THE ACQUISITION OF LITERACY IN CHINESE
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CASE OF ADULTS
OF CHINESE ORIGIN IN ITALY

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ABSTRACT

The number of Chinese people who live in Europe has been rising constantly during the past 30 years. The large majority of them come from Southern China, and their adjustment to life in the European countries has engendered research questions on their settlement, on their relationship with the local people, habits, and rules, as well as on the education of their children.

My thesis focuses on the issue of the teaching of Chinese written language to adult learners of Chinese origin settled in Italy. It points to the devising of a viable teaching method through the analysis of the answers to three relevant questions: 1. Who are the learners to whom the Chinese written language teaching methodology is addressed? 2. Why would they need and benefit from such a teaching methodology? 3. How is the teaching of Chinese written language to be made viable and effective to adult learners of Chinese origin who live in Italy?

The first two questions are dealt with in the first part of the research. In Chapter 1, I outline the history of Chinese migration movements towards Europe, and describe the circumstances and features of Chinese settlement in the UK and in Italy. Chapter 2 explores language use within the communities. It takes into account language as a marker of identity and language proficiency as an asset, by referring to the position of Mandarin within the community as well as at a transnational level. Chapter 3 focuses on literacy, on its definition, and on the way different definitions may apply to languages with different writing systems, with a focus on Chinese written language and the features which mostly affect literacy acquisition in Chinese.

The second part centers on the third question and is articulated into two chapters. In Chapter 4, I analyse the methods in use in four different teaching contexts: Chinese primary schools, Western universities, week-end classes for Chinese children in the UK and in Italy, and adult education in China. I substantiate my analysis with the results of the fieldwork I carried out in China, Great Britain and Italy. The four contexts are taken as a reference for selecting among the teaching devices and discussing their effectiveness as related to the features of each context. In Chapter 5, I describe the case of adult learners of Chinese origin in Italy. I choose among the selected devices those which better apply to the study case, and discuss the principles according to which these devices suit the study case features. The final part of Chapter 5 consists of a sample of a teaching approach that is likely to work for the study case. I select content and illustrate how to teach it according to the principles derived from my previous analysis.

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我手写我口

"My hands write as I say with my mouth"

黄遵宪, 1868[1]

INTRODUCTION

<u>Rationale</u>

The teaching of literacy in Chinese is a topic of increasing research interest. A growing number of Western students are approaching the study of the Chinese language, both spoken and written forms. Literacy standards in Mainland China are being defined with more specific requirements, and larger and larger numbers of the Chinese population are being encouraged to attain them. Literacy in Chinese is also a matter of great concern among the Chinese communities overseas.

In Italy, as has been the case for other European countries before, policies for the regulation of non-EU immigrants' language education generally focus on the more urgent need to teach the local language. Classes for the teaching of Italian to native speakers of non-EU languages are available in many cities all over Italy. And lately an increasing number of Chinese people have begun to take advantage of such provisions. Yet, the focus of my work is the case of the learners of Chinese origin who were born and educated overseas, who therefore have had the chance to learn Italian with their peers while attending mainstream education. I refer to this group of learners as the "second generation", as does the relevant research literature.

Through my work experience as a cultural mediator between Italian institutions and the Chinese community, and thanks to my growing familiarity with the history and features of the Chinese communities settled in Italy, I have gained some positive insights into the usefulness of research work focused on the teaching of Chinese written

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[1] The line by Huang Zunxian is quoted in CHEN Ping (1999) *Modern Chinese*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 70

language to the sons and daughters of overseas Chinese.

I chose to refer to the case of adult learners. As a matter of fact attempts to provide literacy teaching to young pupils of Chinese origin are already being implemented and tested, mainly as a result of the combined efforts of single members and associations of the Chinese community itself. But these classes, usually referred to as "Sunday School classes", fail to reach a large number of children in the community. This is often a matter of location: on the one hand Sunday School classes are not held in every city, town, or area where the Chinese have settled; on the other, the Chinese community itself has a remarkable mobility, in the sense that its members keep moving from one centre to another mainly according to the work opportunities available. The pool of students therefore frequently changes. And the pool of teachers keeps changing as well. Some of the schools have the chance to appoint Chinese language teachers with an appropriate professional background. But some have not, and the volunteered services of a student or other member of the community with no teaching experience may turn out to have no positive effect in the teaching activities. An additional problem relates to the teaching material in use. Many Sunday School classes refer to primary school language textbooks in use in Mainland China, either because these are the textbooks that the Embassy provides, or because few attempts at a different teaching approach have been brought forward, and there is therefore only a limited sample of alternative teaching material available. Finally, the response of the students themselves needs to be mentioned. I cannot provide precise data, but the impression I gathered from my acquaintances within the community may suffice as an indicator: Sunday School classes can be a good occasion for small children of Chinese origin to meet each other and spend some time together, just as they can be an equally good and convenient opportunity for parents who need to work over the weekend as well, and are therefore happy to leave their children in the schools. But children in their teens, who attend mainstream education classes all through the week, hardly look forward to taking classes also during the weekend. Moreover, they have friends outside the Chinese community, and grow more and more interested in the possibility of identifying with the local community, its language, and its habits. Their interest in the Chinese language and its "complicated" writing system lessens as they do not see its function and applicability in the world they belong to.

Motivation then is the crux of the matter. And motivation seems to increase in adulthood, together with the awareness of the positive outcomes of acquiring literacy in

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Chinese. And it increases faster and grows stronger if learners refer to their heritage culture and language as a useful foundation on which to build this knowledge.

Structure of the work

The study of Chinese language teaching poses many questions, the most relevant of which have to do with three fundamental factors: the learner, his or her objectives, and the environment in which the teaching takes place.

My research investigates the topic of literacy teaching in Chinese. I am mainly concerned with the case of learners of Chinese origin in Italy, but I also refer to the experiences of the Chinese communities settled in other European countries for comparison.

The work is divided into two parts. The first part provides a background and a framing structure to the overall study, and consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 includes an outline of the history and development of Chinese migration movements towards Europe. My description is based on the information derived from the review of the existing relevant literature, which besides providing me with models for the description, also focuses my attention on the research problems related to the topic, i.e. the reliability of data and the necessity to distinguish the different historical and social backgrounds while making comparisons among different countries. I then shift the focus to the Chinese settlement in the UK and in Italy, with major attention to its late development. In Chapter 2 I extend my investigation of the overseas Chinese communities to the study of the languages in use by its members. I examine the position and role these languages hold by referring to the ways and milieus in which they are used, and I describe those migration circumstances which mostly affect the acquisition and maintenance of literacy in Chinese within the community. In Chapter 3, I introduce the case of literacy. First I refer to the general definition of literacy and I discuss the way it applies to different languages with different writing systems. Then I broach the case of the Chinese written language. I describe its outstanding features through a comparison with alphabetic writing systems, and I ponder the impact of these differences on the definition of literacy standards in Chinese.

In the second part of the work I refer to the teaching of Chinese written language. Chapter 4 includes a survey of four different teaching contexts: language

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education in primary schools in China, Chinese course programmes in Western universities, week-end classes for Chinese children in the UK and in Italy, and adult literacy education in China. I describe the features of each context, examine the teaching programmes, and discuss the teaching devices in use. I substantiate my analysis with the results of the fieldwork I have carried out in China, Great Britain and Italy. In Chapter 5 I discuss the study case, the case of adult learners of Chinese origin in Italy. First I describe it as a hypothetical teaching context. The majority of the Chinese second generation are young, and there is therefore no relevant number of adult learners to be taken as a sample. Then I refer to the teaching context features and compare them with the other four teaching contexts. The aim of this comparison is to refer to the teaching devices applied in the four contexts, and discuss their applicability and effectiveness in the teaching of learners who have different age, different purposes, and different background knowledge, or who live and study in a different language environment. Since I have to refer to the study case as a hypothetical teaching context, I necessarily need to come to terms with assumptions. Reference to the other teaching contexts, then, is not only the source for generating questions on teaching methods and devices, but it also makes the grounds for ascertaining the effects of their implementation through comparisons. My research work can then fulfil the undertaking of formulating the basic guiding principles for devising a specific methodology for literacy teaching in the study case context. These principles are illustrated and discussed in the final part of Chapter 5.

Research methods

My investigation is carried out with a qualitative research approach. The qualitative approach aims at the understanding of a phenomenon, its main goal being to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation and thoughtful analysis of the research topic.[1]

A major problem I confronted in my study relates to its interdisciplinary nature. "Chinese" is the key word that connects the different fields of investigation I deal with: Chinese migration movements to Europe, Chinese written language, Chinese language

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[1] MAYKUT, P.; MOREHOUSE, R. (1994) *Beginning qualitative research*. London, The Falmer Press, p. 21

teaching methods. One important task in the initial part of my work is to provide a frame in which the connections among the different fields of investigation are made clear. Each topic is approached through an overview of the relevant literature first, while diverse survey methods are chosen and adopted successively according to the needs of the research.[1] I refer to the studies of the history of Chinese migratory movements towards Europe and detect differences and similarities of their impact on different countries. Similarly, I refer to the reports and analyses of Chinese settlements and detect an uneven amount of available data which depends on both push and pull factors of these migratory movements. In my report on the history and features of the Chinese settlement in Italy, I substantiate and supplement the information derived from literature with additional information gathered through interviews with members of the Chinese community and with staff of associations that work with and for the Chinese community in Italy. The main reason for choosing informal interviews for this part of the study is the possibility to reach people through personal acquaintances within the community. Introducing myself and the aims of my research also gave me the possibility of establishing further contacts within the community, and with other organizations and informants involved with it.

Literature provides more articulated information for the study and description of the Chinese written language. Yet differences in views among researchers appear already in the definition of Chinese writing itself. In my brief account of these differences I ponder the way these views seem to affect the views on Chinese literacy teaching and maintenance as compared to the teaching of languages ruled by an alphabetic writing system. Such views are then briefly examined with reference to the case of overseas Chinese who live in Italy, together with a discussion of the way their migration history and settlement in a foreign country may have affected literacy attainments in Chinese.

"The data for qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour".[2] It is in the central part of my work, i.e. the investigation of the teaching methods in different teaching contexts, that this kind of data becomes most necessary. The investigation is carried out primarily through questionnaires for teachers in each

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[1] BLACK, Thomas R. (1993) *Evaluating social science research: an introduction.* London, Sage Publications, p. 1
[2] MAYKUT, P.; MOREHOUSE, R. (1994) *op. cit.*, p. 21

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context. I view questionnaires as the most suitable tool for data collection in this part of the study. Questionnaires for teachers of the four different contexts all have the same structure, which makes it easier to compare the information gathered through the teachers' answers. As for contacts with the teachers and investigation of the teaching methods used in China, the questionnaire format allows concomitant distribution over different areas, and therefore enables the collection of more data in a shorter time than do interviews.[1] The topic investigated is intrinsic to the respondents' interest: teachers are asked to provide information relating to their field of activity. Therefore, once the aims of the questionnaire are made clear in its introduction, the questionnaire allows the gathering of information without need for the researcher to provide further explanation of the intent or the meaning of each question. Moreover, the questionnaire adapts to the general conditions with which fieldwork needed to comply in China. As the basic tool of investigation, it was submitted for approval by the staff of the local bureaux of the Commission of Education, who were then able to refer me to schools, teachers and, in turn, to other local bureaux.

