teaching cultures in two countries.

FINDINGS

In this findings section, we present results from the analysis of the teachers' perceptions and beliefs on two subjects: (a) students' characteristics and (b) teaching methods.

Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Characteristics: "Critical" Danish Students versus "Obedient" Chinese Students

The four teachers discussed their personal ideas regarding the Danish students as compared to the Chinese students. It was found that their perceptions of the students were quite similar; they regarded Danish students as being "open, critical, independent, and creative" (positive traits), but also "too casual, undisciplined, and less respectful" (negative traits). Teacher A's perceptions of Danish students' characters, described below, represent the group's impressions of the typical Danish student as having extensive knowledge, broad horizons, a critical sense, and independence.

> Compared with Chinese students, Danish students have a lot of opportunities to interact with the society. They have wider knowledge and behave like adults. One of their obvious characters is being very critical. For example, in class, they will express different opinions and their disagreement to teachers. Teacher A

Some metaphors, like "不听话" (Teachers A and C; meaning being disobedient in English) and "随意的" (Teachers A, B, C, D; meaning being very casual and capricious) were used by the participants to describe the students in their classrooms. For example, Teacher A was challenged by Danish students who were being critical and independent when she started teaching. This behavior surprised her since she had not expected students to directly express their disagreement or dissatisfaction regarding her teaching while in class. Danish students' independence and individualism were thought by the native Chinese teachers to be disrespectful, thus challenging their classroom management methods.

All participating teachers considered obedience and respect for teachers as one aspect of Chinese students' characters, describing it as a behavioral rule that students are taught from childhood (Leung, 1998). The teachers carry with them the expectation of respectful student behavior from their Chinese educational background and interpret the Danish student behavior from that same cultural perspective. Although they refer to a nuanced understanding of the characteristics of Danish students, the teachers' cultural background influences their perception of the Danish students and their interpretation of the relationship between teacher and student. This also means that some of the characteristics such as "independent" and "critical" are not regarded as unequivocally positive traits.

Teachers A and D thought some Danish students came to school or studied Chinese just for fun and enjoyment. However, the labels our participants attached to Chinese students were "conservative" (Teachers A and C), "hard-working" (Teachers A, B, C, D), "more respectful and obedient" (Teachers A, B, C, D), "less critical" (Teachers A, B, C), and "passive learners" (Teachers A, B, C, D), which fit the stereotypes of Chinese learners found in the literature (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Having spent their childhoods and early education in China, they deemed students in their home country as diligent and highlighted this attribute when comparing Danish and Chinese students. From the participating teachers' word choices, we could see they were annoyed by Danish students' lack of effort to learn or behave in a disciplined manner.

> You cannot compare Danish students to the Chinese pupils; if you do that, you will be very disappointed because they [Danish students] are not hard-working. They are…a little bit lazy. But they are quite creative…very open, so they have their own advantages. Uh, they are also very shy…Teacher D

Judging from the responses, they thought their students were very lazy in study, and they had to push them to work and make efforts to learn; if a student gave up on learning Chinese, the teachers felt it was their duty to persuade the student to stay in the program. However, Teacher C had different opinions on students' lack of interest in learning Chinese and subsequent dropping out. He thought that teachers should not try to persuade students to return if they abandoned the course, reasoning that the cause for the departure could be a lack of interest and suggesting that teachers should respect students' choices. In this case, Teacher C's belief orientation is aligned with and influenced by the general Danish understanding of teacher responsibilities,

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whereas Teachers A, B, and D are still influenced by the Chinese understanding of teachers' responsibilities.

The participating teachers' comparisons of student characteristics show they had realized that there are significant differences in the educational cultures of their home country and their new environment. From the data, we see that teachers have experienced important differences through interacting with Danish students, and that even though they realize that it may not be wise to compare students in China and Denmark, or to have the same expectations of the Danish students as the Chinese (Teacher D), the comparisons still take place more or less unconsciously, and thus the educational and cultural backgrounds of the teachers influence their perceptions and interpretations of Danish students as well as their perceptions of teachers' roles and responsibilities.

Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs Regarding Teaching Methods and Practice

Based on their educational and professional experiences in the two contexts, Teachers A, C, and D used the terms "Chinese ways of teaching", and "Danish ways of teaching" when describing the prevalent teaching methods and practices in language classrooms in both China and Denmark.

Perceptions of Teaching Methods: "Chinese Ways of Teaching" versus "Danish Ways of Teaching"

"The Chinese ways of teaching" were described by participating teachers as very teacher-centered, which is to say they are dominated by teacher lectures and seldom incorporate student participation and discussion.

> The Chinese ways of teaching which I experienced in China were…mostly teachers' talks. The students have to listen to teachers' lecturing and do a lot of memorization. Teacher A

> I don't know whether you would call it the traditional method or not; it is kind of a normal class. There was one teacher, and many students, and the teacher was very good…but very strict… And we followed the teacher, and always did many exercises...Teacher B

Teacher B's experience of studying in a Chinese classroom, and the teacher-centered educational culture to which he was exposed, provided him with the "mental software" (Hofstede, 1991) to perceive a class with the teacher in a dominant role as being "normal."

Teacher C noted that teachers in Chinese language classrooms put great stress on analyzing grammar, memorization, and practice, which typically involves repetition.

> There was no particular teaching method when I was learning English in China...the main method was grammar teaching. The teacher would lead us

in reading and doing exercises, which was very traditional. The teachers were implementing a kind of exercise-stuffed teaching method; what students did was just continuing to do the exercises. And the teacher would give the answers to us without much explanation. Students would make some corrections according to the answers. Teacher C

According to Teachers A, C, and D, "Danish teaching methods" are more student-centered, with students' group work serving as their main feature. Danish teachers stressed teaching activities and students' participation (Teachers A, D); instead of teaching all the time, teachers emphasized students' involvement and responses. The "Danish teaching methods" as described by our participants are closely related to student-centered beliefs. This belief orientation implies that the role of a teacher is to treat students as active participants rather than passive recipients in the process of teaching. Teachers holding this belief tend to regard themselves as facilitators, consider students' needs and expectations, and allow students to play an important role in instructional activities. Teachers A, C, and D provided detailed information in explaining the "Danish ways of teaching."

> The Danish teaching method…it is a very vivid way of teaching with a diversity of activities and various teaching methods. Students can participate actively, and teachers don't force students to learn; the classroom atmosphere is very good. Teacher A

From the participating teachers' words on characterizing "Chinese" and "Danish" ways of teaching, we can sum up their perceptions of the two educational cultures. The table above represents conclusions drawn from the teachers' statements. Underlying the two ways of teaching are two completely different belief orientations, the first being teacher-centered and the second student-centered.

Beliefs on Teaching Methods: A Combination of "Chinese" and "Danish" Ways of Teaching

With regard to their ways of teaching Chinese to Danish students, the teachers argued that the more teacher-centered "Chinese ways of teaching" with teachers doing most of the talking and students simply performing memorization did not work at all when teaching Danish students. They generally agreed that a more student-centered teaching approach with diversified activities was the best choice in the Danish context.

> I can only remember how I learned language in China, but I had to get rid of the way I was taught before. I think the mechanical memorizing I experienced in China does not work on Danish students; they will not listen to you or follow you if you teach in a way which is the same as what I experienced. So, when I am teaching Chinese characters, I do not ask students to spend too much time writing; instead, I focus on the rules and analyze the structures of characters. Teacher A

Table 7.2. Participating teachers' perceptions about educational cultures

"Danish ways of teaching"	*"Chinese ways of teaching"*
various teaching methods	stultifying teaching methods
teachers are facilitators	teachers in authoritative roles
students are independent learners	students are passive recipients
more student participation	more teacher talk, less student discussion
stress students' participation and involvement	emphasis on memorization work and
more activities and group work	exercise
multi-assessment with both oral and	single assessment with written exam
written exams	

To be more specific, Teachers A, C, and D explained that the "Danish ways of teaching," using various teaching methods, activities, and group work, suit the Danish students well and can make teaching more efficient. They illustrated "Danish ways of teaching" with their teaching practices in class. For example, Teacher D often engages students in physical exercises in Chinese class and gave one example of teaching Pinyin through physical activities. She believes that Danish students have very short attention spans and cannot concentrate for long periods of time, so she found a method of involving them physically to keep them feeling occupied and prevent them from getting bored.

> I use the Danish teaching methods to teach Chinese; you have to vary your teaching very much and have many different activities in the lesson…the Danish pupils get bored very easily. If you talk about one thing again and again, they will say, 'Oh, it is so boring, can we do something new?' For example, I have two lessons that last an hour and a half, and you have to find four or five different physical activities… or different exercises which you can use in the same lessons. Teacher D

From the perspective of Teacher A, "Danish ways of teaching" that stress activities were effective in class, so she designed some social interaction activities and communicative tasks in teaching in order to encourage students to become more involved. She believed that letting students use the Chinese language to accomplish activities would make for a relaxed and active class atmosphere. Based on their teaching and learning experiences, all teachers claimed that the Danish students learned better through group work. Learning from this, they suggested that organizing students in groups in Chinese classes could help both strong and weak students to work together and help each other, thus enhancing peer learning and cultivating team spirit. The teachers were convinced that group work could be used in various ways in order to further pronunciation, reading, speaking, culture learning, or completing students' assignments. When talking about their teaching practices in

class, our participants shared common concerns with regard to the following issues: (a) Prioritizing students' interest and motivation in learning Chinese (b) Encouraging interaction between students and teachers (c) Respecting Danish students' needs, listening to their voices, and negotiating with them (d) Adjusting their instructions according to students' expectations and interests (e) Designing activities and various teaching methods to create a relaxed classroom atmosphere conducive to learning (f) Making full use of multimedia and the good conditions in Danish classrooms to facilitate and maximize students' learning (g) Encouraging cooperative learning among students through group work.

Teachers' suggestions and concerns regarding designing and teaching reflected their great attention to students' roles in a Danish educational context, as well as a transition in belief from a more traditional, teacher-centered orientation to a more student-centered one. Additionally, all teachers showed efforts to avoid the rigid and inflexible "Chinese ways of teaching" they experienced in China, and they stated that they did not want to make their teaching too strictly structured. However, all of them did emphasize organizing teaching in a clear linear manner, using designed topics and contents. For example, Teacher C emphasized finishing the goals designed in each lesson and guiding the students through the organizational structure although he also mentioned that he did not want to organize teaching as strictly as he had in China. He was very aware of not being guided by his students' questions, expressing that "it would be a waste of time to be guided by students' questions in class", and that teachers, "should always bear the teaching goals in mind."

> For me, in my class, I always bear in mind what the contents for this class are. After I answer students' questions, I continue moving through the contents I designed, without giving the students too many opportunities to ask questions again. If they still had questions, I would tell them to ask me after class or during the break. In this way, I can finish addressing the teaching content and also answer their questions. Teacher C

Teachers A, B, and D also stressed the significance of a good, disciplined classroom environment and guidance in class. They explained that they spent a lot of time doing classroom management when they started teaching, but as they became more experienced, they began focusing more on content. However, teachers A and B still value the importance of memorization and systematic guidance in language learning. Teachers' overall statements showed that their initial beliefs on teaching methods were partly retained because of their Chinese educational and cultural influences, and their current beliefs involved elements from both "Chinese ways of teaching" and "Danish ways of teaching," representing their adaptation to Danish students and educational culture. The result was a third form, a combined way of teaching consisting of the most appropriate elements of both approaches according to the individual teachers' assessment of the teaching situation. Teachers' perceptions and beliefs on student characteristics and teaching methods reflected two different educational cultures that have shaped and continue shaping them.

DISCUSSION

Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs Regarding Student Characteristics
and Teaching Methods

To a large extent, teachers with similar cultural and educational backgrounds have similar beliefs on teaching as a result of shared socialization (OECD, 2009). In our studies, the teachers' overall beliefs regarding teaching are similar, integrated, and multifaceted. Although teachers hold general beliefs beyond the classroom, some of their beliefs are more specific with regard to student characteristics and the process of teaching (Pratt, 1992a). One of the most commonly held beliefs of the four immigrant Chinese teachers in our study was that the Chinese students were "very obedient, respectful, and diligent", and the Danish students were "independent, critical, creative, less respectful, and less likely to engage in hard work." Additionally, students' characteristics, such as their cultures and ethnicities, influence teachers' perceptions and beliefs, which subsequently exert influence on how they treat the students (Bryan, & Atwater, 2002). For example, teachers in our study believed that Danish students were taught to be independent and critical by their parents and teachers. Consequently, their teaching methods for these students did not display a tight sense of control; they believed that repetition and heavy workloads would not succeed when used on "less diligent" and "lazy" Danish students. This modification in teaching style displays teacher awareness of their students in order to organize their teaching in a more relaxed and interesting way, providing students with more autonomy.

Teachers characterized prevalent Danish teaching practices as being more student-centered, while they viewed "Chinese ways of teaching" as more teacher-centered. Their beliefs on teaching methods were reflected in their speech with regard to teaching practice and instructions in class and implied that they believed in teaching using both Chinese and Danish characteristics, such as using a clear structure in teaching and employing group work and other methods that have been shown to be most effective in a Danish classroom. Previous research supports the notion that teachers' prior schooling and living experience exert long-term influence on their beliefs (Richardson, 1996; Borg, 2003; Borg, 2007). Furthermore, complexities in teachers' beliefs on teaching methods were evident, as they were influenced by the teachers' educational and cultural backgrounds in China and then modified by the Danish educational culture.

Cultural Influence on Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs on teaching and learning are culturally conditioned and have deep meanings. The discussion of those beliefs and perceptions in this study could be linked to cross-cultural and comparative studies focusing on Chinese and Western educational cultures as well as conceptions of teaching in China and Western contexts

(Hofstede, 1983; Hofstede et al., 1991; Pratt, 1992; Leung, 1998; Pratt et al., 1999; Watkins, 2000; Gao & Watkins, 2002; Ho, 2004).

In the Confucianism heritage cultures, collectivism and harmony are stressed, which results in conformity and obedience in the area of education. In Chinese schools, teacher authority has deep-seated cultural roots and teachers are treated with respect by students (Hofstede et al., 1991). All of the teachers in our study highlighted Chinese students' being "respectful" and "obedient" toward teachers. Western countries emphasize individualism and independence (Leung, 1998). Individual goals or rights and a sense of fairness to all are also emphasized (Ho et al., 2001; Watkins, 2000). Students in Western countries are encouraged to argue or express disagreement and criticisms in front of the teachers. In Danish schools, education as a whole, and the teaching process specifically, are always student-centered; teachers are supposed to treat students as equals and they expect to be treated the same way in return (OECD, 2009). While Danish students' independence and critical sense are important educational objectives in secondary school[1], these characteristics were interpreted and deemed as "being casual and less respectful" by the Chinese teachers from an educational culture in which teachers play an authoritative role. In Western countries, like Denmark, it is unpopular for a student to be overly ambitious and failing school is not a big incident; students are not pushed by teachers or parents to study hard (Hofstede et al., 1991). In this regard, schools may have gone too far in their attempts to care for individual students, lighten their students' workload (Leung, 1998). Having received education in Chinese schools, where education and learning are always associated with effort, our interview participants emphasized the attribute of diligence when they were comparing their perceptions of Danish and Chinese students. In China, it is normal for students to work hard, and their diligence in doing so is regarded as a path to success and excellence (Hofstede et al., 1991; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). This could account for the participating teachers' impression of Danish students as "being lazy" (Teachers A, B, D).

Historically, education in China has been teacher-centered and text-driven, with both the teacher and the text regarded as authoritative sources of knowledge (Cortazzi & Jin, 2001). In the area of language teaching, teacher-centered pedagogy is still prevalent, with traditional grammar teaching and PPP (presentation, practice, and performance) frequently used to teach language. As a result, teachers focus on knowledge transmission and rely on exercises to test and consolidate what students learn. Students have very limited opportunities to speak, and their subjectivity in learning is often left out (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Memorization and practice have been greatly stressed in Chinese language classes. These traditional ways of teaching have framed the participating teachers' idea of "Chinese ways of teaching." Research has shown that certain constructivist views of teaching, which are more student-oriented, are more prominent in Nordic countries, in which teachers tend to view students as active participants in the process of acquiring knowledge rather than seeing the teacher's main role as the transmitter of information and demonstrator of

"correct solutions" (OECD, 2009). Students are encouraged to adopt a deep approach to learning and want to feel involved and supported by their teachers (Watkins, 2000). A class is often characterized by various activities relevant to teaching. These prevalent practices in literature are described by our participants as "Danish ways of teaching." The Danish educational system stresses group work and collaboration (Osborn, 2011). According to the teachers in our study, Danish students preferred more group work and collaborative learning, which is part of the Danish educational culture.