Additionally, I scheduled a plan for direct observation of class teaching, both during my fieldwork in China and during the fieldwork in Great Britain and Italy. Data collection and analysis have therefore developed together, and direct observation has made it possible to gather evidence of the implementation of different teaching devices in specific teaching contexts. The overall arrangement of investigation has resulted in the definition of the phenomenon to be explained: effectiveness of the study of Chinese written language depends on the way the teaching adapts to the teaching context.

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[1] OPPENHEIM, A. N. (1992) *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement.* London, Continuum (New Edition), p. 102

LITERATURE REVIEW

As a work of an interdisciplinary nature, my research draws from studies in different fields. The literature I referred to allowed me to gather data and information, but it also provided me with paradigms and theories to develop and shape my own work. Although all the reading contributed to my knowledge, only some of the sources were a major reference for my work, where I agreed or disagreed with the views of the authors.

Following is a presentation of the most salient literature for each of the fields of study covered by my research work. Sources are grouped under topical headings, arranged according to the order in which topics are discussed throughout the work. It is mainly a matter of consistency and clarity motivated by the belief that the knowledge and familiarity a researcher gains through the study of certain subjects make it easier for him or her to extend his or her investigation to other subjects.

While reviewing the literature I also describe my approach to each topic by discussing the position of those scholars whose work has had a major impact on my research.

Migration

I explored the topic of migration from a wide perspective first, in order to tackle major changes and trends which have taken place during the twentieth century. Being mainly interested in the present situation in Europe, I paid most attention to the studies which focus on its recent history,[1] and aimed at the gathering of information on the way

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[1] DELLE DONNE, M.; MELOTTI, U.; PETILLI, S. (Editors) (1993) *Immigrazione in Europa: solidarietà e conflitto*. Dipartimento di Sociologia, Università di Roma "La Sapienza" CEDISS - Centro

"guest workers" migration has turned into permanent or long lasting migration, on the increased number of the countries where migration towards Europe originate, and on the events following which extra-European countries have become the leading source of massive migration flows to some countries of Europe which had barely experienced anything of the sort previously.[1]

I then turned my attention to the case of Italy, for which I referred to reports on the numbers of entries from extra-EU countries (such as the annual reports of the *Immigration Dossier*[2]). I studied the impact of recent domestic migration policies formulated and enforced in Italy and sought to achieve a better understanding of it through comparisons with the situation in other European countries.[3]

My view was inspired by the new current of studies which sees host countries' policies as a dominant factor in determining the incorporation pattern of immigrant communities (Soysal; Kastoryano),[4] following which I studied Chinese migration movements to Europe, by referring to both push and pull factors.

I explored Chinese migration movements both within and outside the borders of China. I drew information from the growing number of studies published during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Research has taken advantage of contributions based on fieldwork and data gathering carried out both in China and overseas in the attempt to provide answers and formulate new, better defined questions relating to the causes, the patterns and the consequences of mass migration movements of people of Chinese origins.

Among the works on which I relied most is the book edited by Frank Pieke and Hein Mallee in 1999.[5] The book is a collection of essays presented in the workshop "European Chinese and Chinese Internal Migration" held in Oxford in 1996, which was intended to promote interaction among researchers in the two fields of Chinese internal migration and Chinese emigration. My attention was caught in particular by the special

di Scienze Sociali; CESARANI, D. and FULBROOK, M. (1996) *Citizenship, nationality and migration in Europe*. London and New York, Routledge

[1] CALVANESE, F. "Nuovi modelli migratori: il caso italiano" in: DELLE DONNE, M.; MELOTTI, U.; PETILLI, S. (Editors) (1993) *op. cit.*

[2] CARITAS *Immigrazione: dossier statistico*. Anterem, Roma

[3] (GORDON, P. and KLUG, F (1985) *British immigration control: a brief guide*. London, Runnymede Trust; MACDONALD, Ian A. (1995) *Immigration law and practice in the United Kingdom*. London, Butterworths; OPCS (1996) *Ethnicity in the 1991 census* - Volume two. London, HMSO; Official Statistics of Sweden (1983) *Immigration and immigrant teaching in Sweden*. Stockholm, Statistics Sweden

[4] SOYSAL, Yasemine N. (1994) *Limits of citizenship: migrants and post-national membership in Europe*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago; KASTORYANO, R. (1986) *Etre Turc en France: reflexions sur familles et communaute*. Paris, C.I.E.M.I. l'Harmattan

[5] PIEKE, Frank. N. and MALLEE, Hein (Editors) (1999) *Internal and international migration. Chinese perspectives*. Surrey, Curzon Press.

focus on the Chinese migration movements originating from Zhejiang (Part II of the book "Zhejiang migrants in Europe and China"), which included studies about the features of that province, its history, and life within it, which may have worked as valuable assets for the establishment and regeneration of successful migration patterns towards Europe (migration chains, recruitment among kin groups and families, and capital participation, as discussed in the essays by Mette Thunø,[1] Xiang Biao,[2] and Luigi Tomba).[3]

My study of Chinese migration movements was fed also by articles published in the *International Migration Review*, in *Hommes et Migrations*, and in the *Revue des Migrations Internationales*. While the monographic issue of the *Revue des Migrations Internationales*[4] proposed a general overview of the Chinese diaspora and some of its communities in Europe, the articles I chose from the other two journals were specifically focused on two relevant issues: the extent and character of the distribution of overseas Chinese in the world,[5] and the people's movement in and from Zhejiang province.[6]

Overseas Chinese

The growing interest in overseas Chinese as a research topic is witnessed by the increased number of conferences which have successfully called for the participation of researchers from China, the United States, Europe, and some East Asian countries where Chinese settlements have longer history. These conferences stimulated various types of comparative approaches outlined and discussed in subsequent collections of essays by their organizers and/or editors.

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[1] THUNØ Mette: "Moving stones from China to Europe: The dynamics of emigration from Zhejiang to Europe" in: PIEKE, Frank. N and MALLEE, Hein (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 159

[2] XIANG Biao: "Zhejiang village in Beijing: Creating a visible non-state space through migration and marketized network" in: PIEKE, Frank. N and MALLEE, Hein (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 215

[3] TOMBA, Luigi: "Exporting the 'Wenzhou model' to Beijing and Florence: Labour and economic organization in two migrant communities" in: PIEKE, Frank. N and MALLEE, Hein (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 280

[4] MA MUNG, Emmanuel (Editor) (1992) *Revue des Migrations Internationales*, vol. 8, n.3 (Collected articles on the Chinese diaspora in Western countries)

[5] POSTON, Dudley L. Jr. and YU Mei-Yu (1990) "The distribution of the Overseas Chinese in the contemporary world" in: *International Migration Review*, vol. 24, n. 3, pp. 480 - 508; LIVE, Yu-sion (1993) "Chine-diaspora: vers l'integration à l'economie mondiale" in *Hommes et Migrations*, 1165, May, pp. 39 - 43

[6] YANG Xiushi and GOLDSTAIN, Sydney (1990) "Population movement in Zhejiang Province, China: the impact of government policies" in *International Migration Review*, vol. 24, n. 3, pp. 509 - 533

The value of the work edited by Wang Ling-chi and Wang Gungwu,[1] the work edited by Elizabeth Sinn,[2] and the work edited by Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini[3] lies in the fact that they all contributed to the strengthening of "Chinese overseas" as a field of study which draws from the work of scholars from different disciplines. The selection of essays collected in the two books represents the taking of new steps towards the broadening of the research field via a discussion of the common and different traits of old and new migration waves from China. Some of the articles are innovative in terms of content, for they explore areas of migration which had not been explored before. Some break new ground in the research by turning the focus on the themes of identity and transnationality, and by discussing them along new comparative and methodological approaches.

Identity and transnationality

In the collection of essays edited by Elizabeth Sinn the contributors' attention is centered on the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore the focus of their work is on new migrants, new destinations, and new patterns of migration and settlement. The articles are arranged into seven sections, along with thematic and geographical classification. The article by Emmanuel Ma Mung, "Groundlessness and Utopia: the Chinese Diaspora and Territory", included in the first section of the book, addresses the paradox of distance and cohesion among overseas Chinese communities. Ma Mung engages in a definition of all diasporas as having two objective morphological characteristics: the multipolarity of the migration - along with the basic definition of a diaspora (dispersion) -, and the interpolarity of the relations - an interpolarity which includes not only the ties maintained by the conventional contemporary migration with the country of origin, but also those existing between the various parts of the diaspora. Ma Mung's attempt to describe the nature of the Chinese diaspora is intriguing. He maintains that, although a considerable risk is involved in seeking for too comprehensive generalizations due to the diversity of situations encountered by the Chinese of the diaspora, a certain number of common characteristics can be pointed out,

[1] WANG Ling-chi and WANG Gungwu (Editors) (1998) *The Chinese diaspora. Selected essays.* Singapore, Times Academic Press
[2] SINN Elizabeth (Ed) (1998) *The Last Half century of Chinese Overseas.* Hong Kong, Kong Kong University Press
[3] ONG A. and NONINI, D. M. (Editors) (1997) *Ungrounded Empires: the Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism.* New York and London, Routledge

the most evident being an overrepresentation of the population involved in business-owning activities, and, likewise, a tendency to form an independent social entity by developing an ethnic entrepreneurship. Yet he does run that risk when, arguing that the maintenance of the connections among the different parts of the diaspora mainly relies on the common nature and features shared by all members of the diaspora, he emphasizes the significance of groundlessness and extraterritoriality as the main commonly shared features of the Chinese diaspora. "Identification with a national or territorial space has been transcended by a vision of oneself in a sort of extraterritoriality, and this perception, this feeling, is what forms the bond uniting the diaspora."[1] Despite his cautious premise, in fact, Ma Mung fails to acknowledge the impact of interaction between each part of the diaspora and the hosting polities it migrated to, by not taking into account the effective involvement of the Chinese communities in the life of overseas host countries as it results, for example, from the birth and growth of a second and a third generation. Moreover, it is on this view of diasporic extraterritoriality that he draws for a definition of identity as related to the case of the overseas Chinese: "Identity is widely believed to require a link to a physical entity, a territory. The diaspora, on the other hand, gradually and intuitively acquires the knowledge [...] that its territory is not one specific place, but a multitude of equivalent spaces, since none of them is the irreplaceable place where one's identity is anchored."[2] "As a result, the diaspora is forced to suspend its identity in a sort of supranational fluid, in an unimaginable and thus imaginary land, which is desired, summoned up, but never made real."[3] Ma Mung also brings in his description of extraterritoriality to account for the transnational nature of the Chinese diaspora. He points out, for example, the way in which multiple migration always occurs within the area already covered by the diaspora, a choice which he ascribes to the fact that the diaspora, unable to identify with a territorial entity, relies instead on the group. Where national territories are constructed as limitations upon movement, in the transnational area of the diaspora they are spaces of more or less movement.[4]

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[1] MA MUNG Emmanuel, "Groundlessness and Utopia: the Chinese Diaspora and Territory". In SINN, Elizabeth (Ed) (1998) *op. cit.*, p. 37
[2] *Ibid.* p. 38
[3] *Ibid.* p. 38
[4] MA MUNG Emmanuel, "Groundlessness and Utopia: the Chinese Diaspora and Territory". In SINN, Elizabeth (Ed) (1998) *op. cit.*, p. 37

Additional breadth is given to the theme of identity in the article by David Parker,[1] who takes a quite different point of view: he explores, in fact, emerging British Chinese identities along the path opened up by cultural studies in Britain. He acknowledges the importance of referring to identity as to something which is 'ever in progress', and underlines the dangers implied by referring to the concept of diaspora, which carries with it the seeds of nostalgic exclusivism. It is in his reference to the work of Stuart Hall that I found a frame flexible enough to include such contrasting ways to describe identity as Ma Mung's and Parker's: Hall suggests that in addition to the fixed and closed description of identity, which is often expressed through racialized myths of origin, there also is one more open *sense* of identity, which is constructed through differences, with an eye to the future, through the positioning in the narratives of the past.[2] The emphasis moves towards the plurality of differences engendered by the subjective perceptions of identity, which in their turn are in a continual process of transformation.