Development of Teachers' Beliefs Due to Cultural Influence

Teachers' integrated beliefs indicated a dynamic process of the developing and reshaping of beliefs and practices, but the changes in beliefs came prior to changes in instructions (Richardson et al., 1991). While teaching in the Danish cultural environment, teachers reported some shifts of beliefs over time. Having been raised and educated in China, the teachers had created and fostered preliminary beliefs on teaching and learning as a result of their accumulated experiences (Pajares, 1992). As Teacher A said, before she started teaching in Denmark, she expected students to listen to her orders in class. When teachers encounter teaching or learning experiences that differ from those to which they are accustomed, they reflect on the differences and become very likely to change their beliefs and perceptions (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). In the new teaching context, teachers' beliefs should conform to some of the external set of professional standards, including the cultural values imbedded in the profession, which may not be clearly specified (Gore & Zeichner, 1991). Their preexisting beliefs, such as teachers holding an authoritarian role and regarding students as "passive learners," were obstacles to their instructions and were gradually reconstructed by interaction with students and colleagues. Their beliefs on teaching and learning gradually shifted into a direction that was coherent with the requirements of the new context. For example, they adopted more student-centered "Danish ways of teaching" to encourage students' involvement through group work, and they integrated physical exercises and activities in language teaching in order to cater to students "who are easily bored."

Nevertheless, while teachers agreed on the benefits of "Danish ways of teaching" and came to avoid "Chinese ways of teaching," their beliefs on teaching methods were neither fully teacher-centered nor fully student-centered. Instead, their beliefs grew to include characteristics of both belief orientations. While they agreed on the importance of adopting "Danish ways of teaching" to more fully engage students, they still emphasized teaching and organizing the class in a clear and structured way, explaining rules and correct solutions, and ensuring calm and concentration in the classroom. They also put much stress on accomplishing their designed goals, which implied a rather content and teacher-centered belief orientation. Their statements regarding beliefs in teaching practices and methods reflect a development process from employing a more teacher-centered orientation to using one that is more

student-centered. It was evident that these teachers were struggling to reconcile the conflict between their different educational cultures when choosing appropriate teaching methods. As the teachers became more experienced, they learned to automate routines relating to managing the class and were able to pay more attention to content issues rather than classroom management (Borg, 2003). This involved moving away from only seeing the disadvantages of Danish students and feeling as though they had to focus on classroom management to compensate. Put simply, their "mental software"' (Hofstede, 1991) was enhanced and enlarged with new professional understandings regarding educational culture.

It should also be noted that the ways in which teachers characterized students influenced their ways of teaching and interacting with them in class (Bryan, & Atwater, 2002). For example, the teachers thought Danish students were "lazy" and "independent" with very short attention spans, so they varied their teaching strategies and designed more activities to attract students. Danish students' critical sense reinforced the teachers' decisions of choosing to facilitate students' conceptual understanding rather than simply employing memorization. The new understanding of teaching gained as a result reframed the teachers' teaching practices and organization of their classrooms to fit this particular context.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teachers' beliefs on student characteristics and teaching methods can be seen from their perceptions of students and prevalent teaching practices in both China and Denmark, and they imply that teachers hold both positive and negative beliefs with regard to Chinese and Danish students' characteristics. Their beliefs on teaching methods involve elements from both "Chinese ways of teaching" and "Danish ways of teaching," implying that they were experiencing a difficult dilemma adapting to the new context and educational culture. The teachers' beliefs are products of the collision between Chinese and Danish educational cultures as well as the constant interactions between teachers' instructional and pedagogical choices and students in the cross-cultural context. These two educational cultures can be linked to belief orientations in the two contexts, but teachers can also develop and change their beliefs from being teacher-centered to being more student-centered, and in that process, create a combination which allows them to draw on the most appropriate elements of both when facing students who are culturally different from them. Moreover, it is not our intention to build up cultural stereotypes by interpreting teachers' beliefs from their perceptions and comparisons of Chinese and Danish educational cultures. Since the participants we chose have been living in Denmark for years and some of their perceptions are based on their previous educational experiences in China, it is possible that their perceptions could be based on outdated information as a result of a changing educational culture. This pilot study also lays a foundation for further longitudinal studies involving observation of teachers' practices and interaction with students.

NOTE

[1]   https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/r0710.aspx?id=132542 a website detailing the educational aims of Danish upper secondary schools: Gymnasiums. Aims for Folkeskole school (encompassing pre-school, primary and lower secondary education) can be found: https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=145631

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CHUN ZHANG & ANNIE AARUP JENSEN

8. PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF NON-NATIVE CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS

INTRODUCTION

The professional identity of language teachers has gained prominence in both the sociocultural landscape of classroom instruction and in teachers' professional development (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Buzzelli, 2002; Varghese et al. 2005; Tsui, 2007; Clarke, 2008; Miller, 2009; Pavlenko, 2009; Gao, 2012). In the field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL)[1], research on the professional development of native Chinese language teachers has emerged in the last decade, but only a very small number of studies have focused on the professional development of non-native Chinese language teachers (NNCLTs)[2]. To address this insufficiency from a perspective of teacher identity, this article reports on a qualitative study that investigated NNCLTs, whose experiences, reflections and sense of identification affect the construction of their professional identities. Drawing upon a framework that underscores Wenger's definition of identity, a qualitative method was adopted to study the factors influencing the construction of NNCLTs' professional identities in an educational context. The study took place during the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 academic years, and the study findings demonstrate some of the factors influencing NNCLTs' professional identities in relation to foreign language teaching in Denmark.

The study contributes to the research in foreign language education and identity construction of non-native language teachers. Most of the research on identity focuses primarily on native language teachers in a host country (Cruickshank, 2011; Orton, 2011). Seldom have researchers scrutinized the issue from a reverse point of view, examining non-native language teachers teaching a foreign language in their home country. Furthermore, with a high degree of teacher mobility in an inter-cultural context, there has been insufficient study of the ways in which non-native language teachers navigate their sense of belonging, and how they negotiate meaning in relation to foreign language teaching. Therefore, this study uses non-native Chinese language teachers at one Danish university as a case study in order to discuss the factors influencing the construction of professional identity.

This paper begins by grounding the study within a brief review in relation to some of the aspects influencing teacher identity. Next, drawing upon Wenger's definition of identity, we outline a conceptual framework for understanding teacher identity construction. Guided by the framework, a section on the methodology of the study is presented. Findings elicited from the data are then described and interpreted in terms

of this framework. Finally, conclusions are drawn regarding the factors influencing the construction of professional identities by non-native foreign language teachers, and the limitation of the study is discussed.

The study is guided by the following research question:

What are the factors influencing the construction of non-native language teachers' professional identities in their home culture?

THREE CONCEPTS INFLUENCING TEACHER IDENTITY

Having reviewed the literature on the issues of identity that affect teachers, we found that the studies relevant to our research question could be categorized by three primary aspects. The first aspect concerns studies in which the focus is on the relationship between teachers' identity and their pedagogy (Morgan, 2004). In a study by Morgan, his concept of "teacher identity as pedagogy" appears to be relevant to our current study. It explains that the transformative potential of a teacher's identity is shaped by the processes of instruction and interaction within specific sites in foreign language education. He argues that "teachers' identities change across time and place; it seems that identity negotiation is domain-specific" (ibid, p.183). By domain-specific, Morgan means that identity negotiation is rooted in the types of practices characteristic of language education programs.

The second aspect concerns the studies in which the focus is on the relationship between teachers' professional identities and their senses of positioning (Varghese et al. 2005; Pavlenko, 2009). In the work of Varghese et al. (2005), they argue that a comprehensive understanding of teaching and teachers requires attention to "identity-in-practice". Identity-in-practice is a term describing an action-oriented approach to understanding identity, underlining the need to investigate identity construction as a social matter which is operationalized through concrete practices and tasks. They stated that

the teacher was not a neutral player in the classroom, but on the contrary, her positionality in relation to her students, and to the broader context in which the teacher was situated, was vital (ibid, p. 22).

The third aspect concerns the studies in which the focus is on the identity construction experience of teachers as they cross different borders (Trend, 2010). In the work of Trend, it is argued that the experience of border-crossing for those who experience roles of learners, teachers, and teacher educators is closely related to how they identify themselves and thereby create a sense of belonging. He argues that such experiences of border-crossing are consequential for identity because they can involve a feeling of becoming someone new (ibid, p. 2).

Given the aspects described above, we see that some researchers focus on a relationship between teachers' identities and their pedagogy from a pedagogical perspective, others focus on the importance of teachers' positionality in relation

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to the practice from a social perspective, and some focus on teachers' experience at different stages of constructing professional identity from a developmental perspective. In the present study, we focus on understanding the construction of a teacher's professional identity from an integrative perspective i.e., one which takes into account all three perspectives and thereby examines which of these factors influences the construction of professional identity. We will start by defining the concept of identity.

THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

Identity displays multiple aspects and multiple definitions. For some scholars, identity can mean an understanding of the 'self' (Mead, 1934, p.1967), for others, identity can mean an understanding of how others view us (Gee, 2000; Danielewicz, 2001), and for still others, identity can mean cultural values or perspectives to which a person most strongly relates (Clarke, 2008; Beauchamp 2011). To avoid confusion, in this study, we adopt Wenger's definition of identity:

> "identity is closely related to practice; and the construction of one's identity is related to identification and meaning negotiation within community" (Wenger, 1998, p. 149).

In using the terms practice and community, Wenger summarizes the relationship between practice and community as "mutual engagement", "a joint enterprise", and "a shared repertoire". With respect to this study, we understand practice as what people do and say, thus confining it to language teaching, and study how teachers perceive themselves and how they perform in classroom teaching. By identification, we adopt Wenger's meaning:

> identification is the investment of self in building associations and differentiation in a sense, that we identify, or are being identified, as belonging to socially organized categories and roles (ibid, p. 188).

Alternatively, differentiation means that we are also identified as not belonging to socially organized categories and roles. Through meaning negotiation, we return to Wenger's explanation that "the diverse degree of claim ownership over the meanings produced in a sense of being able to use and modified them as their own" (ibid, p. 200). To solidify Wenger's definition of identity, we narrow the focus into the following two key questions: What are the factors influencing teachers' sense of identification, i.e., belonging or not belonging? And, what are the factors influencing how teachers find meaning as they practice classroom teaching? Rather than seeking answers to each issue on an individual basis, we explore the answers from an integrative perspective, taking into account the three aspects influencing teacher identity and finding answers corresponding to the concept of identity outlined above.

METHODOLOGY

Guided by the research question and the theoretical framework, a qualitative study was conducted and data was collected through interviews and observation. Through interviews, we explored how the teachers spoke about their experiences as teachers and the teaching methods they used. Through observation, we explored how they dealt with students and practiced Chinese language teaching in the classroom.

The study took place during the 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 academic years. Three teachers were involved in this study: Ellen, Agnes and Sara[3]. All of them had been teaching Chinese as a foreign language to Chinese-major students at a single Danish university at the time the study was being conducted. They are all Danish females. At the time of the study, all of them had between five and thirty years of classroom teaching experience in the field of TCFL. Upon being recruited by the university, Sara and Agnes underwent teaching practicum from Danish universities as pre-service teachers, and Ellen had a chance to attend pedagogical sessions while working as an in-service teacher in China.

Participants

Participant 1: Ellen. Ellen is a teaching associate professor in TCFL at a Danish university and has thirty years of teaching experience. She was in her early sixties when our study was conducted. She holds an M.A. in China studies. She started her Chinese studies in the late 1970s at university A. After several years' study, she was awarded a scholarship to a university in China to intensify her Chinese language study. Prior to being recruited as a teacher by the Danish university, Ellen had received six months of intermittent teaching practicum at a Chinese university. Upon being recruited by the Danish university, she was offered a chance to attend a pedagogical session, which was limited to the completion of a two-week practicum necessary for her teaching qualifications as an in-service teacher.

Participant 2: Agnes. Agnes is a Ph.D. student with five years of teaching experience, and she has taught Chinese language at one Danish university. She was in her late twenties when the research was conducted. She studied Chinese at various Chinese universities over a period of two years. She holds an M.A. in China studies and was pursuing a Ph.D. when the research was conducted. Upon being recruited by the Danish university, Agnes received teaching practicum from that institution. This practicum was limited to the completion of a two-month practicum as part of her teaching qualifications as a Ph.D. student.

Participant 3: Sara. Sara is a teaching lecturer and researcher at one Danish university and has ten years of teaching experience in TCFL. She was in her late thirties when the research was conducted. She studied Chinese for six months in one Chinese university while she was pursuing her B.A. She holds a Ph.D. in China

studies. Upon being recruited by the Danish university, Sara received teaching practicum from the university, which was limited to the completion of a two-month practicum as part of her teaching qualifications as a pre-service university teacher.

Process of Data Production

The process of data collection was conducted in the following manner. To gain some factual information, the process began with individual questionnaires[4]. The questionnaires covered personal data, such as, age, gender, nationality, educational background, and years of teaching experience, and also asked for information pertaining to courses the participants had taught, problems of course implementation, and situations in dealing with their students in the classroom. The questionnaires were written in English, but only two participants answered the questions in English, while the other chose to answer in Danish.

Next, individual interviews were conducted. Each interview was audio-recorded and later transcribed. The questions asked in the interview covered issues such as the participants' experiences of being foreign language learners and teachers in China and in Denmark, their pedagogical practices in relation to language learning and teaching, their reflections on their experiences of language learning and teaching in general, and Chinese learning and teaching in particular. The interviews were conducted mainly in English, though a mixture of both Danish and Chinese was occasionally used for certain expressions such as Danish idioms and Chinese fixed phrases.

Parallel to interviews, classroom observation was conducted over a period of two years.[5] We observed Agnes' classroom teaching twice in the autumn semester of 2011 and three times in the spring semester of 2012. We observed Sara's classroom teaching four times in the autumn semester of 2012. Each classroom observation lasted one and an half hours. In the case of Ellen, however, we followed her classroom teaching from the autumn semester of 2010 to the spring semester of 2012, observing class each semester during that time span. The duration of Ellen's case covered a period of four semesters. During each semester, we sat in the class for three hours and observed her teaching. At the time of observation, we took note of what Ellen, Agnes, and Sara said and how they managed classroom teaching. Field notes were taken in the class, and verbal expressions and non-verbal signs were also noted, including teachers' gestures and facial expressions. All field notes were transcribed and used to correspond to interview data.

FINDINGS

In conjunction with the process of data production, we use the following section to first present the findings from interviews, and after which we present one scenario drawn from the observational data.

Experiences of Border-crossing

To understand how Ellen, Sara and Agnes identify themselves as non-native Chinese language teachers, we first investigate how they perceive themselves both as Chinese language learners and Chinese language teachers. This is shown through the following excerpts of the transcriptions, which illustrate what Ellen, Sara and Agnes experienced as learners in Chinese universities influences the way they view themselves as teachers and their ideas of teaching in Danish universities. With respect to the research question, we are primarily concerned with one key concept: identification.

Excerpt 1:

Chinese teachers are very strict, especially, with regard to tests and examinations. If you have not attended the class and if you haven't told the teachers, they will not look well on you. The atmosphere is very different from the Danish university. In the [Danish] universities, you are not obligated to go to class. But in China, they check all the time and they know if you are absent. They also focus more on how the new words are used in the sentence structure rather than actually using the words in practice. This meant that the students learned a lot of new words every week so that they could read and write, but not actually use them outside the classroom. I suppose that it was, in a sense, kind of different'.

...the way I teach is inspired by what I have been through. This works and this does not work, and combine... but I never had any experience as a teacher before, just an experience as a student. (Agnes)

Excerpt 2:

…the methods used by Chinese teachers when I studied are very different from ours, different in a sense that teachers were disciplinary, [there are] a lot of tests every week. And this demands that we had to recapture the lessons in Chinese. In China, I knew I had to learn it by heart, otherwise, if I forgot one word, then my Chinese teacher would say, 'hey, you forgot one word.' They pointed it out right away. So in this way, you automatically learned. I think I learned a lot. (Ellen)

Excerpt 3:

There is real difference (between Danish teachers and Chinese teachers) in pedagogical approaches. I think teachers in many countries are different from Danish teachers, even when Germans come here, they comment that we are used to being very equal with students. Do you remember, when xx (a name of a native-speaking teacher of Chinese) was here and made a list of who is the best and who is the worst in the class? This is a very Chinese thing to do….

I would never dream of making a list, a public list. It is something that you just don't do in Denmark. (Sara)

In each excerpt, Ellen, Agnes, and Sara describe some of their experiences as Chinese language learners at Chinese universities. Despite the pedagogical difference they experienced at Chinese universities, they each express a certain acceptance towards the engagement of Chinese teachers and the 'Chinese' way of teaching the language. Agnes asserts that "the atmosphere (at the Chinese university) is different from ours (Danish university)" (excerpt 1). This solidifies that the atmosphere of the Chinese classroom differs from that of the Danish classroom; Chinese teachers are strict not only in terms of teaching, but also in terms of classroom management, as seen in the example of keeping the students' attendance. Ellen expresses acceptance of the effectiveness of the Chinese method of learning vocabulary. She states explicitly that "They (Chinese teachers) pointed it out right away. So in this way, you automatically learned. I think I learned a lot" (excerpt 2). Sara shows a certain recognition of the notion of fostering competition among the students, but she is hesitant about implementing it within her own class. She offers a strong personal statement in the assertion that "I would never dream of making a list, a public list," which details her perceptions of the difference in teaching contexts between that of Denmark and that of China. She said that "it is something that you just don't do in Denmark," which implies that while she might not do it in classroom while teaching in Denmark, it cannot be said with certainty that she would not do it if teaching in China.

Reflection on the Applicability of 'Chinese' Pedagogy in a Danish Context

Although they accept some values associated with the "Chinese way" of language teaching, Ellen, Agnes, and Sara seem to be aware of the applicability of Chinese pedagogy in a Danish educational context. As non-native Chinese language teachers, they absorb different cultural views, which necessitates that they try to balance the influence of their home culture with that of Chinese culture. The following excerpts illustrate how Ellen, Agnes, and Sara reflect upon their teaching practices across different places and different times (Morgan, 2004).

Excerpt 4:

I am very disciplinary. I like discipline and I would like to have the right to get sort of disciplinary in the classroom. So, I try to combine the disciplinary teacher role with the friendly teacher role, and also act open, in a sense, to make them (students) feel secure, safe, and 'tryg'[6] so that they are not afraid of making mistakes. (Ellen)

Excerpt 5:

We do not check students' attendance, at least not overtly; this is not very Danish. But of course, I know who attends classes regularly and who does

not.... I used to explain to the students at the beginning of the semester that it is very difficult to learn a language without attending class. You get a lot of subjects where you can read at home, but learning a language requires a learning environment. Since it is in Denmark, the only place to get to speak Chinese is the classroom, so I always try to motivate them to come to class. But they don't. (Sara)

In Ellen's excerpts, she names her teaching practice, which she partly fills with meaning through her explanation of the type of teacher she strives to be, as "one is disciplinary, but also one who is good at combining a disciplinary teacher role with a friendly teacher role". The strength of her explanation about what constitutes her method of identification is underlined by her assertion that "I need to make them (students) feel secure, safe, and 'tryg' so that they are not afraid of making mistakes", a stance that leaves little doubt that the "combination of disciplinary teacher role and friendly teacher role" she described is important.

Ellen's professional understanding of the Danish students guides her pedagogical approach. She knows that the behavior of a disciplinary teacher as she experienced in China would intimidate the students and prevent them from being active, and she believes that active participation is important in language learning. To balance the two, Ellen seeks to integrate a modified disciplinary aspect to increase learning outcome for the students.

In Sara's case, the question is one of student attendance. In China, one of the most powerful pedagogical tools is checking the students' physical presence in class. Sara's professional opinion tells her that this approach would not be acceptable in a Danish context, and therefore, it would not be applicable to the local classroom. However, as she adamantly believes in the importance of attending language classes in order to learn to speak the language, her pedagogical approach is to motivate students.

Self-Positioning in Relation to Teaching Practice

As outlined in the framework, identity is related to identification, which can be understood as a sense of positioning in relation to the practice. As such, it is vital that we understand how NNCLTs position themselves in relation to their teaching practice in order to appreciate the construction of professional identity. The following excerpts illustrate how our participants manage their sense of positioning.

Excerpt 6:

...Having a good relationship with the students would make teaching worthwhile. So, if you don't like teaching, if you are uncomfortable with the students, or if you always think the students are stupid, then you are in the wrong profession. I think you have to enjoy interacting with young people. I see myself more as teacher than researcher. If somebody asks what I do, I guess I would say I am a university teacher. (Sara)

Excerpt 7:

… the salary is lousy, very lousy. It is only... if I did not have this desire to keep getting better and better in Chinese, I would probably have dropped out a long time ago. But I am fascinated by the language. But, in another sense, I am lucky; I also have good circumstances. I feel as if my workplace is my home. It is easy because I have good colleagues... and the students. That is very important. (Ellen)

Excerpt 8:

I think it is still the teacher and student relationship...but there is another aspect; we (students and I) are more or the less same age. So, some of the students are only a couple of years younger than me. That is a little bit strange. But I don't think they see me as they do their fellow students. It doesn't really matter. They are here to learn something. (Agnes)

As illustrated in excerpt 5, Sara positions herself as motivator and facilitator to the students rather than as a controller. She also places emphasis on the importance of a good relationship with the students, putting herself in a position closely related to the students within her practice. She states explicitly that "having a good relationship with the students would make teaching worthwhile" (excerpt 6). This positioning offers her a dimension in which to view herself, to find meaning and thereby identify her sense of belonging. As she put it, "if somebody asks what I do, I guess I would say I am a university teacher." This statement signals that she identifies herself as a university teacher rather than a researcher. Furthermore, her professional identity is as a teacher within a Danish university.

Ellen's strongest motivation for the job is her desire for her own professional development, an example of wanting to improve her Chinese proficiency. Nevertheless, she has also developed a strong sense of belonging in response to the colleagues and students. Her statement, "I feel as if my workplace is my home" (excerpt 7) solidifies the fact that she relates herself and her teaching practice to the workplace, the institute. What matters to Ellen is not the salary, as she says explicitly that "the salary is lousy, very lousy", but the "good circumstances." As she put it, "I have good colleagues... and the students. That is very important." Ellen, too, constructs her identity through a sense of belonging to a Danish university context.

Agnes, however, reflects upon her positioning between teacher and student. She ascribes this to the age difference, asserting that "...there is another aspect; we (students and I) are more or less the same age. So, some of the students are only a couple of years younger than me. "That is a little bit strange" (excerpt 8). Her assertion, on the surface, seems to state simple, factual information, the existence of an age difference, but in a deeper sense, it details the role with which she identifies in her own class in Denmark. We see that the teacher role she experienced as the learner in China now influences her way of teaching, guiding her pedagogical approach in Denmark. Contrary to building association, Agnes seeks to differentiate her

pedagogical approach from that of her teachers in China; she has identified herself as not belonging to the pedagogical approaches adopted by her Chinese teachers. In her final remark "but I don't think they see me as they do their fellow students. It doesn't really matter. They are here to learn something", we see that she negotiates the meaning of her position/professional identity, reasoning that the perception which might be held by the students (that she is too young to be a teacher) is overruled by the position and professional identity assigned to her by the authorities at the university.

OBSERVATION DATA – EPISODE

As noted above, teachers' identities are not only related to how they manage their senses of belonging, but also to their teaching performance (Wenger 1998; Gee, 2000). Thus, in the following section, we present one "episode" from Ellen's in-class teaching as a case. We chose Ellen's class as our case because we have been following her teaching for twelve hours over a period of four consecutive semesters. We present the episode first and then discuss how the data can be analyzed in terms of identity.

Episode

The teacher (Ellen) was sitting among 23 students at a round table, while some students were typing on their computers, some were reading the textbook, and some were looking at her. Before she asked the students to read from a text one by one, the teacher said, "*Jeg forventer at I forberedt jer i teksten.* (I expect that you have prepared the text.) *Hvem vil gerne slippe for at læse højt idag?* (Who would like to skip the text reading today?)." Some of the students attempted to read in a low voice and others continued to type. A girl sitting in the back of the class raised her hand and said, "I haven't prepared the text. I don't want to read." The teacher nodded. After the reading, the teacher moved on to having the students work in pairs to complete a sentence analysis exercise. This was an activity in which students analyzed a Chinese sentence using grammatical terms. One male student was enthusiastically volunteering for each sentence. The teacher told him to be quiet. The student replied, "I have prepared these sentences. I know I can do it." The teacher responded, "Well, leave them to other students." In the middle of the lecturing, one female student stood up and left the classroom. The teacher frowned, but she did not comment.

Next, the teacher had the students correct the original sentence and then had each work through the list one by one, eliciting the correcting pronunciation from the group as a whole. When one female student mistakenly pronounced /s/ as /k/ in a Chinese word 餐 (/san/), the teacher stopped her and said that '*Det var et godt forsøg. Du tænkte sikkert at /c/ skulle udtales som på engelsk.*' (It is a good try. You mistook the sound of 'c' with English pronunciation.). She said this without any reprimand in her tone, and then moved on.

Coherence and Interplay between Observation and Interview Data

As noted by the concept of identity, identity is related to practice, and practice, in this study, is understood as how the teachers perform in teaching language class. Rather than presenting scenarios from all of the participants, we select Ellen's scenario as a case study. The case study of Ellen serves not only as basis for the subsequent discussion on the findings of the interview data, but also as a scenario in which discussion is grounded. Rather than presenting some scenarios of Ellen's daily life as a TCFL teacher in Denmark, we are guided by the research question, and therefore narrow our focus to pinpoint characteristics of her teaching performance in one class.

Given the observational data, we first see the teacher positioning herself as one of the learners; for instance, "she is sitting among students at a round table," indicating that she accepts students sitting in the class without participating. This is, at one point, Ellen performing a role of the friendly teacher as she strives to create a pleasant atmosphere in which students feel safe and confident. However, the teacher also reacts to the students as though they are learners who need to be managed via instructions and procedures. For instance, the teacher has to calm an overly enthusiastic student. Here, we can note that she responds to the student in terms of the traditional, formal roles of teacher (guide) and student (one to be guided). At this point, a disciplinary teacher's role is reassumed.

We also noted both verbal and non-verbal expressions. For example, we noticed that the teacher frowned as one student left the class in the middle of the lecturing without offering any excuse. This minute expression implies the teacher's disapproval of the student's behavior. However, being aware of the circumstances, the teacher did not make any comment.

In terms of identity, one's identity is closely related to one's performance. In the case of Ellen's interview data, although she strongly asserts that "I am very disciplinary. I like discipline and I would like to have the right to get sort of disciplinary in the classroom" (excerpt 4), Ellen might not identify herself as one of the disciplinary teachers. However, observational data shows, in part, how she reacts to the overenthusiastic student in her class. Ellen's response to him reflects her understanding of "a disciplinary teacher," an understanding that is context – dependent. However, as an identity is always constructed in terms of how a person identifies her/himself and meaning is always negotiable in different contexts (Wenger, 1998), the meaning of "a disciplinary teacher" held by Ellen, a non-native Chinese language teacher, differs from that of a native Chinese-speaking language teacher, whom Ellen also described. Thus, for Ellen, "a disciplinary teacher" is a concept associated with a teacher that inspires students, creates a pleasant classroom atmosphere and acts as a guide. As a result, it seems that while Ellen is inspired by the native Chinese-speaking language teachers and shows a certain acceptance towards their behavior and notions of discipline, she also develops her own idea of what it means to be "a disciplinary teacher" in the context of teaching.

As discussed above, identification takes place in engaging in practice, and identity construction entails our investment in what we do in relations to other people (Wenger, 1998, p.192). As argued by Morgan (2005), teacher identity changes across time and space, and identity negotiation is domain-specific. The changes in Ellen's perception of "a disciplinary teacher" and her actual implementation of what she feels this requires can only exist harmoniously through "a meaning negotiation" (Wenger, 1998) within the teaching of her class and the Danish educational context, in which she attempts to find meanings of her performance and her narratives regarding her idea of "a disciplinary teacher."

DISCUSSION

In considering Wenger's (1998) identity definition and our understanding of the concept of identity, two major aspects emerged. First, the roles of both time and space are important. Both aspects interact with one another and are decisive in affecting Ellen, Agnes, and Sara's self-perceptions and reflections in relation to their professional identities. Through pedagogical practice (narration and performance), an individual's past experiences as both a learner and a teacher join together with their perception of and reflection on the type of teacher they aspire to be, thereby shaping the construction of professional identity in the present. Second, the alignment of NNCLTs self-positioning is also an important aspect influencing the construction of professional identity. When their self-positioning aligns with students, institutes, and /or universities, the degree of their meaning negotiation varies. When each of them brings her practice in line with the students, institute, or university, the pedagogical approach present in the Danish university context varies. The findings tell us that in order to be applicable to the local educational culture, Ellen, Agnes, and Sara operationalized their teaching methods through classroom efforts in order to integrate "a modified pedagogical approach," an approach different from that of both the Chinese and the Danish. In this sense, the alignment of pedagogical practice determines teachers' teaching approaches. Wenger states that "we define who we are by where we have been and where we are going" (1998, p.149). For Ellen, Agnes, and Sara, being non-native Chinese language teachers, they draw upon where they have been and take into consideration their learning and teaching experiences in both China and Denmark. Thus, their perceptions and meanings are constantly changing over time (past and present) and across space (the host country being China and the home country being Denmark). By drawing on what they have experienced in terms of Chinese language learning and teaching, Ellen, Agnes, and Sara construct their own meanings in the present situation within their home culture. As outlined in the concept of identity section of this chapter, identity construction is related to meaning negotiation within community, and the ability to construct and negotiate meaning is fundamental to it. As such, the change of space makes NNCLTs fully aware of the importance of context and the culture associated with context, which, in turn, influences their practice. Likewise, the change of time makes NNCLTs reconsider

the different roles of teachers to which they may or may not consider themselves to belong, which allows them not only to find meaning across time and space, but also to create new meaning appropriate to their practice. In this sense, this can also be a creative experience.

CONCLUSION

The qualitative study of Ellen, Sara and Agnes' as NNCLTs shows that the construction of teachers' professional identity is highly complicated. We find that the teachers' identity construction is based on both a pedagogical perspective, in that they identify with their pedagogical beliefs in creating their individual teacher role, integrating into the construction process a social perspective by identifying their positionality in relation to practice. Furthermore, they express a developmental perspective which integrates their experiences as learners and teachers in different educational cultures across time and space. Guided by Wenger's identity definition and by our understanding of the identity concept, we thus summarize three important factors which are considered to influence construction of non-native language teachers' professional identities in their home culture. These factors are meaning creation, pedagogical practice, and alignment of pedagogical practice. Rather than being independent variables presented in a linear format, the three factors are dependent variables presented in a circular format, interconnecting and interacting with each other.

In relation to this study, we conclude that the professional identity construction within the here-and-now of teaching practice requires the negotiation of past experiences, future aspirations, and pedagogical competence. The ability to negotiate meaning over space and across time determines to what degree each non-native language teacher is able to use and modify his/her sense of belonging, and the ability to manage a sense of identification is contingent upon space and time in that what each non-native language teacher experienced as a learner and as a teacher affects his/her professional practice.

The limitations of this study are that, as a qualitative study, the findings are limited by the small number of participants and by the fact that data was gathered at a single university. Therefore, similar contextualized studies of the role of NNCLTs in other educational settings are needed.

NOTES

[1] TCFL or teaching Chinese as a foreign language is an acronym that refers to the study of the Chinese language by non-native speakers. Chinese language study corresponds to the study of standard Chinese (mandarin Chinese) as a foreign language. In this study, we consider TCFL as a main area of research with a focus on Danish speakers learning Chinese as a foreign language in Denmark.

[2] NNCLTs or non-native Chinese language teachers is an acronym that refers to the growing body of Chinese language teachers who speak Chinese as a foreign language (FL) or as a second language (SL) *(dichotomy between FL and SL can be found in endnote 2)* . The term was coined to highlight the dichotomy between native Chinese language teachers (NCLTs) and non-native Chinese language

teachers (NNCLTs). Historically speaking, a native speaker is defined as 'the first language a human being learns to speak is her/his native language; (s) he is a native speaker of this language defined by Leonard Bloomfield. Considering that Chinese is taught and learned as other than Danish and English (English is commonly considered as a second language in Denmark), we support the use of the term "NNCLTs" in this study. The advantage of using these terms is to distinguish native and non-native Chinese language teachers as well as to highlight the explanation based on the dichotomy.