A number of other articles included in the volume hold similar positions, either as part of their main argument or in passing, on the differences stemming from life experience in different host countries and in contact with different cultures. Li Minghuang underlines the impact of differences within the "Chinese community" itself, by considering how cultural-linguistic (dialectal) differences, different district origins in China, and original locations outside China, as well as economic and political differences, are likely to turn into intra-ethnic divisions among the Chinese in the Netherlands, divisions which also affect and are affected by the different ways to relate to the host polities.[3] Karen L. Harris and Frank N. Pieke[4] apply the methodological tool of case comparison to discuss differences and similarities in the ways Dutch and South African Chinese have been negotiating their cultural repertoire to carve their interstitial space within the host societies. Again they do see in the host society a major input source for the shape of the community: "In each individual country Chinese communities encounter highly specific circumstances which require of them highly specific strategies. Like all other immigrant groups, Chinese communities are products

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[1] PARKER David "Emerging British Chinese Identities: Issues and Problems" in SINN Elizabeth (Ed) (1998) *op. cit.*, pp. 91-114
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 93
[3] LI Minghuan: "Living Among Three Walls? The Peranakan Chinese in the Netherlands" in: SINN, E. (Ed.) (1998) *op. cit.*, pp. 167-183. But see also LI Minghuan (1996) "Transnational links among the Chinese in Europe: a study on European-wide Chinese voluntary associations". *Leeds East Asia Papers*, n. 33
[4] HARRIS K. L. and PIEKE F. N.: "Integration or Segregation: The Dutch and the South African Chinese Compared" in SINN, Elizabeth (Ed) (1998) *op. cit.*, pp. 115-38

of their environment and history."[1] Yet, they also do recognize the transnational nature of the Chinese communities, and provide an overview of the practices through which it is reinforced: "chain migration, return visits and continued contact with the home community, networks based on kinship, place of origin and occupation, and the Overseas Chinese policies of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan often forge enduring ties between the Overseas Chinese and China [...] moreover, Overseas Chinese communities in different countries around the globe sometimes continue to be in close contact. It is indeed often possible to talk about a transnational Overseas Chinese community, or rather several relatively independent communities, that extend to the home communities and countries of origin in East and Southeast Asia."[2]

The work edited by Aihwa Ong and Donald M. Nonini[3] also takes transnationalism as one of its central topics. The collected essays gather unanimity on two central points: on the affirmative definition of the Chinese diaspora, and on the important role played by mobility in featuring the diaspora. The position of the editors is one of resistance against earlier paradigms in overseas Chinese studies picturing the diaspora as an inferior phenomenon. The other contributors too view transnational mobility as the source of strength of the diaspora, by which it has been able to face, confront, and alternatively elude many of the limitations imposed by the rise of contemporary modern regimes. Although focused on the experience of overseas Chinese in the Asia Pacific area, the essays in the volume point out strategies by which the Chinese diaspora as a whole manages to deal with the boundaries imposed by new flexible capitalism and modern nation-states. Among these strategies is the use of family and *guanxi* networks that perfectly suit the scope thanks to their informal nature and to their related capacity to span space and connect individuals and groups who occupy different positions in national spaces.

The collection of essays edited by Wang Ling-chi and Wang Gungwu[4] has wider scope in terms of historical as well as thematic grounds. In order to help in conveying a fuller picture of the diaspora world wide and stimulate new comparative perspectives, the editors have selected the essays by giving priority to those focused on communities less known than those settled in Southeast Asia. However one of the main questions addressed by the scholars who contributed to the two volumes is whether, and if yes to what extent, there has been a shift from the *guigen* (return to the roots) character of

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 116-117
[3] ONG A. and NONINI, D. M. (Editors) (1997) *op. cit.*
[4] WANG Ling-chi and WANG Gungwu (Editors) (1998) *op. cit.*

Chinese migration to the *shenggen* (growing new roots) character. Therefore some of the articles are necessarily concerned with the theme of identity. They provide the elements for a better understanding of what it means to identify as Chinese when living outside China, and ponder on how different perceptions of Chineseness have been brought forward and/or promoted within the overseas communities as well as in Mainland China, in turns, for different purposes. In his essay, Tan Chee Beng[1] joins the supporters of the point of view maintaining that there is no global Chinese identity. "The belief in some kind of a Chinese 'race' is based on ethnocentrism rather than social reality, for in the transnational context, Chinese interact as people of different nationalities. [...] Ultimately, identity is a matter of subjective identification which is shaped by the experience of living in a national society."[2] My attention was caught by the way he referred to language as an undoubtedly important indicator of ethnic identity, and by his consequent study of the relationship between Chinese identities and languages in overseas Chinese communities. He takes the case of the Chinese community in Malaysia as paradigmatic of the way different degrees of acculturation following adjustment to different socio-cultural environments may result in different types and levels of language proficiency and different language use both within the community and out of it. In outlining his "types-of-Chinese" picture, he describes the languages each type uses and the circumstances to which the use of each language or "variety" more commonly applies. Accordingly he classifies languages into language of intimacy (LOI: the language regularly used at home), intra-group language (IGL used for intra-group communication) and language of literacy (LOL), and provides a model that could be extended to the study of other communities too. His work is illuminating especially in the sense that it puts emphasis on the social facets of language events, thereby underlining the role played by contexts in which action takes place.

Language as a marker of identity

I focused my attention on the research work carried out during the last twenty years on different Chinese communities. My objective was the investigation of language use both within the communities and among them at a transnational level.

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[1] TAN Chee Beng "People of Chinese Descent: Language, Nationality and Identity" in: WANG Ling-chi and WANG Gungwu (Editors) (1998) *op. cit.*, pp. 29-47
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 40 - 41

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The available sources were diverse in term of length, scope, and, of course, in terms of the way different topics were being approached. First in my list were the accounts on the history and development of Chinese communities in Great Britain and Italy. The work on the Chinese communities in Britain is far richer than the work carried out on the Chinese communities in Italy, which depends on the longer history which the Chinese communities in Britain have, but which also has much to do with the different type of interaction taking place among the governments, the local communities, and the minority groups which have settled in the two countries, as witnessed by a number of focused studies published already in the first years of the 1980s (Lynn; Shang; Home Affairs; Runnymede Research Report).[1] The picture I was able to draw thanks to the greater number of sources on the Chinese communities in the UK, worked as a model for the investigation of the history and shape of the Chinese communities in Italy, about which only limited research work has been carried out lately (Ceccagno; Marsden; Campani (*et. al.*); Carchedi and Saravia).[2]

It is mainly on the grounds of this comparative study, enriched by additional information derived from studies on yet other Chinese communities settled in Europe and elsewhere (Benton and Pieke; Christiansen; Live; Trolliet; Pieke and Benton; Skeldon),[3] that I gathered views about language use within the communities. I referred to the history of the communities, to Chinese government policies and attitudes towards the overseas communities, and finally to the impact of host country policies on the incorporation (integration or assimilation) patterns of the Chinese communities and on the work and family lives of their members.

Again it is from the debate focused on ethnic identity, on the role of Chinese culture, and on the existing ties with the homeland, that I drew useful insight. Despite

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[1] LYNN, Irene Loh (1982) *The Chinese community in Liverpool.* Liverpool, Merseyside Area Profile Group; SHANG, Anthony (1984) *The Chinese in Britain.* London, Batsford Academic and Educational; HOME AFFAIRS (1985) *Chinese community in Britain.* London, HMSO; Runnymede Research Report (1986) *The Chinese community in Britain: the Home Affair Committee report in context.* London, Runnymede Trust

[2] CECCAGNO Antonella (Editor) (1997) *Il caso delle comunità cinesi.* Roma, Armando Editore; MARSDEN, Anna (1994) *Cinesi e fiorentini a confronto.* Firenze, Firenze Libri; CAMPANI, G.; CARCHEDI, F.; TASSINARI, A. (Editors) (1994) *L'immigrazione silenziosa. Le comunità cinesi in Italia.* Torino, Fondazione Agnelli; CARCHEDI, F.; SARAVIA, P. "La presenza cinese in Italia, uno sguardo d'insieme". Paper presented at the conference *Scuola e immigrazione: i cinesi in Italia* held at the University of Florence in May 1993

[3] BENTON, G. and PIEKE, F. N. (Editors) (1998) *The Chinese in Europe.* London, MacMillan Press Ltd.; CHRISTIANSEN F. (1997) "Overseas Chinese in Europe: an imagines community? *Leeds East Asia Papers,* n. 48; LIVE, Yu-sion (1991) *La diaspora chinoise en France.* Ph D dissertation, EHESS, Paris; TROLLIET, Pierre (1994) *La diaspora Chinoise.* Paris, Presses Universitaires; PIEKE, F. N. and BENTON, G. (1995) "Chinese in the Netherlands". *Leeds East Asia Papers,* n. 27; SKELDON, Ronald (Editor) (1994) *Reluctant exiles? migration from Hong Kong and the new overseas Chinese.* Armonk, NY, M. E. Sharpe

the fact that it would be misleading to think of the Chinese diaspora as a supranational entity sharing one culture and the use of one common language, it is true that transnational links among the different sections of the diaspora do exist at some level (Li Minghuan; Christiansen).[1] Moreover, as discussed for example in the work by Zhuang Guotu,[2] the work by Philip A. Kuhn,[3] and the work by Liu Dilin and Lin Canchu,[4] the policies as well as the attitudes of the Chinese government towards the Chinese overseas have nourished and affected the ties to the motherland. According to the view of Liu and Lin "pragmatism" appears to be one of the main factors contributing to the close ties of overseas Chinese to China. They refer to pragmatism as to one prominent feature of Chinese culture, and detect the pragmatic character of the relationship between the homeland government, which, with few exceptions, seeks financial support from Chinese who have settled abroad, and the overseas Chinese, who in return receive honours, titles, and privileges. But they also take a further step and discuss the new modes and media through which exchanges between the two sides continue to take place: through official visits (either Chinese government delegations visiting the Chinese communities overseas; or outstanding members of the overseas communities being invited to China), through business travel, through newspapers (which have increased in number and diversified in target in many of the countries to which the Chinese have migrated), through radio and television channels and programs, and, more recently, through the Internet. Language, therefore, plays a dominant role in bridging the information gaps through the use of these media, and, consequently, in maintaining and expressing the ties to the motherland, to its culture, and to its values (Kuhn; Tan Chee Beng).[5]