[3]   To protect the real identity of the participants, each teacher is ascribed an alias. All personal names and names of institutions are fictitious. The places in which Ellen, Agnes and Sara live and study, were also deliberately vague.

[4]   It is perhaps more proper to use a term of 'written interview' in this study for the reason that the scale of questionnaire is rather limited and the sample of subjects is only three teachers. However we keep the term questionnaire to indicate one of the methodological approaches used in our study.

[5]   Selective observation: a selective observation is used in the process of collecting data from classroom (Flick, 2009).

[6]   Tryg is Danish and means confident and safe.

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9. PLAYFUL LEARNING CULTURE IN THE MUSEUM

MicroCulture and Guided Tour Practice

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, museum learning culture and practice have become a matter of debate in response to a crisis within the museum sector, which has caused pressure from external organizations which are demanding that museums become more effective at managing their resources, attracting more visitors, and providing evidence regarding the relevance of their practices to society (Janes, 2009). As a result, museum innovation has become a common research topic across many different disciplines. Surprisingly, only a few studies have been dedicated to the practice of guided tours which represent a typical learning practice and often serve as children's first museum experience (Best, 2012).

Museum learning culture is dominated by two competing positions, the *modernist* and the *postmodern* (Dysthe et al., 2012), which correspond to the *contextualist* and the *formalist* positions (Pierroux, 2010). These two positions have opposite values regarding learning outcomes and the relationship between learners and guides. The modernist and contextualist positions aim at passing the same knowledge to all the visitors, while multiple learning outcomes are appreciated in the formalist and postmodern positions. In addition to these two positions, two main discourses seem to emerge in museum studies: a *macro-level discourse* dealing with the identity of the museum and its relevance to society (Dysthe et al., 2012; Lang et al., 2006), and a *micro-level discourse* dealing more specifically with daily learning practice and its impact on visitors, and the design and introduction of digital technologies (Muise & Wakkary, 2010; Hornecker, 2008).

Using these insights as a starting point, a qualitative study has been conducted in cooperation with two historical museums, namely The Transport Museum in Coventry, England, and The Viking Museum in Ribe, Denmark. The premises of this study are that culture is a changing process and that culture is created through the encounter of different individuals in accordance with the complex concept of culture (Jensen, 2007; Kirkebæk, chapter 2 in this volume). The study aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of museum learning culture, focusing on guided tours and historical discourse, and on contributing to the innovation of these practices through the design of a new digital learning platform. A participatory design process was therefore undertaken in cooperation with the Danish museum

and a local afterschool facility. A group of 25 children of approximately 10 years of age was actively involved in designing a digital game set in the Viking Age. Based on the theories of Rogoff (1990) and Vygotsky (1978), a digital, table-top game called *MicroCulture* was created with the goal of setting up the conditions for playful learning in museums, eliciting a sociocultural awareness of history, and creating the opportunity for an enriching encounter between the children and the museum guides.

RELATED WORK: FRAMING MUSEUM LEARNING CULTURE

Many studies have been conducted on the process of museum innovation, mainly taking two complementary perspectives: a macro-level discourse concerned with the role of the museum as a cultural organization and learning context within society (Lang et al., 2006), and a micro-level discourse concerned with what happens inside the museum. Furthermore, museums can been viewed from a sociocultural perspective, dealing with the role of guides and educators (Best, 2012; Ritchhart, 2007), or a visitors' perspective, concerning the digitalization of museum practice (Muise & Wakkary, 2010; Hornecker & Stifter, 2006). A few studies attempt to provide a holistic discourse, linking the macro and micro levels so that the role of the museum within society is discussed through specific cases (Dysthe et al., 2012; Hooper-Greenhill et al.; 2004), but they do not explicitly mention the two perspectives.

Several researchers use different terminology when discussing museum learning culture in reference to learning and guided tours. Dysthe et al. (2012), for instance, talk about a paradigmatic change, and Pierroux (2010) introduces the term "narratives" or "positions". However, despite the different terms used in the literature, two main positions emerge as dominant, the first being concerned with assessment and in passing on "true" knowledge to each visitor, and the second being concerned with eliciting a constructive dialogue between guides and visitors, and acknowledges individual learning outcomes as valuable. These two positions answer to the descriptive and the complex concepts of culture, respectively (Jensen, 2007; chapter 2 in this volume). These two concepts have strong implications for learning practice. The descriptive concept focuses on the role of teachers in passing on knowledge, implying a teacher-centered, lecture-based approach to teaching. Meanwhile, the complex concept implies a student-centered and task-based approach to teaching, emphasizing constructive dialogue and the making of meaning (Baeten et al., 2010; Kirkebæk, chapter 2 in this volume).

According to Pierroux (2010), museum learning culture is dominated by two opposite positions, or "narratives": the formalist position, represented by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) of New York, and the contextualist position, represented by Philadelphia Museum of Art. The formalist position emphasizes interpretation and is based upon the pedagogical method of Visual Thinking, according to which inexperienced visitors should be helped to develop their perceptual and reasoning

skills through intuitive thinking. As a consequence, the formalist position values the emergence of individual and differentiated learning outcomes. The contextualist position, however, is concerned with assessment of learning and disciplinary context so as to avoid the emergence of misunderstanding and false knowledge. In this sense, the contextualist position admits the existence of a true knowledge to be passed on to each visitor. According to Pierroux (2010), who conducted a comparative study in order to establish how the two positions are embedded in art education and how they affect learning and interaction, it was discovered that similar strategies emerged among educators at both MOMA and the Philadelphia Museum of Arts. In both museums, the guides asked the visitors to describe the displayed objects, then reformulated students' responses and connected previous utterances together while discussing a specific matter. Furthermore, expressions of ownership and multiple interpretations emerged in both contexts, through negotiations, agreements, and disagreements. But, in the end, the formalist position appears more receptive to supporting interpretive analyses of artworks; the educators do not focus their talks exclusively on the objects and the students are supposed to contribute to the interpretive discourse (Pierroux, 2010). The formalist position seems to approach museum artifacts as boundary objects, in the terms of Star and Griesemer (1987). The objects displayed in museums are seen as providing trading zones through which guides and visitors can establish a mutual understanding, negotiating and sharing their individual understandings, which are rooted in their individual backgrounds and interests. In this way, the guided tour is seen as a dialogic practice of sense-making, mediated through physical artifacts.

According to Dysthe et al. (2012), these two opposite positions represent a paradigmatic change in which museums are moving from the modernist to the postmodern position. Modernist museums aim at revealing true knowledge about the past, possibly to prevent misunderstandings in the visitors. Conversely, postmodern museums strive to engage in dialogue with visitors. On a general level, it is possible to argue that the contextualist position embodies values from the modernist culture, while the formalist position embodies values from the postmodern culture. According to Dysthe et al. (2012), this paradigmatic change toward the postmodern museum is needed within the context of contemporary multi-ethnic societies composed of individuals with different backgrounds and experiences. The postmodern position acknowledges that sense-making and understanding cannot be separated from the individual cultural background of the visitors, promotes an open attitude towards learning and culture and supports both the integration of young people into society and their involvement in active citizenship (Dysthe et al., 2012).

The fostering of active citizenship among young people is also acknowledged by Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2004) as a main contribution of the museum to society from a macro-level perspective. Hooper-Greenhill et al. discuss a quantitative evaluation of an initiative called the Renaissance in the Regions Education Programme from the perspective of primary school pupils and teachers. This initiative is aimed at creating an integrated network of local museums by grouping them into regional hubs so as to enrich museum learning culture. Based on the data gathered, the report

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argues that museums are "achieving government targets" in fostering confidence and motivation in primary school children (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2004).

However, despite many studies having been conducted on museum practice and culture, only a few are devoted to the guided tours that are a central component of museum learning culture. Therefore, what really happens during guided tours and how this practice contributes to the education of young people, or how it may be improved in order to do so more efficiently, is still a matter to be investigated in-depth (Best, 2012).

A similar paradox holds in relation to design studies which propose engaging digital solutions aimed at enriching visitors' experience. However, such studies tend not to link their digital solutions to current museum practice and the needs of guides and curators. It is argued in this paper that the lack of integration between the proposed digital solutions and the needs of museum practitioners may hinder the process of museum innovation and slow down the introduction of digital technologies. Two studies stand out (Muise & Wakkary, 2010; Hornecker & Stifter, 2006); although they do not take into account the needs of the museum and the practice of guided tour, they do discuss digital installations in relation to visitors' current practices, providing general guidelines for the design of new learning technologies.

The study conducted by Hornecker and Stifter (2006) discusses results from a complex quantitative study, investigating the quality of visitors' interaction when engaging with the digital installations displayed at the medien.welten exhibition held by the Museum of Sciences in Vienna, Austria. The aim of the exhibition was to raise awareness regarding a contemporary, media-based society in different age groups. The visitors were invited to engage with thematic islands that displayed installations focusing on advancements in the areas of transmission, storage, and calculation media, in chronological order. Through ethnographic observations, Hornecker and Stifter were able to establish general patterns regarding visitors' needs and habits. For example, it was noticed that visitors expressed emotional responses towards objects from their everyday life, with older visitors showing a nostalgic feeling for the objects they used when they were young. The exhibit also allowed visitors to engage with the installations in different ways, making it possible for some to dedicate more time to specific installations, while others spent a little time at each installation in order to experience the whole exhibition. This means that digital installations should be enjoyable in both short and long periods of time, according to visitors' needs. Finally, while many visitors came to the museum in groups, most exhibitions are designed for individuals. As a result, installations involving problem-solving activities and providing support for social and tangible interaction appeared to be the most successful since the visitors spent the most time engaging with them.

The study conducted by Muise and Wakkary (2010) proposes a new learning scenario targeted at families' tours via the design of a digital hybrid system called Kurio. The visitors are supposed to play the role of time travelers who are stranded in another time and have to repair their time compass in order to return to the proper time. The system involves several devices: a set of tangibles, a table-top display,

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and a personal digital assistant (PDA). The proposed learning scenario is based on constructivism, with references to the works of Piaget (1896–1980) and Vygotsky (1896–1980). Following constructivism, Muise and Wakkary introduce forms of playful problem solving in the museum in order to enrich families' experience.

Taking these insights into account, this study proposes the introduction of forms of tangible play in order to enrich the practice of the guided tour with respect to promoting historical discourse and social interaction between guides and primary school children.

GUIDED TOURS AND DISCOURSE IN HISTORICAL MUSEUMS

The empirical study was conducted over a period of one year and involved two main sites: The Viking Museum in Ribe, Denmark, and The Transport Museum in Coventry, England. Since the present study is concerned with the richness of guided tour practice and the quality of the interaction emerging between visitors and guides, the choice was made to use qualitative methods, such as ethnographic and participant observations as well as situated and semi-structured interviews (Pink, 2007). A participatory design process was conducted in the Danish context, involving a group of 25 children ranging from 9 to 12 years old from a local afterschool institution. This target group was selected primarily because children in this age group have tried guided tours with their school classes, and also because the guides define them as "nice" visitors, although they are often not very communicative, making it difficult for the guides to assess if they are learning anything or if they have particular interests.

The design process (Fig. 9.1) was carried out in a participatory fashion in order to actively involve the children as co-designers (Druin, 2002). The children were
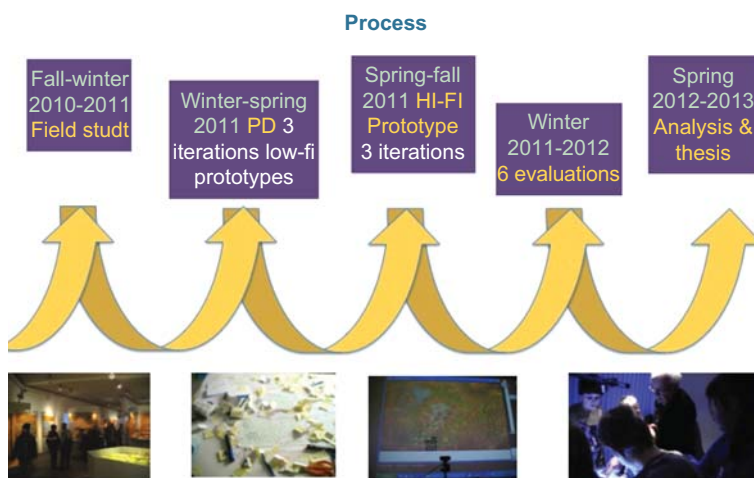
Figure 9.1. Design process.

invited to take part in a total of six workshops. The first two workshops were task-based interviews, aimed at gathering insights about children's museum experience; the first was carried out in the children's afterschool facility and the second inside The Viking Museum. During the four following workshops, the children were asked to cooperate with the researcher to design tangibles for a game about the Viking Age. Different materials were presented to the children, including play dough, Lego bricks, and drawing materials. During the final two workshops, a low-fidelity cardboard prototype of a table-top game was presented to the children, who were supposed to play and modify it according to their taste by mainly using sticky notes, markers, and other drawing materials.

A total of seven versions of the concept were realized and tested through the process. The resulting working prototype was tested six times, with the first three tests being preliminary evaluations with the curator, the pedagogue from the afterschool institution, and two guides from Ribe. Finally, the last three tests were conducted with three different groups of seven to eight children inside the museum so that the participants could be observed interacting with MicroCulture during a real guided tour.

Each session involving the users was video-recorded and analyzed through the interaction analysis method (Jordan & Henderson, 1994). This means that the analysis took into account the richness of emergent interaction, looking at not only verbal language, especially in relation to how it referred to play and history at the same time, but also modulation of the voice, gestures, and facial expressions. The focus of the analysis was to capture the quality of emergent interaction between children and guides, and, in relation to the final test with the working prototype, to evaluate how MicroCulture affects the practice of guided tours from the perspectives of both groups of participants.

Challenges in Museum Learning Practice

Results from the field study revealed a convergence between the two contexts with respect to emergent strategies and open issues, such as:

– The "mono-directional" nature of the communication between guides and visitors.
– Ineffective communication of historical processes.

Despite the many differences identified between the two museums, such as differing organization structures, division of labor, funding strategies, and sociocultural context, similar issues emerged. Personnel from both museums claim that a main issue in the museum learning culture is the "mono-directional" essence of the communication taking place between museums and the public. The same term was used by the curators of both sites, and by the head educator from Coventry. In both cases, a dialogue between society and museums is not emerging, and this is happening on a macro-level perspective as well as on a micro-level perspective between guides and visitors. As a result, curators are not sure of how to best innovate their practices

in such a way so as to ensure that the main exhibition is preserved despite their desire to enrich it. As said by the curator from Coventry: "We are having more visitors, but we are not sure what they like or what to change!"

Furthermore, from a micro-level perspective related to guided tours and the interaction emerging between guides and children, it seems as though museum learning culture embodies values from traditional, teacher-centered teaching; the guides take the role of teachers, acting as authority figures, and establish routines for the children, deciding which objects to pay attention to and for how long (Ritchhart, 2007). They perceive their activities as storytelling in the sense that they aim at telling the children a good story in order to elicit in them an interest in history and prompt them to search for new information, thereby becoming more aware of their own cultural identities. In this sense, their understanding of museum learning practice is in line with current studies, according to which the mission of museums is to promote a cultural awareness and active citizenship (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2004; Dysthe et al., 2012).

In general, the guides seem satisfied with the way children respond to the guided tours; they are "nice" and "polite," and they seem to follow the guides. However, it has been noticed that children never ask the guides questions. A few of them speak, but only when they are first asked a question, such as being prompted to identify a specific object. This situation is confirmed by observations of guided tours and makes it difficult for the guides by limiting their ability to assess if the children are learning anything, if they need support, or if they have a particular interest in specific artifacts.

Results from the workshops with the children show that children initially have positive feelings when talking about their museum experiences, describing museums as "interesting," "nice," and "fun." However, historical museums are not the first that come to mind; most children were referring to The Fisheries Museum in Esbjerg, an aquarium where children can look at different varieties of fishes and aquatic animals. Moreover, when talking specifically about historical museums, a few children complained that although they liked the Vikings, Nordic myths, and war stories, they found some museums to be "boring" since "you cannot touch anything" or "run." According to data gathered through this study, children have strong emotional responses to living beings, possibly explaining the attraction to the Fisheries Museum, where the children can see the fish moving, watch the seals performing exciting tricks, and touch skates coming out of water to interact with the children. Inside The Viking Museum, however, the children relate emotionally to stories about children of their own age who lived in different historical periods, and to the skeletons displayed in the museum. This phenomenon is interpreted as a form of emotional perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1948) in which the children approach people from the past by imagining the possible lives they could have lived.

Regarding the learning of history, it has been observed that the use of tangible installations is usually restricted to reconstructions of environments and artifacts, while historical processes are communicated mostly through verbal speech.

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Moreover, in England, museum personnel feel pressure from the school system to conform to a linear, facts-based view of history. This issue emerged at numerous times during the interview with the curator and is discussed in literature as severely constraining museums' freedom to innovate (Reeve & Woollard, 2006). According to the head educator, local schools expect museums to present history as a sequence of events which is "easy to be discussed in class and fits what we already do!"

However, it is argued that the dominant use of verbal communication can be ineffective, as it may hide the complex intertwining of events and sociocultural factors determining historical processes. Moreover, this approach may prevent children from gaining an intuitive understanding of such processes and performing their own critical reflections, which are valuable because they can contribute to the goals envisioned for museum practice in current studies, such as the fostering of culture of thinking (Ritchhart, 2007) and participation in active citizenship, the latter of which flourishes through reflections on personal experiences (Dysthe et al., 2012).

A PLAYFUL LEARNING SCENARIO FOR MUSEUMS

Based on the insights gained from the field work, a new learning scenario was proposed, leveraging on mediated play as a resource for conceptual thinking and allowing children to gain an intuitive understanding of history as a complex sociocultural process.

The study conducted indicates that museum learning culture is still rooted in traditional learning approaches, in which guides acquire the role of teachers and children the role of pupils; in this sense, when accessing the museum, children receive another lecture. However, in both museums used in the study, material objects, archeological findings, and reconstructions were found to enrich the children's learning and experience of the museum. Interestingly, it was noticed that all reconstructions focus on history from a synchronic perspective, in which history is seen as a series of points in time (Fig. 9.2). These installations include walk-through setups, such as reconstructions of a Viking ship or of streets during World War II. These installations are appreciated because they offer multimodal engagement, allowing visitors to interact in personal ways and stimulating different sensorial spheres (Kress, 2010). Moreover, these installations create an illusion of coevalness (Fabian, 1983), in which the distance in time between the past and the present is reduced.

Synchronic perspective
focus on facts
points in time

Diachronic perspective
focus on process
segment in time
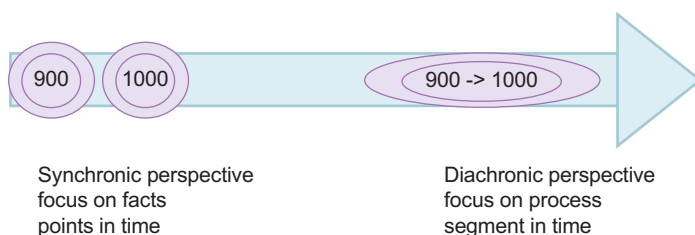
Figure 9.2. Synchronic versus diachronic perspective.

Conversely, when it comes to the diachronic perspective of history, or dealing with processes through time, verbal communication is the dominant communication mode; no visual or tangible representation is given. According to the diachronic perspective, history is seen as a complex intertwining of events in which individual actions are affected by social forces, producing unexpected and unintended outcomes (Carr, 2001).

It is argued in this study that the sequential nature of verbal language is not adequate for providing an accurate representation of the complexity of historical processes due to the risk of communicating history as a series of disconnected events that occurred in sequential order. It is also argued that the current trend in museum learning culture should be enriched, shifting from a lecturing framework toward one of a playful apprenticeship in thinking (Marchetti & Petersson Brooks, 2012; Rogoff, 1990). Therefore, a new learning scenario is proposed in which guides and children start their interaction by playing together with interactive representations of historical processes, the different elements of which are mirrored in the representation itself and build on the participants' playful interactions. This new learning scenario is based upon the theories of Rogoff (1990) and her framework of apprenticeship in thinking and Vygotsky's (1978) theory of play. According to Rogoff, children learn new knowledge and skills by engaging in goal-directed activities together with expert adults. The role of the adults is vital to the children's learning, as they communicate the correct course of action through their interaction with the physical context. Moreover, adults support children by segmenting the activity into smaller tasks that fit within the children's potential, so as to help them when reaching their zone of proximal development (Rogoff 1990, Vygotsky, 1978), which represents the boundary between what they know and what they can learn according to their cognitive development. In this sense, the situation defined by Rogoff is close to what takes place during guided tours, in which children are supported by expert adults who disclose to them the knowledge embodied in the artifacts displayed in the museums.

Moreover, according to Vygotsky (1978), play with physical toys is a vital factor to the development of superior mental functions. Much like when children engage with physical toys, they project their actions into an imaginary world in which they can freely explore various courses of actions and their implications. In this way, children learn to move from the plane of "now and here," or their current physical contexts, and to think on an abstract, conceptual level.

Finally, both Rogoff and Vygotsky claim that learners should actively participate in their learning. Evidence gathered through the empirical study suggests that active participation is currently lacking in museum learning culture even though it could offer a significant contribution to the emergence of active citizenship. Play is, therefore, envisioned as a resource to:

– Create multimodal representations of historical processes.
– Support children to become more active and reflective in their learning.

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– Provide a tool for the guides to better communicate on the topic of historical processes.

Therefore, this study proposes a shift from lecturing toward a playful learning culture so as to contribute to the museums' goals of fostering cultural awareness and active citizenship by stimulating their visitors' imaginations.

The Design of MicroCulture

The outcome of the design process was MicroCulture, and its creation is based upon all the insights gathered throughout the empirical study. The name comes from a metaphoric understanding of guided tours, in which culture is the focus of learning and participants conduct shared "experiments" over a simulated "culture."

The result is a table-top tangible game aimed at representing urban development as a sociocultural process resulting from the interplay between political authorities, their actions of placing infrastructures over the territory, and the peasants' responses. This topic was selected as it represents a complex historical process and is relevant to both museums.

Different technical settings were considered for MicroCulture; ultimately, a hybrid platform was created based on off-the-shelf technologies such as a flat screen TV, a high-definition web-cam, and a dual-core processor laptop (Fig. 9.3). A basic set of four paper tangibles was provided, shaped as bottomless cubes, each representing a different infrastructure of the kinds that were used in Ribe during the Viking Age: a wooden-paved street, a wooden bridge, market place fences, and a circular turf rampart like those King Harald Bluetooth placed around Ribe when it became a town (Jensen, 1991). Four sets of tangibles were provided to the participants in the final tests so that there would be enough tangibles for all the children and the guide.

The TV screen shows a simulation of a settlement with a population, implemented in Python, specifically using the Pygame game library and ReacTIVision (Keltenbrunner & Bencina, 2007), an open-source tracking system created to support the development of tangible interfaces. The system can save a screenshot every 30 seconds (Fig. 4) in order to support analysis of the interaction during the
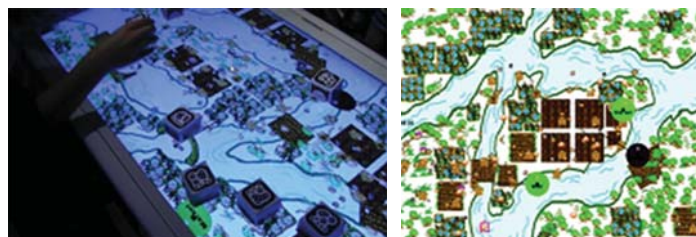
Figure 9.3. MicroCulture during the final evaluation and screenshot.

testing by comparing the children's actions during their play with the result of their actions as captured in the screenshots.

In order to play, the participants are supposed to place the paper tangibles on the screen. The system can tolerate multiple tangibles simultaneously while still using the webcam to trace the unique marker placed on the top of each tangible. After a few seconds, the players can remove the tangibles and an infrastructure will appear on the simulated settlement. The simulation is inspired by games such as *Simcity*, *Civilization*, *World of Warcraft*, and the board game *Monopoly*, the latter of which was chosen for the tangible face-to-face interaction that it affords. Ultimately, MicroCulture is conceived as a computer simulation, showing a village and its population from a top-down perspective, as seen in *Simcity*, *Civilization*, and *World of Warcraft*. The interaction style, however, is inspired by *Monopoly*, a board game allowing players to engage in a tangible, face-to-face interaction.

All of the graphics are hand-drawn in a non-photorealistic style and inspired by the artifacts the children made during the design process. The simulation attempts to reproduce the dynamics of infrastructure placement, focusing on the way this affects the territory and the freedom of action of each of the characters forming the populations. For instance, when a player places a bridge tangible on the map, a bridge appears in the simulation and enables the characters to cross a river, reaching the opposite bank. In this way, the players can build new houses and new workshops in areas that were not formerly reachable, expanding their settlement. Similarly, streets convert woods or swamps into a planked walkway on which the characters can walk and establish new houses and workshops. Hence, infrastructure placement directly affects the life of the characters, as they become able to extend the range of their circulation and actions, overcoming natural constraints. Each infrastructure disappears after a while, meaning that landowners have to be committed to their land, using resources to keep the infrastructures in a functional state and replacing them when needed.

Finally, the characters are given a simulated life cycle, so that they are born as females and males within a household and then move out of their parents' home to establish their own home some distance away when they grow old. In this way, the simulation reproduces the dynamics of Jutland wandering villages[1], the center of which migrated with new generations (Schmidt, 1991).

DISCUSSION

Results from the final tests show that forms of mediated tangible play can support children in reflecting on historical concepts at an abstract level by reasoning on their play.

A rich interaction unfolded between children and guides, progressing through four main stages in which the children explored different forms of play and different aspects of the simulation:

1. Technical
2. Collaborative play

3. Role-play
4. Competitive play

This progression started with an introductory phase, in which the presence of a game elicited enthusiasm and curiosity in the children, prompting them to ask many questions in order to understand how the system worked, how they could play with it, and what they were allowed to do. This response is interpreted as a form of emotional perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1948) in the sense that the children were confronted with a familiar object and with the possibility to play inside a museum. Similar responses were identified also by Hornecker and Stifter (2006) in relation to how children responded to the presence of games in the *medien.welten* exhibition. The first group of participants had the strongest response; they expressed their emotional state verbally and through facial expressions. They said that the game was "cool!" or "nice" while smiling. Their reaction was probably caused by a feeling of ownership as they recognized that it was the game we designed together; a boy even asked: "Is it the game we made? With the play dough and paper?" and then added "Ahhh, cool!" The other two groups also showed enthusiasm, but in a moderate way; however, all the groups played for approximately 20 minutes and complained when it was time for them to continue with the tour.

Generally, after having played approximately 5–10 minutes, the three groups moved toward a stage in which they focused on the simulation content; it was in this stage that the guides were able to use MicroCulture to talk about history with the children. The children's attention was focused on the dynamics of the simulation, which mirrored historical dynamics of infrastructure placement, and this was expressed by the children's talking with the guides. The children tended to associate themselves with one of the five islands represented in the simulation map (Fig. 3), expressing forms of collaborative play, which evolved into role-play. Typical utterances were, for example: "*We* need more streets on *our* market place!" or "*We* need to place a bridge for *our* people." Through this stage, the children reasoned about how to connect different areas on the simulation, how to support the circulation of the characters (peasants) over the territory, and how to prevent swamps from appearing again. For instance, a girl directly asked the guide if the swamps could "disappear," and, in another case, a discussion emerged on the role of bridges in connecting market place areas:

Boy: "Should there be another market place there?"

Guide: "There should be a street and the street should be connected to a bridge!" (Mixed voices)

Boy: "Where is a bridge?" (Looking around for the tangible)

Guide: "What about these people there? How could they make it to the marketplace?" The boy places a bridge where the guide is pointing.

Girl: "There should also be this!" (a street). She passes the street-tangible to the boy.

This form of interaction may look simple, but it embodies meaning, pointing at archaeology of landscape and practical use of infrastructures from the perspective of peasants moving in a natural environment.

Most children reached a stage of collaborative role-play in which they exchanged and passed tangibles to each other as in the reported conversations. It was only in the case of the first group that a form of competitive play was identified, in which the children challenged each other as if they were competing landowners. A girl placed a series of ramparts in order to eliminate riverbank access to an influx of peasants coming from the island of a boy playing close to her. She addressed the boy, laughing and saying, "Caught! J. You are caught!" The boy answered "Nooo!" and then responded to the attack by placing a series of bridges, allowing his peasants to cross anyway. This interaction is particularly interesting, as it shows that the children gained an understanding of the functional role of infrastructure in warfare through play.

This progression into stages is marked by the gradual emergence of fantasy and role-play in which children "hallucinate," imagining that the situation depicted in their play is real (Sutton-Smith, 1997). As the children got more and more immersed in the fantasy play, the guided tour became a theatrical reenactment in which historical processes were reproduced through a participatory storytelling, allowing for shared sense-making and active involvement of the participants. This means that mediated play can allow guided tours to shift from a teacher-centered paradigm to one that is more student-centered (Baeten et al., 2010; Kirkebæk, chapter 2 in this volume), promoting active participation of learners as recommended by Rogoff (1990) and Vygotsky (1978). Moreover, through fantasy play, the children mirrored the personal and interpersonal dynamics involved and their effects on the community plane, in urban development as a sociocultural activity (Rogoff, 1995) as they enacted how landlords could have behaved in relation to developing their territory, either cooperating or competing with each other. The simulation also showed how personal actions affected the settlements and the life of the peasants, linking the personal and interpersonal planes to the societal plane (Rogoff, 1995). In this way, MicroCulture represents sociocultural activities in their richness, displaying an intertwining of the different planes of focus and mapping them into the different dimensions of mediated play, these being the players' interactions, the tangibles, the different features in the simulation, and the individual behaviors of the players.

Implications

Data gathered through the study indicates that mediated play can contribute significantly to the practice of guided tours, enriching the interaction between children and guides from a micro level perspective and answering to Rogoff's (1995) personal and interpersonal planes. During the final test with MicroCulture, the guides were supportive in relation to children's play and their responses, and they also said that they were happy to answer to the children's questions. The guides

provided support in sense-making and participated in the children's fantasy play. In this sense, mediated play allows the participants in guided tours to achieve a different state of mind, engaging in a sort of theatrical act, in which reality can be turned upside down and usual hierarchical relationships subverted (Sutton-Smith, 1997). In Best's (2012) words, mediated play emphasizes and enriches the already existing improvisational nature of guided tours.

At the same time, digital simulations and mediated play correspond to the activity of conceptual thinking supported by physical toys as discussed by Vygotsky (1978), so that by being immersed in their "hallucination," children reflect upon the implications of their actions, asking "what if" questions within the framework of the game.

The results gained through the study also have implications for the macro-level perspective on museum innovation. Regarding children and their learning, the introduction of mediated play within guided tours can support museums changing from the modernist toward the postmodern cultural framework. Much like the formalist position (Pierroux, 2010), play allows for the emergence of individualized interpretations of knowledge through the free exploration of meaning. In this sense, mediated play could be envisioned as a communicative and representational resource in the postmodern museum.

Furthermore, introduction of mediated play within museum learning culture embodies consequences for the role of guide. In fact, it implies that the guided tour has to be perceived as an open-ended learning practice in which multiple learning outcomes are acknowledged. Moreover, guides have to be aware of their role in sense-making in relation to discussing parallels between the past and the present, which could contribute to the emergence of cultural awareness in young visitors. During observations of guided tours in both museums, parallels between the past and the present were explicitly discussed, in relation to specific objects, such as a smooth bone that was used as a skating blade during the Viking Age. However, this did not happen during the final tests; the attention of the guides seemed absorbed in the simulation and in assisting the children, even though they could have taken the opportunity to discuss parallels between the past and the present with regard to the use of communication infrastructures. Therefore, the introduction of mediated play within guided tours implies that guides have to be trained differently in order to be able to use the available technology to its full potential.

Such insights should be taken into consideration within the debate that has emerged in the UK about the professionalization of guides or educators[2]. The profession of the museum educators is, in fact, defined as an "unsettled" profession (Woollard, 2006) because a precise education path is not required to access it. Moreover, educators seem to be marginalized inside the museum, so that not involved in important decision-making processes. This marginalization could be related to the fact that educators are in direct contact with visitors; they are the ones dealing with "the children" (Woollard, 2006). However, by being in touch with visitors in the context of a postmodern museum, guides are in the privileged position of interacting with visitors in person and thereby participating in their sense-making process. As a

result, they are the only professionals to gain firsthand information on the visitors' needs, which means that their opinions should be taken into serious consideration regarding exhibition planning, which technologies the museum should purchase, and how new technologies should be used.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed a participatory, design-oriented study about how mediated play could support the process of innovating museum learning culture. Two main issues are taken into account: the emergence of a monodirectional communication between guides and children during guided tours, a common practice with surprisingly little study devoted to it; and the frequently ineffective communication of historical processes.