An important part of the debate on ethnic identity springs from the acknowledgement of the importance of language and language standards within the borders of China, and of the way in which the formal establishment of *Putonghua* as the National Language of China, and therefore also as the medium chosen in education,

[1] LI Minghuan (1996) "Transnational links among the Chinese in Europe: a study on European-wide Chinese voluntary associations". *Leeds East Asia Papers*, n. 33; CHRISTIANSEN F. (1997) "Overseas Chinese in Europe: an imagines community? *Leeds East Asia Papers*, n. 48
[2] ZHUANG Guotu "The policies of the Chinese Government towards Overseas Chinese (1949-1966)" in: WANG Ling-chi and WANG Gungwu (Editors) (1998) *op. cit.*
[3] KUHN Philip, A. (1997) *The homeland: talking about the history of Chinese overseas*. The fifty-eighth George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology. Canberra, The Australian National University
[4] LIU Dilin and LIN Canchu "The pride of *zuguo:* China's perennial appeal to the overseas Chinese and an emergent civic discourse in global community" in: KLUVER, R. and POWERS J. H. (1999) *Civic discourse, civil society and Chinese communities*. Stamford, Ablex Publishing Corporation
[5] KUHN Philip, A. (1997) *op. cit.*; TAN Chee Beng "People of Chinese Descent: Language, Nationality and Identity" in: WANG Ling-chi and WANG Gungwu (Editors) (1998) *op. cit.*

may have affected the overseas communities (Kuhn).[1] Although, due to some basic features of the overseas Chinese communities (such as the chain migration from the same provinces and the same districts which originates and re-generates them), the use of other dialects or varieties would seem to be more functional than the use of Mandarin at least within the communities themselves, this is not really or permanently so. My investigation draws from studies on the role of Modern Standard Chinese in Mainland China (Dwyer;[2] Chen Ping;[3] and Lee MariJo Benton)[4] for the discussion of the position Mandarin holds among other dialects within the overseas community. In one of his studies on overseas Chinese communities Flemming Christiansen, while discussing the case of speech segmentation,[5] points out the increasing importance of Mandarin as compared to the other Chinese languages and dialects spoken by the Chinese in Europe. In terms of prestige as well as functionality Mandarin plays a higher role than any other Chinese dialects which are not as widely spoken and understood; it plays a higher role than English, which remains more functional among the communities in the United States; and it also plays a higher role than the main languages spoken in each European country when it comes to communication among members of different Chinese communities, by indeed helping to bridge the linguistic differences once national boundaries are crossed. A similar position is held by D. Bradley,[6] who besides considering it unlikely for non-Mandarin *fangyan* (dialects) to disappear completely from overseas Chinese communities, also acknowledges the increasing influence of Mandarin "as a kind of heritage and commercial language in addition to their own *fangyan*",[7] and foresees the spreading of increasingly standard varieties of Mandarin in an increasing number of domains.

Yet, while trying to make predictions for the future, a number of variables need to be taken into account through research carried out in different national contexts, by referring to late changes in language use : "Ethnic identity is created, not only out of a group's own sense and definition of itself, but also by the sense and definition that the

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[1] KUHN Philip, A. (1997) *op. cit.*
[2] DWYER A. M. "The texture of tongues: Language and Power in China" in: SAFRAN, W. (Ed.) (1998) *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China.* London, Portland - Oregon, Frank Cass
[3] CHEN Ping (1999) *Modern Chinese. History and Sociolinguisitics.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
[4] LEE MariJo Benton (2001) *Ethnicity, Education and Empowerment. How minority students in Southwest China construct identities.* Aldershot - Burlington USA - Singapore - Sydney, Ashgate
[5] CHRISTIANSEN F. (1997) "Overseas Chinese in Europe: an imagines community? *Leeds East Asia Papers,* n. 48
[6] BRADLEY, D. (1991) "Chinese as a pluricentric language" in: CLYNE, M. (Editor) *Pluricentric languages: differing norms in different nations.* Berlin and New York, Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 305 - 324
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 320

outside host society has of it".[1] H. Serrie brings forward the issues of second generations and their sense of identity, which is necessarily based on a more complexly built ethnicity. "However secure adult immigrants may feel about their ethnicity in whatever alien context they may find themselves, children born and raised in the new cultural environment will find their own ethnicity to be complex and problematic. There is the pull towards the culture of their parents, the source of life and care; but there is also a push towards the culture of their peers, especially when it is the source of friends, future spouses, and employment."[2]

My particular interest in the development of discourse on identity (cultural/ethnic identity) and transnationality relates to their impact on language use and literacy by the members of the overseas Chinese communities. Implications of ethnicity and sense of identity on language choice and language shift throughout generations make up a new field of research which has only recently seen contributions directed to the study of overseas Chinese communities. Among these are another work by David Parker,[3] which focuses on the experiences of young Chinese people in Britain, and the work by Li Wei,[4] which consists of an attentive study of patterns of language use and shift in the Chinese community settled in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Literacy

My research takes literacy as its central focus. In order to approach the topic of literacy teaching in Chinese to learners of Chinese origin I reviewed the work in the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and education which could contribute to an exact yet comprehensive description of the wide and complex scope of my research.

The first aim to reach for was a viable and up-to-date definition of some key terms, the most relevant of which is literacy. National standards generally refer to literacy by the measurement of required skills, which can be acquired through formal education. Standards at an international level, in the attempt to achieve formal homogeneity, have also been producing massive generalizations (as for example in the

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[1] SERRIE, H. "The Overseas Chinese: Common Denominators of a Changing Ethnicity" in: HSU, Francis L. K and SERRIE, Hendrick (Editors) (1998) *The Overseas Chinese - Ethnicity in National Context*. Boston, University Press of America, p. 5
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 7
[3] PARKER, David (1995) *Through different eyes: the cultural identities of young Chinese People in Britain*. Aldershot, Avebury
[4] LI Wei (1994) *Three generations two languages one family. Language choice and language shift in a Chinese community in Britain*. Clevedon - Philadelphia - Adelaide, Multilingual Matters Ltd.

definitions by UNESCO in 1956 and 1963).[1] According to the findings of most recent works, there is in fact a misleading tendency to look for fixed yet widely applicable definitions of literacy. The question "what is literacy?" has been a challenging starting point in the development of several studies since the early 1970s. Or, more correctly, the challenging starting point has been the reference to the way in which literacy had been defined until then: literacy as a ladder that people have to climb up (deficit model); single literacy (dominant model); literacy as the acquisition of technical skills (autonomous model). These are some of the features noted by the promoters of the New Literacy Studies (NLS) (David Barton, James Paul Gee, and Brian Street) while exploring the definitions of literacy widespread until the 1980s. Their claim is that there can be no definition of literacy until language and literacy are studied as they occur naturally in social life (Street).[2] One major tenet of NLS is that literacy *is* a social practice, and it should therefore not be constrained into definitions which prioritize either the surface features of language (pointing to the acquisition of disembedded skills), or any single-literacy assumption.

It is on the premises brought forward by current research led by NLS that my work develops. If it is not possible to give a definition of literacy without running the risk of seeing only the surface features of language as its basics (Bernstein),[3] it is indeed possible to refer to those features literacy has been viewed with after the 'social turn' of research (Gee;[4] Hasan)[5] which has taken place over the last few decades. Accordingly, it would no longer be correct to think about one literacy, but to acknowledge instead the existence and the role of multiple literacies (Baynham),[6] to emphasize social contexts, to direct efforts to the understanding of the way in which they affect literacy (Barton and Hamilton;[7] Baynham),[8] and to promote a context sensitive and culturally responsive teaching which takes into account all forms of literacy events as valuable parts of an

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[1] UNESCO (1972) *Literacy 1969-1972*. Paris, Unesco

[2] STREET Brian V. "Contexts for literacy work: the 'new orders' and the 'new literacy studies'" in CROWTHER, J., HAMILTON, M., TETT, L. (Editors) (2001) *Powerful literacies*. Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, p. 13

[3] BERSTAIN, B. (1997) *Class codes and control*, vol. 4: "The structure of pedagogic discourse". London, Routledge, pp. 63-93

[4] GEE, J. P. "The new literacy studies. From 'socially situated' to the work of the social" in: BARTON, D.; HAMILTON, M.; IVANIC, K. (Editors) (2000) *Situated literacies. Reading and writing in context*. London and New York, Routledge

[5] HASAN R. "Literacy, everyday talk and society" in: HASAN, R. and WILLIAMS G. (1996) *Literacy in society*. London, Longman

[6] BAYNHAM, M. (1995) *Literacy practices. Investigating literacy in social contexts*. London and New York. Longman

[7] BARTON, D.; HAMILTON, M. (1998) *Local literacies. A study of reading and writing in one community*. London, Routledge

[8] BAYNHAM M. (1995) *op. cit.*

already existing knowledge to build upon. Such a flexible and comprehensive description manages to include differences in terms of languages, varieties, age, and contexts, and seeks for a way to encompass the dichotomies between dominant and minority languages, high and low varieties, lack and possession of skills. The new definition of literacy has come to be generalized so as to cover all forms of discourse, spoken as well as written, in order to refer to effective participation of any kind in social processes. In so doing, though, it prevents providing a specific definition for what used to be called literacy before, while it is still to some extent necessary to distinguish reading and writing practices from listening and speaking practices taking place through this participation (Halliday).[1] With the editors of the volume *Powerful literacies*, in which the guiding principles of the New Literacy Studies are illustrated, I therefore share the position held by Green,[2] who sees literacy as involving three levels: operational literacy, as competence in reading and writing; cultural literacy, as the understanding of the meaning embedded in communication and texts; and critical literacy, as the understanding of how some meanings are selected and legitimized and some are not. While formal definitions of literacy, such as those in use for national standards, tend to be limited to the operational level, according to Green, these three levels ought to be working together in practice. Following this path, my work too takes into account all three levels of literacy: the operational level is the one which calls out for a description of the skills to be acquired. It reflects the concept of literacy from a linguisitc point of view, and necessarily refers to the features of the language as these affect the acquisition of literacy skills. The cultural level is the one for which I take into account the contexts in which literacy events take place, and in my work, data and sources of information relevant to each context are explored to provide a key to the understanding of such literacy events. The critical level is the one that involves an in-depth investigation of language shift and language choices, according to contexts, according to power relations, and in response to different needs.