A cross-cultural study has been conducted in Denmark and England, comparing how this change is taking place in two historical museums. Moreover, a participatory design process has been conducted in the Danish context, involving approximately 25 children of roughly 10 years of age. A new learning platform, called MicroCulture, was created, based on the evidence gathered, the theories of apprenticeship in thinking (Rogoff, 1990), and play as a learning resource for conceptual thinking (Vygotsky, 1978).

Results from the final evaluation of MicroCulture show that mediated play can significantly contribute to the innovation of current museum learning culture, offering rich implications for both the macro and micro-level discourses emerging in museum studies. On a micro-level perspective, mediated play provides the children with space for self-expression and a meaningful grounding for critical thinking about historical knowledge while giving the guides a way to assess the children's needs. Moreover, on a macro-level perspective, introduction of mediated play can contribute to the fostering of active citizenship in the children, emphasizing individual interpretation, active participation in learning, and cultural awareness. Finally, mediated play could introduce a new professional recognition of the role of guides and educators within museums, requiring a re-conceptualization of their training so that they will be better prepared to employ digital technology and play as a pedagogical tool.

NOTES

[1]   These particular settlements were found in Southern Jutland, close to the area of Ribe, where the museum is placed.
[2]   The term "educators" consistently appears in Anglo-Saxon literature.

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RASMUS GJEDSSØ BERTELSEN, DAI YING & GRETA SOLINAP

10. "LEARNING, WHEN YOU ARE NOT LEARNING"

Artistic, Scientific, Professional, and Political Culture at Leading Universities in Britain, France, USA, and China

INTRODUCTION

The world of academia pays considerable attention to the rankings of institutions. These rankings are predominantly based on research and, to some extent, quantifiable elements of teaching. The authors of this paper have benefitted from the privilege of studying at highly ranked and selective institutions or communities: University of Cambridge, Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, Harvard University and Tsinghua University (which we refer to as leading institutions here). However, we believe that some of the most important qualities of these institutions are less tangible, but which nevertheless, we wish to capture and discuss in this paper. We believe that the access to artistic, scientific, professional and political culture at these institutions provide a learning environment of a particular quality. It is the observation of the authors that some of the most effective learning at these institutions takes place outside of formal learning settings such as classrooms and in informal encounters. We use the term "informal learning" to denote activities outside formal classroom settings subject to examination (Smith 1999, 2008). This informal learning is also often implicit, but definitely not unintended, since many resources are devoted to this informal learning. It is the value of "learning, when you are not learning."[1]

Our aim with this paper is not to state that it is nice to be privileged, which is self-evident. Rather, we believe, that these institutions hold lessons and best practices which are not only dependent on their great resources, but also on a mindset that can be emulated by other institutions to the advantage of large numbers of students. It is easy to ascribe the learning at the institutions here to their ability to attract substantial resources and to their great financial wealth in some cases. However, we believe that there are lessons and best practices from these institutions that can be applied to higher education institutions broadly.

Clearly, one of the greatest strengths of these universities is their openness to society and the world. They open up to and engage in art, professional life and politics. They give their students the opportunity to engage with practitioners at a high level facilitating both learning and increased self-confidence. A conscious engagement between students, faculty, artists, professionals and political leaders from home and abroad is also important to the universities. Much of this openness

to and engagement with society and the world is a question of mindset. It is also a question of mindset to acknowledge and appreciate informal learning as an important part of the educational experience at a university. These are the lessons that we hope to share from the institutions described here. These lessons contrast with the traditions at many, for instance, Continental European and Nordic universities, which do not see it as their role to engage with the arts, professions and politics or connect their students with academic, government, business, cultural and other elites. Changes in the social and national composition of the student body may make this type of engagement preferable. In the past, privileged local students had access to the local artistic, scientific, professional and political culture outside university. Today, neither new local students from less-privileged backgrounds nor foreign students have access to such informal learning, but both groups would greatly benefit from accessing informal learning from access to a high-level artistic, scientific, professional and political culture.

Bringing out the value of the learning setting and the access to culture at institutions is also interesting at a time when Massive Open Online Courses and the promises of e-learning are being intensely debated. The observations in this essay show the importance of the onsite interaction of students and faculty, and the importance of the university as a meeting place for learning. It brings back the physical university and emphasises that e-learning must take this into account and consider ways to orchestrate such encounters for informal learning of artistic, scientific, professional and political culture.

In order to discuss the value of the informal learning and access to artistic, scientific, professional and political cultures at these institutions, we apply the framework of Roberto Verganti in his book *Design-Driven Innovation: Changing the Rules of Competition by Radically Innovating What Things Mean* (Harvard Business Press, 2009). Verganti argues that, contrary to general belief in user-driven innovation, the cultural background and elite access of designers and executives are of great importance to their innovativeness. A sophisticated and broad cultural background is important to be highly innovative. We will show in this essay that the learning environments described here offer the opportunity to develop a sophisticated and broad personal culture in arts, science, professions and politics. It is our argument that it is this personal development in informal learning, which is one of the most valuable characteristics of these institutions, and where other institutions can learn much. Verganti also points to the importance of access to and dialogue with *elite circles* of talented and/or central individuals who can teach and inspire students about the world and its direction. Again, the authors of this paper believe that this argument by Verganti captures one of the benefits of studying at one of the institutions described here. Being a student gives access to peers and faculty of particular talent. Equally, these institutions have strong global networks of alumni and others. More higher education institutions can give their students an advantage in innovativeness by developing their personal culture and giving them access to key interpreters of the world.

This paper is based on the personal experiences of its authors: Rasmus Gjedssø Bertelsen studied political science at the University of Copenhagen, University of Iceland, University of Geneva, University of Lausanne and University of Amsterdam before doing a PhD in International Relations at the University of Cambridge, during which time he was a visiting PhD candidate at Sciences Po and lived in the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris. Later, he was a research fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Subsequently, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Japan Society for the Promotion of Science at Tokyo Institute of Technology and United Nations University—Institute of Advanced Studies. He was a postdoctoral fellow and is now an assistant professor at Aalborg University. Dai Ying holds an undergraduate degree in history from Anhui University and an MA and PhD in International Relations from Tsinghua University. Dai was a predoctoral fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. She is currently a resident of Austin, Texas, where she has audited courses at the University of Texas at Austin. Greta Solinap is a graduate of the Harvard College Class of 2013. She majored in history and science and minored in neurobiology. Bertelsen and Dai were colleagues at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School, and Bertelsen and Solinap met in Pforzheimer House at Harvard, both encounters underline the access to interpreters at these institutions.[2]

METHODOLOGY: STRUCTURED, FOCUSED COMPARISON, AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND NARRATIVES

This study is guided by a structured, focused comparison (George & Bennett 2005) of four highly ranked and selective intellectual environments in Europe, the USA and China structured around the question of informal learning through exposure to artistic, professional and political culture. The focus of the questions in each case is how learners learn culture through working, living and socializing in the environment in question. A structured, focused comparison allows for a systematic comparison between cases.

The method is autoethnography. Autoethnography combines the systematic ("graphy") study of culture ("ethno") based on personal experience ("auto") (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). The structured, focused comparison of informal learning ensures a systemic study. Autoethnography is a useful method for the authors to share their experience with informal learning in these institutions with the purpose of analyzing access to artistic, scientific, professional, and political culture. The authors combine personal experience and observation with background information about the learning environments. The autoethnographies of these institutions are presented as the narratives of the authors' experiences there. Narratives are the preferred method of describing the authors' and their fellow students and colleagues' access to and co-creation of artistic, scientific, professional and political culture in these institutions (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010).

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Criticism could be raised that outside observers would be less biased than the three participant-authors. However, anyone observing these institutions for several years from the inside would also become an insider. These institutions are open to the outside, and it is possible for the reader to verify the experiences of authors through, for instance, online sources and events pages of these institutions.

THE BASELINE: CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN AND NORDIC UNIVERSITIES FOCUS ON RESEARCH AND TEACHING

The informal learning at the so-called leading universities described below and the possible lessons for universities in general stand out more clearly as we briefly describe what is common practice at many universities. Here, we will use Continental European and Nordic universities based on the experiences of the authors. It is important to remember that these universities offer access to quality education for the vast majority of students in their societies and play a key role in these societies as knowledge-based economies.

What strikes the authors about these Continental European and Nordic universities is that they see a relatively limited mission for themselves. Their missions are research and teaching, with a more limited third, new mission of outreach. Concerning their students, the mission is traditionally limited to educating and examining them according to formal study plans. Students usually only spend time at the universities to engage in formal teaching or examination. There is little emphasis on extracurricular activities, and the informal learning described below is limited. Students do not usually live on campus, nor do they eat or socialize there except when being taught or taking exams. These universities do not see themselves as a meeting point in society for art, science, business, professions and politics. They expect their students' and faculty's needs in those domains to be covered by other institutions in society. This tradition fit well in a world where privileged youth went to the local university and were otherwise well integrated in the world of arts, professions and politics. However, it is clear that it leaves out underprivileged or foreign students in today's globalized, mass university system. We believe that these universities can learn from the universities discussed below with benefits for much broader groups of students.

COLLEGE LIFE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE (BERTELSEN)

The University of Cambridge is one of the world's oldest universities founded in 1208 and is highly ranked. The University of Cambridge together with the University of Oxford share a unique feature, the college system, which makes them stand out from other leading universities around the world and which is the focus of this narrative. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge are British state universities, and it is this state university which awards the students' degrees. However, at the same time,

the University of Cambridge consists of 31 colleges, and the University of Oxford consists of 44 colleges and halls of residence. These colleges are the unique feature of learning at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. Cambridge college life is the topic of this section, based on Bertelsen's experience as an advanced student (PhD candidate) at Churchill College, Cambridge, from 2002 to 2006.

All students and most faculty members at Cambridge are members of a college. The college is where the students live, eat and socialize, which is the focus of our attention here. The colleges are much smaller than the university and they are interdisciplinary in nature. Therefore, the colleges bring together students and faculty members at all levels and all disciplines. The colleges are private, self-governing institutions with their own income and endowments. The division of labor between college and university is that the colleges select their own students in accordance with university regulations. Undergraduate teaching is divided between the colleges offering supervisions and the university offering lectures and seminars. Degrees are awarded by the university. The colleges house, feed and supply social and athletic support for its members.

A Cambridge or Oxford college is probably the closest one can come to a Protestant monastery, where people live, eat and study together. It has been described to me as a large medieval household with a chapel, a dining hall and living accommodation, which is an apt description. The college contains accommodation ranging from rooms for students to apartments for student families or faculty members. The social heart of the college is the dining hall since socializing is centered around food and drink.

I will recount my own experience as a PhD candidate in Churchill College to describe the learning experience in the Cambridge college environment. During a visit to Churchill College, before embarking on my PhD, I met a fellow International Relations PhD student from France at breakfast in the dining hall. When I joined the college some months later, this fellow student introduced me to a circle of PhD candidates in Churchill College, who became key sources of learning for me. What characterized this group is a clear example of the learning experience in a Cambridge college, that is, its composition of extraordinary talent from around the world across subjects: an Irish PhD candidate in engineering design, an Algerian PhD candidate in chemical engineering, a Norwegian PhD candidate in theoretical physics, a French PhD candidate in International Relations, a South Korean PhD candidate in computer science, a Czech PhD candidate in biology, a Brazilian PhD candidate in mathematics, an American PhD candidate in theoretical physics and an Egyptian PhD candidate in virology, among others. These individuals first and foremost represented talent. They also represented a very wide range of personal and professional experience. They represented very wide ranging national and international educational experiences as well as professional experiences ranging from teaching in Middle Eastern universities to working in the South Korean high tech industry to serving on US nuclear submarines.

I spent countless mealtimes with this group and other students, discussing questions of current affairs, culture, religion and science. Due to the repeated nature of these conversations, there was an exceptional level of trust and openness. With the combination of trust, openness, talent, experience and differing perspectives, this socialization was a very important part of my learning as a PhD candidate in Churchill College and the University of Cambridge. It was possible to address complex and controversial topics such as politics, family or religion in a trusting and respectful manner, which allowed for developing a deep understanding of other cultures, societies and perspectives. Topics of intense discussion and analysis were the Iraq war, religious fundamentalism, Middle East-West relations, family and gender relations, Christianity-Islam relations, the place of natural science and technology in society, the structuring of education and research at all levels, and the transition of Asian tiger economies and its effects on family structures and politics.

The level of talent together with the wide range of fields of research covered made it possible to learn about a range of intellectual fields at a privileged level. I had a Nordic and Continental European background in political science when I arrived in Cambridge with no exposure to natural science or technology topics since my secondary education. Socializing extensively with talented PhD candidates in biology, chemical engineering, computer science, engineering design, mathematics, theoretical physics, and virology in Cambridge gave a privileged insight into the workings of international natural science at a high level. It became clear to me that graduate studies in natural science works very differently from humanities and social sciences, which could probably learn much from the higher degrees of teamwork and collaboration. Likewise, these natural science and technology PhD candidates learned about the way of thinking and working in the field of human sciences. It was clear that education and research training is very much a socialization into ways of thinking and becoming acquainted with other ways of thinking is highly beneficial. Later, one of the engineers, when working in an African post-conflict state for an international oil company, remarked that he struggled to understand the history and politics that would be obvious to me as an International Relations scholar. Such a statement is a clear indication of the interdisciplinary understanding developed through such college socializing.

The college also gathers together a number of committees, which gives undergraduate and advanced students the opportunity to work with leading academics and others. I was the advanced students' representative on the Churchill Archives Centre Committee, the board of the Churchill Archives Centre. One responsibility of this committee was to select the speaker for the public biannual Stephen Roskill Memorial Lecture on strategic topics in Churchill College. I observed the selection and invitation of Prince Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan as the speaker, and it was fascinating for a young Scandinavian, obviously without any experience of dealing with Middle Eastern royal families, to observe the debates surrounding the selection

of this speaker and then, to observe how a Middle Eastern prince was approached using the ties between Cambridge and the Jordanian royal family.

THE CITÉ INTERNATIONALE UNIVERSITAIRE DE PARIS (BERTELSEN)

The Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris (CIUP) strives for international learning for students, researchers and artists from around the world. The CIUP, or the "International University City of Paris", was born of attempts to foster reconciliation after World War I and to induce the learning and socialization that would render such horrors as World War I impossible. The founding fathers of the CIUP were the parliamentarian and minister of education André Honnorat and the rector of the University of Paris, Paul Appell, with the financial support of oil tycoon Emile Deutsch de la Meurthe, his CEO Jean Branet and the Lazard banker David David-Weill.

The CIUP today receives 10,000 students, researchers and artists every year, from 140 nationalities into its 40 halls of residence. The first residence hall to open was the Fondation Deutsch de la Meurthe in 1925 followed by 39 other halls sponsored by foreign countries or French foundations and grandes écoles. The halls were built in the inter-war years and after WWII with the former Iranian House built as the last one in 1969 (today, Fondation Avicenne). The CIUP is an open-air museum of the 20th century reflecting attempts of peace-building and reconciliation after WWI and imperialism, decolonization, revolutions and architecture around the world. It is an educational experience to live in this environment and breathe this history. A few examples suffice to illustrate. The WWI roots of the CIUP have been described and they are clear from the residences built in the interwar years and the central International House donated by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. following the donation of his other international houses in New York, Chicago and Berkeley. French imperialism is clear from the House of Southeast Asian Students, and Dutch imperialism is showcased in the salon of the Dutch House with a fresco of the Netherlands at one end and of the Dutch East Indies at the other end. Decolonization and state building is clear from the residencies of former French protectorates or mandates such as Tunisia, Morocco, Cambodia and Lebanon.

The beautiful Cambodian House built by newly independent Cambodia in the 1950s designed by some of the leading architects of the time is another vivid illustration of 20th century history. General Lon Nol ousted King Sihanouk in a coup in 1972; subsequently, fighting broke out among students in the Cambodian house. The house was closed and afterwards stood empty. The Khmer Rouge ousted Lon Nol in 1975 and both were ousted by the Vietnamese invasion of 1979 and the rule of Hun Sen until the peace process of the 1990s. Through all the turmoil, the Cambodian House of the CIUP stood as a sealed-off empty ruin and testimony to the suffering and crimes against humanity in Southeast Asia. Despite the civil war in Lebanon from 1975 to 1991, the Lebanese House of the CIUP managed to keep itself together as a place of dialogue. The Iranian government of the Shah constructed the Iranian

House in 1969 as a modernist statement by leading architects of the time, but this residency quickly became a hotbed of the Iranian opposition to the Shah. The Iranian government then gave up on this residency after a few years and handed it over to the CIUP, which renamed it the Fondation Avicenne. The CIUP is a showcase of national identity and aspiration, and many of the residencies are of high architectural value. The residencies of Brazil and Switzerland are designed by Le Corbusier and are protected as French cultural heritage. All residencies are, in their different ways, illustrations of the styles, cultures and societies of their sponsoring countries.

Let us now turn to the life inside the residencies. The first thing to notice about the residencies is that they select their residents, and in fact, the national residencies select from their home countries. However, after selecting their residents, they exchange half with other residencies to ensure mixing of nationalities, the so-called "brassage." In my discussion of life in the CIUP, I will focus on the Fondation Danoise, the "Danish Foundation" or the "Danish Students' House in Paris" as it is called in Danish, where I was a resident from October 2003 to July 2004, for some of the time together with my then future wife.

The Fondation Danoise was handed over to the University of Paris in 1929 by the Committee for the Danish Students' House in Paris. This committee was led by the CEO of the Tuborg Breweries, Benny Dessau. The committee raised the funds for this Danish residency from private sources and from the Danish state. This committee then formed the board of trustees of the Fondation Danoise. This board has funded the upkeep and operation of the residency ever since, through private donations and a subsidy from the Danish Ministry of Education (now from the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Higher Education).

The building is designed by the Danish architect and Royal Inspector of Buildings, Professor Kai Gottlob to showcase Danish architecture and design. The building is equipped with quality Danish design in furniture and fittings to be experienced by the foreign residents and visitors of the house. The Fondation Danoise is the venue of an active cultural calendar of music, literature and academic events organized by the director of the house and its residents. The Fondation Danoise gives its own residents, residents of the CIUP and of Paris access to some of the best jazz musicians Denmark has to offer. The house enjoys an artist's studio, which gives the residents direct access to any visiting Danish artist. In addition, the house is a venue for Danish authors and poets in Paris. I myself had the opportunity to meet the important contemporary Danish poet Ursula Andkjær Olsen there. Such a rich cultural and intellectual life takes place to a greater or lesser extent in all of the 40 residencies offering a privileged cultural and intellectual environment to the residents of the CIUP. In addition, it deserves mentioning that a number of the residencies have libraries for studying and for showcasing national media and literature. Previously, the communal meal was emphasized as a place of intercultural learning in the Oxford or Cambridge colleges. The kitchen and dining room of the individual CIUP residences together with the dining halls of the International House are places of

meeting across nationalities and fields of study. The "brassage" of mixing students from the various houses also ensures an intense intercultural learning.

Looking at the CIUP today, it is clear that the founding fathers, the academic Appell, the politician Honnorat and the philanthropists Deutsch de la Meurthe, Branet and David-Weill were successful and prescient in their vision of creating an international student city to bring together students, researchers and artists of the world to learn together for reconciliation and peace, although outside conflicts have sometimes spilled over into this world.

Summing Up Cambridge and CIUP: The Power of History and of Eating Together

In both the cases of Cambridge and the CIUP, it is clear that the young people there have privileged access to artistic, scientific, professional and political culture. We see the value of "living and breathing history and culture" and of a rich communal life where such basic things as bringing people together across age, nationality and disciplines to eat together is a powerful learning tool. Keeping in mind Verganti's suggestion that a strong cultural background and access to elite circles make individuals particularly suitable for participating in radical innovation processes, it is clear that the student experience in a Cambridge college or the CIUP is valuable.

UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING AT HARVARD COLLEGE (SOLINAP)

Freshman Year

When I first stepped onto campus as a seventeen-year-old college student, I was struck by how beautiful the campus was. I had never seen such impeccably adorned red brick buildings and antiquated cobblestone pathways. I grew up in Nogales, Arizona, a small town that touches the Mexico-U.S. border in the Sonoran desert. I had also spent a considerable amount of my childhood in the Visayan provinces of the Philippines. I had expected that Harvard was going to be a completely different world; however, I never could have predicted how different and distinct it would be.

On my first day as a freshman entering college, I was completely terrified. I was anxious that my classes were going to be too difficult for me. Although I did not know it at the time, these feelings of fear and insecurity were common to many newly admitted students. For many of us, we were handling a form of what is often termed as "imposter syndrome," the condition where someone does not feel accomplished despite having received affirmation of their own accomplishments. I knew that I had been accepted to Harvard and that the admissions officers did not make a mistake. My feelings, however, trumped my logical reasoning, and I felt as if my admittance had definitely been erroneous.

Thankfully, those feelings slowly dissipated as I began to know my freshman roommate and the other students in my "entryway," which comprised of 30 other Harvard freshmen all living in my residence, Hollis South. All the freshmen are required to live in one of 16 freshman residences ("dorms"). During those first few

days of orientation and getting settled, I was pleasantly surprised to meet people from all over the world: Peru, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, and Phoenix, Arizona, a two-hour car drive from my house. Along with the diversity of geographic hometowns, we all had a wealth of experiences, interests, and personalities. Throughout the first few weeks at Harvard, I experienced a flood of conversations with other students, as we were all trying to meet and get to know each other. Dialogues of all sorts – political, personal, and serious – abounded while waiting in line for food at lunch or engaging in a discussion during class hours. Most students here were extremely open about their thoughts and opinions which significantly contributed to almost every aspect of life on campus, inside and outside the classroom.

The freshman dorms lie along the perimeter of Harvard Yard, more commonly referred to as the Yard, the most central part of campus. Freshmen are lucky to get some of the best real estate at Harvard, in terms of location. The freshmen dining hall, Annenberg, the Science Center, Sander's Theater, and most classrooms are all easily located within a two-minute walk around the Yard. Despite the proximity of the buildings, freshman year is still a whirlwind. For me, the whole year was a period of getting accustomed to this new place and lifestyle. Freshmen enroll in four courses during their first semester. Even though students do not typically spend as many hours in class as they had done in high school, school work still took up a huge part of my time. Besides learning in class, there were many learning avenues that students could take outside the classroom to bolster their learning. First, all teaching professors had "office hours" which were hours every week where the professor must be available to students to talk about the material and chat about life. At first, I was completely intimidated to attend my professors' office hours but once I had attended a few times, I realized that the majority of my professors were extremely approachable and friendly. Additionally, they were interested in my own life and experiences. I was shocked that they genuinely cared about me. For my freshman seminar, the class of twelve students ended the semester with a home-cooked dinner at my professor's house. These types of close and meaningful relationships with professors and teaching assistants were common at Harvard.

Other ways of learning outside the classroom included attending academic events related to my own particular interests. There are numerous lectures by professors and guest speakers weekly. For example, I was able to listen to and meet Dr. James Watson, the world-famous Nobel laureate who co-discovered the structure of DNA, when he gave a talk in the Science Center about his discovery and later career. Additionally, to supplement my immigrant fiction writing class, I attended several discussions moderated by Pulitzer-prize winning author Junot Diaz, whose work I had read and written about. There were countless forums, lectures, and colloquia on a wide range of subjects that allowed students to meet and discuss with internationally recognized professors, scholars, politicians, and public figures.

During my freshman year, while deeply engaged in my studies, I also joined several school organizations, which was common for the majority of freshman. I regularly attended weekly meetings of RAZA, the organization that promotes Mexican

American culture on campus, Latinas Unidas, and the Harvard Philippine Forum. These meetings usually met once a week over dinner. Through these clubs, I met many upperclassmen and expanded my knowledge of campus past the boundaries of the Yard. These organizations regularly organized events that featured professors, national political activists, and local Cambridge and Boston community figures. For example, through the Harvard Philippine Forum, I was able to meet college-aged Filipinos throughout the greater Boston area through conferences and cultural shows we performed in and attended. One of my favorite events of the year was the show "Cultural Rhythms" put on by the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations, where about a dozen cultural groups on campus performed at Sanders Theatre and an award for Artist of the Year was granted. The performers reflected many cultures and traditions from around the globe, from Mariachi Veritas to the Asian American Dance troupe. During my freshman year, the Artist of the Year was musical artist Wyclef Jean, and other guests that have followed during my time here have been Shakira and John Legend. The first time I saw this show I was struck by the diversity of student groups on campus and how talented they were. Secondly, I was surprised by the kinds of people that participated in the cultural groups. There were people of all backgrounds in every piece, indicating that students here were encouraged to explore different cultures and experiences beyond their own. After four years, I have experienced and witnessed firsthand the numerous welcoming and inclusive cultural communities on campus.

In addition to these activities, I also sang in a co-ed *a capella* group, the Harvard-Radcliffe Veritones. My time with the musical group consisted of some of my most memorable experiences in college. Through the Veritones, I was able to learn about the other *a capella* groups on campus and I became aware of all the other musical and performance groups—the multitude of orchestras, theatrical productions, ensembles, and dance companies, to name a few. There are at least 20 student-led theatrical productions every semester.

As a freshman, I realized how inundated my schedule could become with events that I heard about through email, flyers, or friends. There was almost never an empty afternoon and evening without an event happening on campus. I quickly had to learn the importance of time management and prioritization. This was unlike any experience I had ever had before.

Upperclassmen

After freshman year, students move out of the Yard and are randomly assigned to live in one of the twelve upperclassmen houses. Freshmen choose a group consisting of two to eight people who they want to live with in the same house for the next three years called a "blocking" group. Together, the "blocking" group moves together to the new house to experience the completely new world of house life.

Of the twelve houses, I was placed in Currier house, which I immediately came to love. Currier house, like all other houses, has its own dining hall, gym, library,

common spaces, and music practice rooms. House life has been one of my best experiences at Harvard. Currier has come to feel like a home to me over the last three years. It has cultivated my own academic, social, and emotional development, while also fostering meaningful relationships with Harvard faculty members and mentors. Every house has a pair of housemasters, who are senior members of the faculty and their spouses, as well as academic deans, resident and non-resident tutors, creating an entire, intergenerational network of people that students can frequently talk to and ask advice from. As a member of the house system, I was able to partake in a dynamic and diverse community, from sunrise to sundown. In the houses, there were a range of activities and events. There were weekly speaker events where Harvard faculty members come and have dinner with a group of students. There were weekly teas, movie screenings, house masters' open houses, and study breaks. Every semester, students in the house could take field trips to various places in Boston such as Fenway Park, where I went my sophomore year for a Red Sox Game, and longer excursions such as hiking in New Hampshire for the day. My house provided me a smaller, more intimate part of the greater Harvard community.

Lastly, a wonderful aspect of the house life at Harvard is that each house is open to students from all houses. Students of one house can go to almost any other house and join friends for a meal or house event or study group anytime.

A Week at Harvard College as a Senior

Every week at Harvard was different, depending on special events, extracurricular activities, and schoolwork. Within the general scaffold of class, schoolwork, sleep, eating, and spending time with friends, a barrage of other activities quickly seeped into my schedule every week. The Harvard campus is lively and in constant motion. Depending on a student's particular social, academic, and extracurricular sphere, every student will have a unique experience on campus.

Let me guide you through one of my typical weeks at Harvard, emphasizing my time spent outside the classroom. On Monday afternoon, there was a public talk at Sanders Theater with Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook. She came to speak to the entire Harvard community on her beliefs about female leadership in the workplace. Later in the evening, there was a panel on global maternal health, where three prominent physicians in the field from Harvard Medical School shared their experiences. I want to be a physician in the future, so I usually tried to attend many medicine-related panels and lectures. On Tuesday evening, I was able to have a formal dinner in Currier with Dr. Sophia Roosth, one of my history of science professors. She shared stories with me about her college experience, passion for biotechnology, and time at Harvard. Every semester, Currier hosts a faculty dinner where students invite any faculty member at Harvard to a housemaster's reception and dinner. On Wednesday, I attended the Harvard Foundation's Albert Einstein Science Conference Luncheon where Dr. Lisa Randall was honored as the Scientist of the Year. I had always wanted to meet her, as she has been one of the leading physicists of our time,

and I enjoyed the chance to talk with her and hear her speak. On Thursday, I was one of six students who participated in a master class, organized by the Office for the Arts at Harvard, with renowned singer and actress Barbara Cook. As a singing student, I prepared two pieces to perform in front of her as well as a large audience. After my performance, she gave me comments on how to improve and grow as a singer. The experience was very difficult but extremely rewarding. It was an honor to meet her, as I had listened to her sing and had watched her films as a child. Throughout my four years at Harvard, I have been able to sit in the audience of other public classes with artists such as Lang Lang, Renée Fleming, and Yo-Yo Ma. Lastly, on Friday, I attended a dinner at the Institute of Politics to meet and discuss policy topics with the former president of Mexico Felipe Calderón. Although I am not very involved in political groups on campus, the Institute of Politics offers all students a multitude of opportunities to hear and question numerous political leaders around the globe.

Harvard Undergraduate Conclusion

When I look back on my four years here at Harvard, one of the best parts of life on campus has been the conversations and discussions I have had with people of all backgrounds, interests, and ages. As an undergraduate student, I have felt that the entire Harvard community not only opens its doors to its youngest members, but also really cares about them and engages with them. There are various communities to be a part of, including cultural, academic, artistic, career-oriented, and social organizations, in addition to the house community that the majority of upperclassmen enjoy and love. I often wish that I could live at Harvard without actually enrolling in classes—then I could perhaps attend even half of all the events I would like to in a given week. In my experience, the type of learning that goes on outside the classroom has been equally significant, rich, and diverse as the education I have received in the classroom.

MY EXPERIENCE IN TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY AND HARVARD UNIVERSITY (DAI)

Chinese people regard Tsinghua University as one of China's most renowned and selective universities, a university which has distinguished faculty members such as Nobel laureate Chen Ning Yang and influential alumni including current Chairman Xi Jinping and his predecessor, Chairman Hu Jintao. My experience in Tsinghua University started in the fall of 2004 when I enrolled as a graduate student in the Institute of International Studies (Then known as IIS, it was renamed Department of International Relations in December 2007). I spent seven years in the department where I obtained my MA and PhD degrees in International Relations.

Looking back on these years in Tsinghua, my first impression is the huge— (389.4 hectares)—and beautiful campus which combines Eastern and Western cultures. Tsinghua was established in 1911 on the site of a former royal garden of

the Qing Dynasty—"Tsinghua Garden." Surrounded by lotus ponds, luxuriant trees and arch bridges, many American-style buildings are placed in this classic Chinese garden because Tsinghua first functioned as a preparatory school for students who were sent by the government to study in the United States.

While the University has more than 100 years' history, research on International Relations is relatively young since Tsinghua restarted humanities research only in the 1990s. When I was studying at the Institute of International Studies (IIS) in 2004, it had been set up for only seven years, had seven faculty members and had approximately 20 students in total. It was easy to know every faculty member and student in the institute—I met all of them in a small conference room at the first seminar. The teachers and students were very close because we were a small family. The department provided an activity room for students located on the same floor as the faculty offices where we could use the desks and computers for free after class. A water cooler was also in the activity room so the teachers also came in frequently for hot water. Gradually, the activity room became a center for brain storming in the department. I remember how enjoyable it was to watch professors arguing academic and political issues while leaning against the water cooler with their teacups or coffee cups. Sometimes our director would rush into the room for a quick response to the article he was working on, and he would even find a listening ear at ten o'clock in the evening. We also had the monthly "Graduates Forum" for academic discussion in the department. The forum provided an excellent interaction between students and faculty and is made up of two graduate students as the presenters and a committee of experts containing three teachers at a time. Each presenter must submit an article to the committee at least two weeks before the forum and then give a thirty-minute talk in the forum. Rather than criticizing, the committee focuses on constructive feedback such as supplying related literature, providing study cases, completing research logic and offering suggestions in improving methods. Therefore, all the presenters and audience benefit from the comments and discussion, especially those who are preparing for their theses.