Among the other terms to be defined in the wide and multifaceted field of literacy studies as they relate to the context of application dealt with in my research work is that of **mother tongue**. As far as the case of adult learners of Chinese origin

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[1] HALLIDAY, M. A. C. "Literacy and Linguistics: a functional perspective" in: HASAN, R. and WILLIAMS G. (1996) *op. cit.,* pp. 339-341

[2] Quoted in: CROWTHER, J. and TETT, L.: "Democracy as a way of life: literacy for citizenship" in: CROWTHER, J.,HAMILTON, M., and TETT, L. (Editors) (2001) *Powerful literacies.* Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, p. 114 [from: LANKSHEAR (1998) "The educational challenge of the new world order: globalization and the meaning of literacy" in: *Concept,* 8 (2), pp. 12-15]

who were born and grew up in Italy is concerned, it is difficult to establish whether their mother tongue is the Chinese dialect their parents may speak, Mandarin, or Italian. If by the term mother tongue we refer to the first language one acquires in childhood, then it is likely that the affective language, the language of intimacy, i.e. the southern dialect usually spoken within the family and the community, coincides with his or her mother tongue. But what if more than one variety is spoken in the community? and what if his or her parents speak to the child in Italian in the attempt to facilitate his or her adjustment to the host community? In my work I sometimes refer to the term mother tongue when speaking about the first language children learn within the family environment. Yet, I try to avoid falling into the habit of using such term, because I am aware of the fact that it implies not taking into account the case of bilingualism (when two or more languages - or varieties - are learned together in early childhood). Additionally, I do sometimes also use the term heritage language, which more specifically refers to the language of the ethnic group, and again is likely to be the first language the child naturally acquires in the family environment (Balboni).[1]

The definition of mother tongue calls for another concept to be considered: **native speaker**. Rampton[2] discusses the non-flexible and out-dated definitions he derives from literature. He notices that a set of improper assumptions has been associated with the concept. First the assumption that a particular language is inherited – either through genetic endowment or through birth within the social group stereotypically associated with it. To which he argues that particular languages are acquired in social settings and people do not belong to only one social group, once and for all. Membership changes over time and so does language. Among the other assumptions generally implied in the discourse on native speakers are that inheriting a language means being able to speak it well, and that being a native speaker involves a comprehensive grasp of a language. Rampton points out that nobody's functional command is total, and that users of a language may be more proficient in some areas than others. He finally contests one more assumption, the one asserting that, just as people are citizens of one country, people are native speakers of one mother tongue.[3] Although this assumption does not go as dangerously far as to imply that one is expected to be a native speaker of the official language of the country he is citizen of, it still does not take into account the fact that many countries are multilingual, and that

[1] BALBONI, P. (1994) *Didattica dell'italiano a stranieri*. Roma, Bonacci Editore
[2] RAMPTON, B. (1995) *Crossing. Language and ethnicity among adolescents*. NY, Longman
[3] RAMPTON, B. (1995) *op. cit.* p. 336

therefore from an early age, children normally encounter two or more languages. As Rampton explains, sociolinguistic studies have taken due steps in deconstructing folk presuppositions about language. Yet, although the use of terms like varieties and codes have been widely accepted to substitute for terms such as languages and dialects, concepts like native speaker and mother tongue seem to have escaped the attempts towards reformulation. It is this idea that people really only have one native language, and that really monolingualism ought to be the fundamental linguistic condition, that has led to the widespread failure to recognize *new* and *mixed* linguistic identities. By stressing the importance of social processes and cultural negotiation of a person's language identity, Rampton's work seeks for a way to counteract the dissatisfying way to view the relationship between speakers and their languages which underlies the use of the native speaker concept.

Multilingualism and community literacy practices

Following the recent turn of research towards a view of literacy as totally embedded in social practice, a growing number of scholars (Barton and Ivanic; Gregory and Williams; Barton and Hamilton)[1] have started looking at language and literacy as they actually are, i.e. by acknowledging their never ending process of transformation. In their works language and literacy are seen as comprehensive entities drawing from a multitude of sources. Barton,[2] while stressing the importance of putting forward social views of literacy, borrows the terms of literacy *practices* and literacy *events* from the fields of sociolinguistics and anthropology to address the fundamental issue of the plurality of literacies. Most relevant to my work is his re-definition of the term *domain*, which mainly serves to clarify the contrast among home, school, and work situations, and to illustrate the reasons for substituting speculation on the idea of a single literacy with the study of effective literacy practices. It is on the grounds of the approach suggested by Barton that I chose to describe the circumstances in which literacy practices are likely to take place, and to refer to specific evidence of literacy events on

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[1] BARTON D. and IVANIC R. (Editors) (1991) *Writing in the community*. Newbury Park, London, and New Delhi, Sage Publications; GREGORY, Eve and WILLIAMS Anne (2000) *City literacies. Learning to read across generations and cultures*. London and New York, Routledge; BARTON D. and HAMILTON, M. (1998) *Local literacies. Reading and writing in one community*. London and New York, Routledge

[2] BARTON, D.: "The social nature of writing" in: BARTON, D. IVANIC, R (Editors) (1991) *op. cit.*, pp. 1-13

which to base the selection and organization of contents to be included in the literacy teaching material for learners of Chinese origin in Italy: "literacy serves other purposes. In general, people read and write in order to do other things, in order to achieve other ends".[1] Through the study of literacy practices these purposes can be made evident and lead, in this sense, to a functional orientation of teaching.

The work by Gregory and Williams[2] aims at the deconstruction of the myth which associates the mismatch between language and learning styles used in the home and those demanded by schools with difficulty and early reading failure. The authors point out the congruence of this myth with what they see as one of the school's main concerns in the education of children belonging to ethnic minority groups, i.e. the replacement of home languages without any recognition of the skills and possible advantages it may bring. They explore the range and the impact of several literacy activities within the communities of one area of London, and then extend their discourse to some supracontextual generalization. To them, the extensive and intensive nature of such unofficial literacy practices may provide arguments for a new paradigm that acknowledges strength in diversity, a position I agree and attempt to be consistent with throughout my work.

As the central theme of my work is the acquisition of literacy in Chinese by the second generation members of the Chinese community, the comprehensive views which take into account the impact of domains and contexts on the choice and use of languages are extremely relevant. I reviewed the basic definitions of language shift and language choice provided in sociolinguistics (Holmes),[3] and then turned my attention to those studies which relate the topic to literacy. Again I found that there is an increasing number of studies which take the issue of culture and language contact to address related problems in the field of education. Among these is the volume edited by B. M. Ferdman, R. M. Weber, and A. G. Ramirez,[4] a collection of essays focused on the relationship between literacy and linguistic diversity. As it is claimed in the introductory chapter of the work, the authors direct their efforts to promoting the improvement of an educational process beyond the boundaries of dominant languages and majority language groups through the integration of literacy, language, and culture in research and theory. The essays focus on the social and cultural contexts in which literacy

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[1] *Ibid.* p. 8

[2] GREGORY, Eve and WILLIAMS Anne (2000) *op. cit.*

[3] HOLMES, Janet (1992) *An introduction to sociolinguistics.* London, Longman

[4] FERDMAN B. M., WEBER, R. M., RAMIREZ, A. G. (Editors) (1994) *Literacy across Languages and Cultures.* Albany, State University of New York Press

develops and is enacted. Although the emphasis is on language diversity in the United States, the authors address general yet important issues such as dominance and differing literacy attainments of groups within the population (Devine),[1] literacy acquisition in L2 (Ramirez),[2] and differences and relations between literacy in a second language and mother tongue literacy (Hornberger.)[3] by providing useful theoretical reference and models.

Heritage language education

The overview of recent literature on literacy and multilingualism has informed my approach to the discussion of education related issues for learners of Chinese origin in Europe. It is mainly along with the idea of the fundamental importance of the contexts in which literacy practices take place that I turned my attention to the sources taking language education of learners of Chinese origin as their focus. Since most of the literature I referred to relates to the case of the Chinese in the U.K. (Cheng and Heath;[4] M. J. Taylor;[5] L. Y. F. Wong;[6] Tsow Ming)[7], context variables were taken into account in two ways. First, I could draw parallels between the cases studied in these works and the case which is the focus of my research: they all refer to Chinese learners who live in a foreign country. Second, I articulated my comparison into the study of the distinctive features of each case: not only are the countries of abode different, with a different dominant language in use, and with different provisions made available by the local governments and the local communities, but also the area from which the Chinese communities in the two countries originate is different, which accounts for quite different characteristics of their background, not least of course, the use of different local languages (dialects).

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[1] DEVINE J. "Literacy and social power" in: FERDMAN B. M., WEBER, R. M., RAMIREZ, A. G. (Editors) (1994) *op. cit.*, pp. 221-237
[2] RAMIREZ, A. G. "Literacy acquisition among second language learners" in: FERDMAN B. M., WEBER, R. M., RAMIREZ, A. G. (Editors) (1994) *op. cit.*, pp. 75-101
[3] HORNBERGER, Nancy H. "Continua of biliteracy" in: FERDMAN, B. M., WEBER, R. M., RAMIREZ, A. G. (Editors) (1994) *op. cit.*, pp. 103-119
[4] CHENG, Y. and HEATH, H. (1994) *Education and class: Chinese in Britain and the United States.* Adershot, Avebury Press
[5] TAYLOR, Monica J. (1987) *Chinese pupils in Britain: a review of research into the education of pupils of Chinese origin.* Windsor, NFER-Nelson
[6] WONG Lornita Yuan Fan (1992) *Education of Chinese children in Britain and the USA.* Clevedon, Multilingual Matters Ltd.
[7] TSOW Ming (1984) *Mother tongue maintenance: survey of part-time Chinese language classes.* London, Commission for Racial Equality

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Chinese language and writing

In my work, the study of the Chinese language takes into account two aspects: the first relates to the spoken form, and focuses on the different Chinese varieties in use (Ramsey;[1] Norman;[2] DeFrancis).[3] I followed the model proposed by DeFrancis and referred to the distinction between dialects and regionalects in order to illustrate the diversity of the local varieties in use in China.[4] I also referred to a few studies on the particular features of the Wu regionalect, which includes the dialects in use in the Wenzhou area of Zhejiang Province from where originate the largest number of Chinese migrants who have settled in Italy (Yan; Fudan Daxue; Li and Xiong)[5].

The second aspect of interest relates to the Chinese writing system. My objective has been a focus on those traits of the Chinese written language which are most likely to affect literacy acquisition, intended here as the mere acquisition of reading and writing skills (Halliday).[6] Along with the purposes of this investigation I initially oriented my research on the study of the differences between Chinese and other writing systems (French)[7] I took the alphabetic writing system as the major term of comparison for two main reasons: first because of its wide diffusion (since it also is the writing system adopted by a powerful language like English); and secondly because, due to the substantial differences between the two systems, their apposition is often adopted in research to illustrate how language processing works, and how the different features of the writing systems may affect literacy acquisition.

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[1] RAMSEY, S. Robert (1987) *The languages of China*. Princeton, Princeton University Press

[2] NORMAN, J. (1988) *Chinese*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

[3] DEFRANCIS, John (1984.b) *The Chinese language: fact and fantasy*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 57-64

[5] YAN Yiming 颜逸明 (1994) *Wuyu gaikuang* 吴语概况 (A survey on the Wu language). Shanghai, Huadong Shifan Daxue chubanshe; Fudan Daxue - Zhongguo yuyanxue yanjiusuo (1988) *Wuyu Luncong* 吴语论丛 (Collected essays on the Wu Language). Shanghai, Shanghai jiaoyu chuban faxing; LI Rong and XIONG Zhenghui (1988) "Chinese dialects - the Wu group" in: *Language Atlas of China*. Hong Kong, Longman Group Ltd.

[6] HALLIDAY, M. A. C. "Literacy and linguistics: a functional perspective" in HASAN, R. and WILLIAMS, G. (1996) *Op. cit.*

[7] FRENCH, M. A. "Observations on the Chinese script and the classification of writing-systems" in: HAAS, W. (Editor) (1976) *Writing without letters*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp. 101 - 129

It is on the basis of the studies carried out by Boltz and Qiu[1] on the origin and development of Chinese writing system, in addition to the work by DeFrancis, which also focuses on the written form of Chinese, that I drew my description of Chinese written language while arguing against two widely spread label-definitions of the Chinese writing system (pictographic and ideographic) based on the misinterpretation of its basic features.

The different views on the nature of Chinese writing, and on its difference from languages ruled by an alphabetic writing system, have shaped the discussion on the most effective ways to teach reading and writing in Chinese. One of the questions usually addressed in research focused on the acquisition of literacy in Chinese concerns content: *what* needs to be learned? Given that Chinese written language is made up of an extremely wide inventory of different signs - i.e. characters, representing morphemes at a semantic level, and syllables at a phonetic level - as opposed to the alphabetic writing systems which have a limited inventory of signs to be variously combined to form words, the acquisition of literacy in Chinese has come to coincide with the study of a selected number of characters which vary according to the purposes of literacy itself, and to the context in which its acquisition takes place (Hannas).[2] Accordingly, a number of works providing lists of the most frequently used Chinese characters have been published.[3] Official policies too, have taken the number of characters, and their frequency of use in different contexts, as the grounds for the definition of literacy standards and for the devising of literacy programmes in mainstream education as well as in adult literacy education in China.[4] In the final chapter of my work I follow this path too, and include suggestions for editing a frequency list, designed for the study case, which takes into account the specific features of the learner and of the teaching context.

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[1] BOLTZ, William (1994) *The origin and early developments of the Chinese writing system.* New Heaven, American Oriental Society; QIU Xigui 裘锡圭 (1988) *Wenzixue gaiyao* 文字学概要 (A short introduction to Chinese philology). Beijing, Shangwu yinshuguan.

[2] HANNAS, Wm. C. (1996) *Asias's orthograpic dilemma.* Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. 129

[3] Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan yuyan jiaoxue yanjiusuo bian 北京语言学院语言教学研究所遍 (1986) *Xiandai hanyu pinlu cidian* 现代汉语频率词典 (*Frequency dictionary of modern Chinese*) Beijing, Yuyan Xueyuan chubanshe; *Xiandai hanyu changyong zibiao* 现代汉语常用字表 (*List of common characters in modern Chinese*) (1988) Beijing, Yuwen chubanshe; Zhongguo wenxue gaige weiyuanhui - Guojia biaozhun ju bian 中国文学改革委员会 - 国家标准局编 (1986) *Zui changyong de hanzi shi naxie?* 最常用汉字是哪些? (*Which are the most commonly used characters?*) Beijing, Wenzi gaige chubanshe - Zhongguo biaozhun chubanshe

[4] CHAN, M. K. M. and HE, Baozhang (1988) "A study of the one thousand most frequently used Chinese characters and their simplification" in: *JCLTA*, vol. 23, n 3, pp. 49 - 68; DEW, J. E. (1997) "The frequency factor in graded vocabulary for textbooks" in: *JCLTA*, vol. 32, n. 2, pp. 83 - 92

Chinese language teaching methods

My work includes the investigation of four different contexts for the study of Chinese written language. This investigation draws from several types of sources: primary sources in Chinese (textbooks and official publications); interviews and personal communication (with teachers and educators in China, Italy, and the U. K., and with members of the local education bureaux in China); and research findings published in the articles of the *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association*, and in the collection of papers presented during conferences and workshops [Journées d'étude internationales sur l'einsegnement du Chinois (1998); 10th Biannual Conference of the European Association of Chinese Studies (1994); 2nd Conference of the European Association of Chinese Linguistics (2001); Chinese workshop on literacy and adult education (1999)]. Through the study of the different approaches to Chinese language learning suggested in the sources, I gathered evidence of the extent to which differences were determined, either in theory or in practice, by different contexts variables. Such information was complemented by direct observation, which I carried out during my fieldwork in China (Chinese language classes for primary school pupils, and adult literacy classes), in the U. K., and in Italy (Chinese language teaching to University Students, and Sunday school classes for young members of the Chinese communities).

Each of the four contexts of investigation was chosen because it shares at least one relevant context feature with the context I take as the focus of my work. The underlying idea, which found confirmation in the investigation of the four teaching contexts and in the sources I referred to for such investigation, is that some teaching methods do specifically apply to the teaching in some contexts, i.e. they actively respond to some features of the context, be it the learners' age, their background knowledge, or the language environment in which the teaching takes place (Rogers);[1] I therefore define context and discuss its variables as they are likely to affect the teaching methods to be chosen. This work opens the way to the presentation of the context which is the object of my research, and to the suggestion and discussion of the most useful teaching devices to be implemented in such context as in the final chapter of the thesis.

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[1] ROGERS, Alan (1986) *Teaching adults*. Milton Keynes, Philadelphia, Open University Press

Adult learners and second language learning

I referred to research in the fields of adult education and second language learning to gather the tools to critically analyze the different methods applied in the four teaching contexts I investigated. I focused on the literature concerned with the study of adult learning styles and strategies, their difference from young pupils' learning styles in formal school education, and their implication on teaching (Rogers;[1] Prosser;[2] Harris and Coltheart;[3] Baer).[4] But I also took into account more specific piece of research referred to the case of adult literacy acquisition (Soifer;[5] Fordham, Holland, and Millican)[6] and to the case of second language acquisition by adults (Perdue).[7]

I referred to second language learning as to the study of a language which has a dominant or at least relevant role in the learner's everyday life, and I therefore considered the distinction between second and foreign languages as of remarkable importance when it comes to the strategies to be adopted in teaching. In contrast with Mitchell and Myles,[8] who believe that the underlying learning processes are essentially the same for more local and for more remote target languages despite differing learning purposes and circumstances, I followed Rampton's[9] argument in support for a socially engaged perspective, where theoretical development is rooted in, and responsive to, social practice and language education in particular. The study of more specific work on second language instruction (Ellis)[10] also provided me with a sound basis for outlining the programme and motivating the approach to teaching I suggest with it in the final chapter of my work.

The scope of the literature I reviewed was progressively oriented towards the more specific subject of adult literacy acquisition in Chinese, for which I also turned to some relevant studies on adult literacy education in China. Among these are a few

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[1] ROGERS, Alan (1986) *op. cit.*
[2] PROSSER, Roy (1967) *Adult education for developing countries.* Nairobi, East African Publishing House
[3] HARRIS, M. and COLTHEART, M. (1986) *Language processing in children and adults: an introduction.* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul
[4] BAER, E. R. (Editor) (1976) *Teaching languages ideas and guidance for teachers working with adults.* London, BBC
[5] SOIFER, Irwin (1990) *The complete theory to practice handbook of adult literacy.* New York, Teachers' college press
[6] FORDHAM, P.; HOLLAND, D.; MILLICAN, J. (1995) *Adult literacy.* Oxford, VSO
[7] PERDUE, C. (1993) *Adult language acquisition: cross-linguistic perspectives.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
[8] MITCHELL, R and MYLES, F. (1998) *Second language learning theories.* London, New York, Sydney and Auckland, Arnold, pp. 1-2
[9] RAMPTON, B. (1995) *op. cit.*
[10] ELLIS, R. (1991) *Second language acquisition and language pedagogy.* Clevedon, Bristol, and Adelaide, Multilingual Matters Ltd.

works published in English (the work edited by Duke[1], and the work edited by Hunter and Keehn[2] - which are part of the same research project - and two chapters[3] of *China: lessons from practice*, edited by Wang Maorong, Lin Weihua, Sun Shilu and Fang Jing), while most of the relevant information was derived from literature published in Chinese, large part of which I was able to collect during my fieldwork in Beijing and in the Wenzhou area of Zhejiang province.[4] These sources were complementary to primary sources (mainly textbooks), and enabled me to formulate further specific questions to the staff of the education bureaux, to the teachers, and to the compilers of the textbooks in use in China.

Concluding note about the use of the sources

The scope of my research work develops from the intersection of all the fields of study I briefly illustrated above. There is too little focused work done so far on the teaching of Chinese literacy to overseas adult learners of Chinese origin to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework, which is the reason why I needed to carry out my reading in such a broad range of studies. I will consequently refer to the works which inspired me by recalling the theoretical position of their authors, and by indicating at each stage of my research work any further step I took in elaborating new positions.

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[1] DUKE, Chris (Editor) (1987) Adult education: international perspectives from China. London, Croom Helm
[2] HUNTER, Carman St. John; KEEHN, Martha (Editors) (1985) *Adult education in China*, Croom Helm, Sydney
[3] SUN Shilu (1988) "Research on Adult Education" and ZHAO Wenqin (1988) "Literacy and postliteracy adult education" in: WANG Maorong, LIN Weihua, SUN Shilu, FANG Jing (Editors) *China: lessons from practice*. San Francisco, New Directions for Continuing Education, no.37
[4] DONG Mingzhuan 董明传 (1997) *Chengren jiaoyu juece yu guangli* 成人教育决策与管理 (*Policy making for adult education and its management*). Shanghai, Wenhui Press; Guojia jiaoyu weiyuanhui chengren jiaoyu sibian 国家教育委员会成人教育司编 (1998) *Saochu wenmang wenxian huibian 1949-1996* 扫除文盲文献汇编 1949 - 1996 (A collection of documents on eradicating illiteracy, 1949-1996). Chongqing, Xinan Shifan Daxue chubanshe; LI Chunxiang 李春祥, HOU Zhanxin 侯占新 (1995) *Saomang jiaoxue lun* 扫盲教学论 (*On literacy teaching*). Zhengzhou, Henan renmin chubanshe; HUANG Zhongren 黄忠仁, "Saomang jiaoyu yu gonggu" "扫盲教育与巩固" ("Literacy education and its follow-up"). Paper presented at the Chinese workshop on Literacy and Adult Education, July 1999, Beijing

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1
"CHINESE COMMUNITIES: A SURVEY"

Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of the history and development of Chinese migration movements towards Europe. It is based on the review of the existing research carried out on Chinese internal and international migration movements, with special reference to work investigating recent migration waves originated from the south eastern regions of China.