What is my most memorable experience in Tsinghua? The answer is the learning methodology in the department. The department places strong emphasis on the research methodology, especially conducting social scientific analysis and promoting statistics and correlation studies, although the study of International Relation's history and International Relation's theories has dominated in China for decades. Having written the first textbook about research methods in China, "Practical Research Methods for International Relations", Tsinghua is one of a very few Chinese universities which can provide a methodology course for post-graduates. I followed two courses: "International Relations Research Methods" and "Quantitative Analysis for International Relations" and they were my favorites. Students are encouraged to compare the advantages and disadvantages between traditional methods, for example, historical research, and scientific methods, for example, quantitative analysis. It helps us to choose the appropriate method for the specific research we are doing. Take, for instance, my master's thesis: I used the Least Square Method

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to calculate the correlation between Sino-US voting behavior in the United Nations General Assembly and their bilateral relations. In my PhD thesis, I adopted historical and quantitative methods to analyze the critical number of Small Arms and Light Weapons which could cause huge humanitarian disasters in Africa.

More importantly, I witnessed how the department spread social scientific methods to the young generation of China. The department founded an academic journal, *Science of International Politic*s, in order to encourage scholars to employ scientific experimental methods in their research; the department organizes many seminars and summer workshops to train more IR students in understanding social scientific methodology. However, doubts and misunderstandings are unavoidable. Social scientific methodology is new and controversial in the International Relations academy of China, and some scholars argue that the significance and reliability of scientific experimental methods are questionable. In a conference held by the department several years ago, a guest speaker asked our director, "Why do we need methods from Western countries? We should use our own methods to understand our own issues." Methodology has no nationality. Through years of effort, the department has made significant progress in the areas of social science research and education. Tsinghua has established an ever-growing social scientific research-based course system. "Practical Research Methods for International Relations" is a recommended text by the Ministry of Education for all graduate students in China.

In the spring of 2009, I studied as a research fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs in the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University for six months. Many people are impressed by the frequency and high quality of the seminars held by the Kennedy School, and so am I. The seminars show the robust relationship between the Kennedy School and the leading practitioners of political issues in the world, and it makes Harvard an indicator of the latest developments in US foreign policy. For example, the project of Managing the Atom in Belfer Center organized a workshop about nuclear security in March 2009. The participants concluded that nuclear terrorism would be the biggest threat to the security of the world and the international community should focus on combating smuggling of nuclear materials in the future. A few weeks later, President Obama called for the construction of a nuclear-free world in order to prevent terrorists obtaining nuclear weapons in the historical speech in Prague. In comparison, the international relations students in Tsinghua have fewer opportunities to gain access to the policy makers since our speakers primarily come from the academia.

The reason for the difference is the "revolving door" between academia and government in the United States. Many senior government officials are hired by think tanks and universities after they leave office and are engaged in policy research and public consulting. It also works in reverse. Scholars from think tanks and universities have the chance to be appointed to government positions and take part in policy decision-making. Therefore, policy makers and academic researchers are closely connected in America. In contrast, the "revolving door" does not exist in

the current political system in China, with government officials rarely returning to the research arena.

The six-month experience at the Kennedy School opened my mind and also inspired me to think deeply about the cultures of Harvard and Tsinghua. The Kennedy School trains student to lead at domestic and international levels, whether it be in the private, public or non-profit sector, while Tsinghua educates students with integrity and the spirit of "actions speak louder than words". However, both schools believe they have the responsibility to advance the public interest. According to the Dean of the Kennedy School of Government, the School is "inspired by John F. Kennedy's famous call to service: "Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country", and "our mission is to train exceptional public leaders and generate the ideas that provide solutions to our most challenging public problems." Coincidentally, just as we read in the slogan "working with vigor for the motherland for 50 years", Tsinghua also calls students to devote themselves to the construction of our country and especially encourages graduates to work in the less-developed and grassroots regions in the western regions where the country needs the most development.

Tsinghua Conclusion: Rapid Development of Chinese International Relations

Looking back at the seven-year learning experience in Tsinghua University, I have witnessed the rapid development of the Department of International Relations and the University. The students have sufficient chances to discuss with and learn from the teachers after class in the activity room and in the "graduate forum" since we are such a close family. Besides studying the most advanced methodology in academic research, I have also greatly benefitted from the department's experience of spreading social scientific methods among the young generation of China. My six-month experience in Harvard allowed me to attend many high-level discussions with policy practitioners and to think deeply about the cultures of Harvard and Tsinghua. While Tsinghua is deeply affected by the "humble spirit" of Chinese culture, Tsinghua and Harvard both believe they have the responsibility to advance the public interest.

CONCLUSION: "LEARNING, WHEN YOU ARE NOT LEARNING"—EXCELLENCE AND OUTREACH AT THE UNIVERSITY

Verganti argues in *Design-Driven Innovation* that personal culture and access to elite interpreters of the world are important for being innovative. This argument highlights the less tangible qualities of learning at some leading academic institutions. In this essay, we have outlined how young people at Cambridge, CIUP, Harvard and Tsinghua have privileged access to artistic, scientific, professional and political culture. These institutions are known for tangible and quantifiable characteristics, which is at the basis of their high rankings. However, it was our belief that some of their strengths lie in informal "learning, when you are not learning" experiences outside the classroom.

Our observations and analysis of these institutions suggest that a key to their success is a combination of a pursuit of scientific excellence, which is at the basis of their high rankings, along with outreach and engagement with society. It is essential that basic scientific research and public engagement are not in contradiction. The universities' engagement with society is at the core of our argument. Cambridge (and Oxford) cultivates a college culture where young talent and senior experience across nationality, sector of society and scientific field are brought into dialogue in the dining hall. Living in the CIUP is like living 1900s world history while being exposed to culture, art, architecture and society and from living with a global mix of fellow students, artists and scholars. Harvard College offers and encourages intense engagement with different cultures as well as arts, science and society in parallel and support of formal education. Tsinghua is a front-runner in Chinese science and enjoys a central position in Chinese society, which offers its students a privileged access to science and society at the highest level.

Comparison with Continental European and Nordic universities with high quality formal research, teaching and examination, highlights the relative lack of informal learning as seen at Cambridge, CIUP, Harvard and Tsinghua. Describing this informal learning encourages the consideration of adopting it at other institutions. It is clear that particularly Harvard has financial resources of an order far from other universities even in the developed world. These resources make it possible for Harvard to attract and sponsor the activities at the highest level, as described above. However, it is also clear that the activities mentioned are much a matter of thinking. It is a matter of taking informal learning seriously through encouraging and facilitating the encounter of students and junior and senior faculty members as well as with key actors in society. Such encounters are particularly valuable to underprivileged and foreign students.

Universities can be meeting places of different actors in society such as those from business, government, culture, civil society and politics. The universities described in this paper take this role seriously. They seek to be central venues of debate either at the dining hall table, in the seminar room or in the auditorium about pressing questions of society, culture or politics. As such, they give their students opportunities to develop their artistic, scientific, professional and political culture and networks. Other universities should consider this role as spaces of encounter and dialogue, especially for the sake for underprivileged and foreign students.

It is also clear that Cambridge, CIUP, Harvard and Tsinghua are places of privilege. Their students often come from backgrounds of privilege and due to this education are very likely to remain privileged. The artistic, scientific, professional and political culture displayed at these institutions are also usually of privilege. In fact, many of these young people simply gain even better access to the walks of life which they come from and where they will continue. Universities should also work to bring marginalized and underprivileged sectors of society and the world into the conversation. Such diversity would *truly* broaden the culture of many of these young people.

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This paper also brought out distinct learning experiences in leading universities at two different stages of development. Being relatively young and an emerging international leading actor, Tsinghua University has learned from other leading universities in the world to develop its unique approach. In the past thirty years of rapid economic growth in China, Tsinghua has actively interacted with society by leading the way to novel technologies and methodologies. The experience gained by students in this stage of development may cultivate their ability, determination and courage, since the implementation of the most advanced technologies, theories, and methodologies in a rapidly developing society often occur while debating pre-existing concepts. Meanwhile, deeply affected by the "humble spirit" in the Chinese culture, Tsinghua follows the motto of "actions speak louder than words," and educates students to be practical and modest. The other universities discussed in this chapter, which have existed for hundreds of years, are the most established academic institutions in the world. They have a mature exchange mechanism with society, an active role in engaging with high-level politics, and a strong social ability to question and debate. The students in these universities benefit much from such exposure. In summary, the leading universities at both stages of development provide their students with opportunities to "learning, when you [they] are not learning".

NOTES

[1] We thank Mads Jakob Kirkebæk for crystallizing our message in this phrase.

[2] The authors also wish to thank Dr. Kevin Matulef for his valuable input and discussion. Matulef did his undergraduate degree at Brown University, a Part III in mathematics in Churchill College, University of Cambridge, his PhD at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his first postdoc at Tsinghua University. He is currently a postdoctoral fellow at Aarhus University.

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MADS JAKOB KIRKEBÆK, XIANG-YUN DU &
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11. CONTEXT AS THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY

The Contribution of Context to Teaching & Learning of Culture

INTRODUCTION

The chapters in this volume fully illustrate that "culture is not taught in a vacuum or learned in isolation" (Kirkebæk, Du & Jensen, chapter 1 this volume). The teaching and learning of culture may be influenced by many factors both inside and outside the classroom. Meanwhile, culture influences the context and may be considered either a threat or an opportunity.

Context as Threat

In the Danish education field a strong component of teacher identity can be coined in the phrase, "my classroom is my castle and my subject is my treasure.[1]" Danish teachers have freedom of choice in teaching methods, they select teaching materials themselves, and traditionally, they plan, conduct, and evaluate their own teaching with very little intervention from school and national authorities. This high degree of freedom and autonomy may at least partly explain why some teachers, in the authors' experience, consider influences from outside the classroom as potential threats and interdisciplinarity as highly overrated. These teachers, here termed "the teaching purists," tend to keep their classes and subjects as insulated and isolated as possible and in fact de-contextualised. One often heard argument is that because classroom time is already limited, there is not time to focus on anything outside the main subject area. Another argument is that interdisciplinarity may confuse students and disturb their acquisition of the primary subject.

Context as Opportunity

Another, and seemingly, growing number of teachers, we term them "the teaching pragmatists" also use limited class hours as an argument, but as opposed to the teaching purists, they use it as an argument for closer coordination and cooperation between teachers, subjects, and classes. Because lessons are few, it is, on the one hand, essential to avoid overlaps and unnecessary repetition in different classes. Meanwhile it is also necessary to integrate and create meaningful contextualisation

of subjects by building on each other's lessons in order to secure the fastest possible progress.

The teaching pragmatists do not believe that interdisciplinarity and simultaneous teaching of more than one subject during class will affect students' primary subject acquisition in any negative way. They see drawing clear borderlines between subjects neither as an aim nor as a real possibility. They argue that noting similarities and differences between already known subjects and new ones may help and support acquisition.

The positions of teaching purists and teaching pragmatists correspond to the positions of those who advocate a descriptive or a complex view of culture (see chapter 2 and Jensen (2007) for an elaborate discussion of the two views). A descriptive view of culture sees it as something fixed, stable and very slow-changing; on the other hand, a complex view of culture sees culture as something in a state of constant flux, created and negotiated between individuals within different social contexts. The studies in this volume may be used to argue that neither teaching, learning, nor cultures are fixed entities that can remain or be understood in isolation. Teaching, learning, and culture, as well as the teaching and learning of culture, are all deeply embedded in social, economic, political, and cultural contexts.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE NEXT?

The Need to Explore How Context May Contribute to Teaching and Learning of Culture

In this volume, we have articulated and elucidated five factors that may influence teaching and learning of culture, and we encourage teachers to consider each of them when planning, conducting, and reflecting on their teaching. These factors are their views on (1) globalization and culture, (2) how they conceive of culture, (3) their teaching and learning approaches, (4) how they handle the teacher-student relationship, and (5) creating a supportive learning environment.

The remaining question is what we ought to do next. If, as the conducted studies strongly indicate, influences from inside and outside the classroom cannot – and should not – be eliminated from the teaching and learning of culture, we should not try to avoid or limit these influences, but instead investigate and explore how they may be integrated into and used constructively in the teaching and learning of culture. In this way, teachers, students, subjects, and context may be allowed to enrich each other and enter into a fruitful dialogue, play together, and cooperate to achieve the established goal: Acquisition of cultural awareness and intelligence. However, before this desire can be translated into action, we must readily face the five challenges outlined below.

FIVE REMAINING CHALLENGES

Challenge One: Context as Opportunity, not as Threat

The first challenge is to convince teachers and students that context gives additional opportunities for learning and should not be viewed as a threat to teaching and learning of culture. Context is not an obstacle, but constitutes an important resource that teaching and learning may benefit from. Resources may take different forms, including other courses and subjects, informal learning environments, students' cultural heritage, and more.

Challenge Two: Helping Teachers Cooperate More

The second challenge is encouraging teachers to cooperate more often and effectively. In Danish primary schools, a decision was made that all teachers should work in teams. It was a decision taken by the central government, and in the beginning, many teachers participated in the obligatory team-meetings more because they had to than because they believed they could benefit from them. However, the initial doubts and suspicion about working in teams has gradually been replaced by a more positive attitude, and today most primary school teachers are happy to prepare, conduct and evaluate teaching in teams. A similar development can be observed in Danish high schools and – at a slower pace – at Danish universities.

Challenge Three: Examinations that Fit an Interdisciplinary Approach

The third challenge is to make examinations fit the interdisciplinary approach. When teachers work in teams and coordinate and cooperate closely across subjects and classes, it must be reflected in the examinations. If course integration and interdisciplinarity is the focus in the classroom, it would be a paradox if students continued to be examined in the individual subjects. If the goal of the classroom is to prepare students for real-life work after graduation, then teaching should reflect many disciplines.

Challenge Four: A Need to Create an Informal Learning Environment

The fourth challenge is to create an informal learning environment. At Danish universities, semesters are relatively short and lack of time makes it crucial to create an informal learning environment that supplements the formal teaching and learning in the classroom and supports students' independent and peer-learning processes. Aalborg University, Denmark, is a problem-based learning (PBL) university as described in more detail in chapter 4 and Du (2012). The PBL approach to learning means that all teaching is conducted in the first ten weeks of a semester. Thereafter, students do projects on their own, supported by a supervisor. For the teaching and

learning of languages and other subjects as well, this structure poses a challenge because it results in long teaching gaps between semesters. In order to bridge these gaps and make it possible for students to reach the learning goals, it is important to create and support an informal learning environment outside the classroom. As described in chapter 10, this informal learning environment could take many forms, including seminars, workshops, lectures and different social activities open for all students at the university.

Challenge Five: Make Teachers Feel Ownership of a Study Program,
Not Only a Subject

The final challenge is to make teachers feel ownership, not only of their own courses, but of the whole program they are a part of. China Area Studies at Aalborg University can be used to illustrate how this may be done. The program consists of four two-semester courses in Chinese civics, Chinese culture, written Chinese studies, and oral Chinese studies. Until recently, the different courses have been run very independently even though it should have been quite obvious that they would have benefitted from cooperating and coordinating with each other. In order to remedy this situation, the teachers have now set up a team and decided on a number of themes that will be part of all four courses. One of the themes is called human relations. In oral Chinese, students work with greetings, and in written Chinese, they write greetings and introductions and closing letters. In Chinese culture, the cultural meanings of different greetings are analyzed and discussed, and in Chinese civics, human relations in China are put into a broader historical, social, political, and economic context. Therefore, the different courses support and benefit from each other, and the students are able to experience a higher degree of coherence and progression. Another goal of the new course structure is that it nurtures a sense of ownership of the whole program among the teachers.

IN CLOSING

The power of context in teaching and learning culture is strong. The context may be invisible and hide itself as tacit knowledge, taboos, non-formulated beliefs and embedded values, or it may be very visible and present itself as a study guideline, an examination requirement, parents' expectations, and more. No matter what form the context has, the studies in this volume more than indicate that it is essential to be aware of the power of context in teaching and learning culture in order to understand it and to be able to negotiate it.

The studies further indicate that influences of context cannot – and should not – be avoided. An important and remaining task is to investigate and explore ways to have context contribute to the teaching and learning of culture. Even though, as Fred Dervin reminds us in the foreword, we should "always bear in mind that othering is an international 'sin' of which we are all guilty" (Dervin, 2012, here cited

from foreword), we should still allow ourselves to have the intention of creating a learning environment that does not distinguish and build up contrasts, but – on the contrary – avoids comparison and takes communalities and similarities between teachers, students, subjects and contexts as a starting point for future teaching and learning of culture.

NOTE

[1] This and the following section elaborate on a discussion in Kirkebæk (2013).

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