The presentation also takes into account the different responses of the countries of destination in Europe, by discussing the impact of their immigration policies on the shape and the structure of the present Chinese communities. I follow the approach foramlized by Yasemin Soysal in her *Limits of citizenship* (1994)[1]: she views the taking into account of social and cultural characteristics of migrant groups alone as insufficient for the study of community incorporation patterns, and refers to the study of the host polities and their institutions as to an additional yet crucial variable in accounting for the emerging organizational patterns of migrants.

The focus of this part of the work is on the Chinese settlement in Great Britain and Italy. The comparison between the push and pull factors generating Chinese migration movements towards the two countries, together with the discussion of the problems relating to the gathering of reliable data, is intended to provide the elements for a better understanding of the main features of the present Chinese communities, both at the specific national level, and at the transnational level, as discussed in more details in the following chapter with special reference to the role played by language and literacy.

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[1] SOYSAL, Yasemine N. (1994) *Limits of citizenship: migrants and post-national membership in Europe*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago

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1.1 CHINESE MIGRATION TO EUROPE: PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

Chinese migration has a long and complex history, and its importance derives both from the number of people involved in it and from the distance and variety of places that these people managed to reach. Traditional destinations of Chinese migration were initially in South East Asia and in the North American countries. As far as Europe is concerned, the Chinese presence hardly had any socio-demographic relevance until the early seventies of the twentieth century.[1]

The main focus of this survey is on Chinese migration to European countries during the last three decades. However, the introductory overview of Chinese migration trends, through the identification of the most relevant push and pull factors that developed over the last century, can contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

1.1.1 THE PUSH FACTORS: CHINESE MIGRATION PATTERNS

The first part of the investigation deals with the analysis of the "push" factors, meaning the historical, social and environmental circumstances that contributed to the movement of Chinese people from China towards foreign countries. My interest chiefly focuses on the circumstances that originated migration movements from China to Europe, which can be sought for in the tumultuous events that took place in China since the end of the nineteenth century. Politics, economics, and demography are the three domains to refer to in order to identify the major factors that led to the development of Chinese emigration.

As far as political changes are concerned, the communist take-over in 1949 and the Cultural Revolution stand out as two major push factors of Chinese emigration. The events officially turned China into a closed country where movements of people both in and out of the borders were temporarily restricted and kept under control.[2] This formal lull in the international movement of Chinese people which lasted until the end of the seventies has been referred to as the turning point from old migration patterns to new

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[1] PIEKE, F. N. "Introduction: Chinese migrations compared" in: PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *Internal and international migration. Chinese perspectives.* Surrey, Curzon Press, p. 2

[2] SKELDON, R. and HUGO, G. "Conclusions: of exceptionalisms and generalities" in: PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (1999) (Editors) *Internal and international migration. Chinese perspectives.* Surrey, Curzon Press, p. 335

ones.[1] Chinese population movements have in fact persisted,[2] although those originating during those thirty years and heading outside the Chinese borders necessarily consisted mainly of clandestine and refugee migration.[3]

The fact that the number of Chinese people who moved towards Europe has increased during the thirty years from 1949 to 1979 needs to be considered in the light of two other major events: the cession of Hong Kong and Kowloon, and the lease of the New Territories to Great Britain. These were stipulated by the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 and the Ratification of the Convention of Beijing in 1860, at the end of the Opium Wars,[4] and by the Second Convention of Beijing in 1898.[5] Being located at the border of China, these areas which had gone under British sovereignty at the end of the nineteenth century, made it easier for some Chinese people dissatisfied with the big changes in their country after 1949 to seek better conditions outside China.[6] Hong Kong became the first halting place in a long emigration path which eventually led to many different destinations, including Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. The large numbers of Chinese refugees who arrived in Hong Kong after 1949 heavily affected the subsequent movement of people from Hong Kong to overseas destinations. Their numbers put pressure on the land and contributed to the emigration of Chinese farmers of the New Territories to Great Britain. Many of the refugees who arrived from the southern provinces of China were in fact skilled farmers who enhanced competition for work with local rice farmers in the colony.

A key role in determining the massive movement of people was also played by the economic pressure established by the rice market competition all over South East Asia during the sixties.[7] The availability of cheap rice imports from Burma and Thailand had turned paddy cultivation, which had been the main activity of farmers of the New Territories until the fifties, into an unprofitable practice. Among the attempts

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[1] SKELDON, R. "Hong Kong in international migration system" in: SKELDON, R. (Editor) (1994) *Reluctant exiles? Migration from Hong Kong and the new overseas Chinese*, Armonk, NY, M. E. Sharpe, p. 25

[2] LARY, Diana "The 'static' decades. Inter-provincial migration in pre-reform China" in: PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 30

[3] PIEKE, F. N. "Introduction", in PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 19

[4] SKELDON, R. "Hong Kong in international migration system" in: SKELDON, R. (Editor) (1994) *op. cit.*, p. 21

[5] FLOWERDEW, J. (1998) *The Final years of British Hong Kong*. New York, Macmillan, p. 16

[6] WONG, Lornita Y. F. (1992) *Education of Chinese children in Britain and the USA*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters Ltd., p. 12; POSTON, Dudley L. Jr., YU Mei-Yu (1990) "The distribution of the overseas Chinese in the contemporary world" in: *International Migration Review*, vol. 24, n. 3, pp. 480 – 508; TAYLOR, Monica J. (1987) *Chinese pupils in Britain: a review of research into the education of pupils of Chinese origin*. Windsor, NFER-Nelson, p. 7

[7] PARKER, D. "Chinese people in Britain" in: BENTON, G. and PIEKE, F. N. (Editors) (1998) *The Chinese in Europe*. London, Mac Millan Press Ltd., p. 75

made by farmers to adapt to the new situation were the conversion of an increasing number of paddy fields to market gardening, and the development of other activities such as poultry and pig farming. Yet, the concomitant industrialization and possibilities of finding jobs in the urban area, lured many farmers out of the agricultural pattern. Hong Kong and Kowloon[1] consequently turned into an important reservoir for the recruitment of cheap labour, where fierce competition was established between the constantly renewed supply of refugees from Mainland China and out-of-work farmers with little education and few skills besides rice-growing. However, it was mainly the former rice-farmers of the New Territories - Chinese citizens of the Commonwealth -[2] who could emigrate and profit by the employment opportunities that were opening up for Chinese people in the catering business in Europe. Many of them moved to those countries where Chinese immigrants had already begun to settle, creating the first nuclei of Chinatowns.[3]

As far as the situation in Mainland China is concerned the change of the economic setting that took place in the late seventies produced a noteworthy increase of migration movements. On the one hand, the economic reforms promoted by Deng Xiaoping made it easier for Chinese people to move within their own country. According to Chan Kam Wing[4] mass population shifts in the post-Mao economy can be broadly attributed to the following factors: "(1) rural decollectivization, which has set free surplus labourers previously tied to the place of residence in the countryside; (2) rapid expansion of the urban economy, especially in the labour intensive sectors, creating ten of millions of low-skilled jobs; (3) continuing large gaps in living standards between cities and the countryside in many regions, especially after the mid-1980s; (4) concurrent relaxation of migratory controls and development of urban food and labour markets; (5) increasing regional specialization of skills partly based on different traditions; and (6) the development and expansion of migrant networks."[5] Among the main consequences of this shift, especially in the south-eastern provinces which had already opened to foreign trade and economic contacts, was the development of further

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[1] ROBINSON, V. "Une minorité invisible: les Chinois au Royaume-Uni" in: MA MUNG, E. (Editor) (1992) *Revue Europeenne des Migration Internationales* (R.E.M.I.), vol. 8 , n. 3 (Collected articles on the Chinese diaspora in Western countries), p. 18

[2] Under the 1948 Nationality Act, and until 1962, when the Commonwealth Immigrants Act came into force, the possession of a British Passport to which people who were born in the Colony were also entitled, gave access to Britain without further restrictions.

[3] TAYLOR, Monica J. (1987) *op. cit.*, p. 35

[4] CHAN Kam Wing "Internal migration in China: a dualistic approach" in PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 50

migration abroad. On the other hand, since 1978, the strategies adopted by Chinese authorities in their relationships with foreign countries also contributed to a systematic and legal increase of emigration. Official agreements among governments were made. Some of these agreements were concerned with the employment of Chinese qualified workers abroad, and were aimed at the acquisition of new markets and adequate aid for technological development;[1] others, while witnessing the new value attached to economic relations with foreign countries, provided guarantees for the economic growth of Chinese business abroad. An outstanding example is the agreement signed in Rome in 1985 by China and Italy. It came into force in March 1987[2] and was meant to create positive conditions for economic co-operation between the two countries.[3] The agreement was concerned with reciprocal investment protection in the partner-country and it gave greater confidence to Chinese entrepreneurs in Italy. As a consequence of the new advantageous opportunities for setting up enterprises, the number of Chinese-managed firms in Italy increased, and this also promoted the further settlement of the Chinese community in Italy.

Chinese migration movements during the eighties were also affected by the demographic situation in China and by the adoption of the one-child family policy. The one-child family policy came into force at the end of the seventies, and was meant to become the fundamental tool for population growth control in the following years. China's population policies had already contributed to the demographic transformation that had taken place in the period from 1949 to the end of the seventies. Despite the success in leading to a remarkable decline of total fertility rates, these policies also played an important role in shaping the young age structure of the total population of China for the following decades. And they led to the rise in number of women entering childbearing age at the beginning of the eighties.[4] As a result the taking of a further step towards the reduction in population growth became of strategic importance, and the one-child family policy was eventually established. Respect for traditional values and Confucian precepts on family size and hierarchies, and concern for the family economy

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[1] These agreements mainly involved Middle East and Asian countries. See: STAHL, C. W. and APPLEYARD, R. T. (1992) "International manpower flow in Asia: an overview" in: *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* (Manila) 3 / 4

[2] Law 109 3/3/87

[3] CARCHEDI, F. "La presenza cinese in Italia" in: CAMPANI, G.; CARCHEDI, F.; TASSINARI, A. (Editors) (1994) *L'immigrazione silenziosa. Le comunità cinesi in Italia*. Torino, Fondazione Agnelli, p. 65

[4] For a detailed examination and discussion of the application of norms for population control see: MILWERTZ, Cecilia Nathansen (1997) *Accepting population control. Urban Chinese women and the one-child family policy*. Richmond, Curzon Press

as well as for the security of its older members, resulted in an overall initial resistance to the one-child norm, especially in the rural areas. The application of the one-child family policy might then have contributed as an additional minor factor in pushing Chinese people to emigrate to overseas countries.[1]

1.1.2 THE PULL FACTORS: EUROPEAN IMMIGRATION POLICIES

A considerable amount of information about the nature of Chinese immigration in Europe can be derived from the analysis of the "pull" factors, meaning the external circumstances which mostly contributed to determining the destinations and the growth in numbers of Chinese migration flows, as well as the incorporation patterns through which Chinese have been adjusting to life in the different countries of abode.[2] The pull factors mainly consist of European immigration policies which had come into force since the end of the Second World War. Europe has always been involved in important migration flows, both within its boundaries and towards extra-European countries, but the different histories of the European countries have given rise to the development of different national immigration policies. Some relevant remarks need to be made: extra-European immigration, mainly migration flows coming from developing countries, has had an impact all over Europe during the last thirty years. The fact that Great Britain, France or Spain had already been in touch with extra-European countries relates to their history, which is characterized by a long tradition of migration for imperial expansion and colonialism. Lately, the situation has changed, and this has heavily contributed to the formulation of new immigration policies. On the one hand, colonies have achieved independence and have entered the international scene as developing countries; on the other, European countries have started to devise policies and regulations relating to economy, politics, and migration issues, as a Community.[3]

Immigration in Europe, since the end of the Second World War, can be divided into three phases.[4] The first phase began in the post-war reconstruction period and lasted

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[1] The majority of Chinese people who in arrived in Italy during the eighties, for example, come from Zhejiang, and large numbers among them are from rural areas of the province.
[2] SOYSAL, Yasemine N. (1994) *Limits of citizenship: migrants and post-national membership in Europe.* Chicago and London, University of Chicago, p. 85
[3] MELOTTI, U.: "Migrazioni internazionali e integrazione sociale: il caso italiano e le esperienze europee" in: DELLE DONNE, M.; MELOTTI, U.; PETILLI, S. (Editors) (1993) *Immigrazione in Europa: solidarietà e conflitto.* Dipartimento di Sociologia, Università di Roma "La Sapienza" CEDISS - Centro Europeo di Scienze Sociali, pp. 29 - 65
[4] MARSDEN, A. (1994) *Cinesi e fiorentini a confronto.* Firenze, Firenze Libri

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until the second half of the sixties. It was characterized by rapid economic development and by the adoption of the "guest-workers"[1] system. The immigration flow of that period was mainly inter-European, and the presence of foreign workers was assumed to be a temporary circumstance. As later history witnesses, this was seldom the case: as long as return to their home countries was not made compulsory, a large number of immigrant workers started to settle in the host countries. The second phase began around 1967 and developed throughout the following decade until the end of the seventies. Its character was determined by the reorganisation of the production system which was taking place in those years: manufacturing activities that depended heavily on human labour were settled in the developing countries where cheap labour could be recruited; and cheap labour was imported in order to meet the needs of those activities that could not be settled abroad. Also the process of automation had major consequences on the new labour market and contributed to the import of cheap labour from the developing countries. The third phase began in the eighties and continues up to the present. It is characterized by the widening of the area from which immigration originates as well as by the strengthening of expulsion policies. Immigration to Europe from the developing countries which were going through economic, political and demographic breakdown, steadily increased during this phase. There was a double change in migration trends: first, southern European countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece, which had hitherto been a source of labour for northern European countries, became the destinations of the new waves of migration and gradually turned into immigration countries. Second, the character of immigration changed too: from the traditional search for work, combined with the European host countries' economic need for an immigrant labour force, it turned into the movement of people who were mainly in search of refuge, asylum and social security.[2] Policies aimed at restricting the presence of foreign workers into European countries considerably increased in number; they were also included in the European Community legislation, as the expression of a unanimous will to control immigration flows: return migration was encouraged, and additional efforts to curtail new entries were made. But the only real change was to be seen in the form in which immigration continued: on the one hand procedures for family reunion and political asylum augmented; on the other, illegal immigration also

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[1] "Gastarbeiter" was the original phrase first adopted in Germany to define workers recruited for limited periods. (See: MELOTTI, U.: "Migrazioni internazionali e integrazione sociale: il caso italiano e le esperienze europee" in: DELLE DONNE, M.; MELOTTI, U.; PETILLI, S. (Editors) (1993) op. cit., pp. 36)
[2] HOUSE OF LORDS (Select Committee on the European Communities) (1993) Community policy on migration, London, HMSO, p. 8

underwent a sudden increase.[1]

Despite the gradual development of a European Community legislation, differences in the immigration policies formulated and adopted by the various European countries had existed for quite a long time. The analysis of these differences makes it easier to derive a better understanding of the impact of pull factors on the migration phenomenon. In fact, although in Europe the recognition of the permanent character of immigration took place only recently, some countries were ready to implement regulations to deal with it sooner than others. Sweden and Great Britain represent two major examples.[2] Sweden owes much of its policy readiness to the long lasting presence of a strong and well organized Finnish community. The principles of equality, co-operation, and freedom of cultural choice - i.e. whether to maintain and study the language and the culture of the mother country - were developed in the Swedish immigration policy since 1967.[3] Eventually they resulted in the formulation of new laws, together with a further recognition of immigrants' political rights.[4] As far as Great Britain is concerned, the introduction of specific antiracist legislation has been a relevant topic since the end of the war. This was mainly a consequence of immigration coming from the New Commonwealth. Already in the fifties, the increasing importance of issues related to problems of coexistence of different ethnic groups had led to the formation of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants and the Race Relations Board. The relatively early-developed concern for the creation of immigration policies had also pushed forward changes in the domain of education: in the early seventies the Department of Education and Science promoted an investigation into the situation of immigrants' children and into the pace of their adjustment to the British school system.[5] Later on, the British Government also convened a committee with the task of promoting multicultural education for both immigrants and natives, in order to enhance antiracist strategies.[6]

The achievement of any appreciable result in the creation of effective immigration policies took much longer in many other European countries. There, the

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[1] MARSDEN, A. (1994) *op. cit.*, p. 26
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 39
[3] SCHIERUP, C.U. (1990) "La situazione svedese" in: *Italia Europa e nuove immigrazioni*, Torino, Agnelli, as referred to by MARSDEN, A. (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 39
[4] ALUND A.; SCHIERUP, C. U. "Prescribed multiculturalism in crisis" in: ALUND A.; SCHIERUP, C. U. (1991) *Paradoxes of multiculturalism*. Aldershot, Avebury, pp. 1 - 20
[5] WONG, Lornita Y. F. (1992) *op. cit.*, p. 41
[6] The Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Ethnic Minority Children was specially convened in 1979 (Refer to JANSEN, Lionel "Education, pluralism and access to knowledge" in: CAMBRIDGE, A. X. and FEUCHTWANG, S. (Editors) (1990) *Antiracist strategies*. Aldershot, Avebury, pp. 91 - 121

new character of immigration, mainly the fact that it could no longer simply provide a country with a temporary supply of workers, was recognised only in later times. This was the case in Italy, where legislation first acknowledged fundamental rights for workers coming from extra-European countries only in 1986.[1] Researchers refer to extra-European immigration in Italy as a phenomenon "discovered" by the media at the end of the seventies.[2] This gives a clue to the circumstances under which the phenomenon has been approached. The striking delay in the effective acknowledgement of immigration, its impact, and its numbers was not only a matter confined to the legislative domain, but it also pertained to the much wider contexts of everyday-life and society. Its overdue recognition turned immigration into a sudden and alerting phenomenon to the eyes of Italian people, when immigrants had eventually already started to play a permanent role in the economy of many areas of Italy.

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[1] This happened after the coming into force of the Indemnity Act - Law 943, 30/12/1986. The impact of this law on immigration flows of Chinese people will be discussed in section 2.1 of this chapter. (See also: CALVANESE F. "Nuovi modelli migratori: il caso italiano" in: DELLE DONNE, M.; MELOTTI, U.; PETILLI, S. (Editors) (1993) *op. cit.*, p.175)

[2] Anna Marsden, who came to this conclusion, made an accurate review of news paper articles published in Italy during those years. A report of her investigation can be found in one section of her book about Chinese immigration in Italy [MARSDEN, A. (1994) *op. cit.*] and partly in the article "Le comunità cinesi viste dalla stampa" published in: CECCAGNO, A. (Editor) (1997), *Il caso delle comunità cinesi.* Roma, Armando Editore

1.2 CHINESE IMMIGRATION IN GREAT BRITAIN AND ITALY

1.2.1 ABOUT SOURCES, DATA AND DEVICES

This section covers the history of Chinese migration to Great Britain and Italy. The different phases of migration will be examined in order to lead to a better understanding of the structure, shape, and *raison d'être* of the present communities settled in the two countries.

Time of immigration and number of immigrants are fundamental data for the study of Chinese immigration to Great Britain and Italy. As far as time is concerned, I will highlight the more important phases of Chinese immigration in the two countries, and I will refer to studies and interpretations that have been formulated recently. Numbers represent a problem:[1] in fact, as has often been remarked by the authors of research studies on Chinese overseas communities, the Chinese population in Europe, and especially in Italy, has received little and only recent attention.[2] Despite the fact that an extensive literature exists about Chinese migration trends and about the process of adjustment of Chinese people to new standards of life, work and education, data about their numbers often fail to be reliable owing to a number of factors. On the one hand, there are circumstances resulting from the transient character of Chinese migration: Chinese migration waves have reached many countries, but first destinations have seldom turned out to be final ones. Intermediate sites are a common feature of migration flows from China. Hong Kong, for example, has been the launching-pad for a large number of Chinese immigrants. But the fact that there is no official record of the massive emigration that took off from Hong Kong before the eighties, makes it difficult to assess the reliability of figures on the subject.[3] Migration typologies also affect the reliability of data drawn from the analysis of destination countries' official records,

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[1] PIEKE, F. N. "Introduction: Chinese migrations compared" in: PIEKE, F. N and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 6

[2] CAMPANI, G. and MADDII, L. (1992) "Un monde à part: les Chinois en Toscane" in: MA MUNG, E. (Editor) (1992) *op. cit.*, pp. 51 - 71; MARSDEN, A. (1994) *op. cit.*; COLOGNA, D. "Dal Zhejiang a Milano: profili di una comunità in transizione" in: CECCAGNO, A. (Editor) (1997) *op. cit.*; COLOMBO, M.; MARCETTI, C.; OMODEO, M.; SOLANO, N. (1995) *Wenzhou - Firenze. Identità, imprese e modalità di insediamento dei cinesi in Toscana.* Firenze, Angelo Pontecorboli Editore; CARCHEDI, F.; FERRI, M. "The Chinese Presence in Italy: Dimensions and Structural Characteristics" in: BENTON, G. and PIEKE, F. N. (Editors) (1998) *op. cit.*; TOMBA, Luigi "Exporting the 'Wenzhou model' to Beijing and Florence: Suggestions for a comparative perspective on labour and economic organization in two migrant communities" in: PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*

[3] SKELDON, R. "Hong Kong in International Migration System" in: SKELDON, R. (Editor) (1994) *op. cit.*, p. 27

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which only refer to entries and therefore fail to provide any further distinction between settlers and temporary sojourners. In Great Britain, before the census in 1991, the government did not collect information about people's ethnic origin to be included in the national census figures. Therefore, the researcher who studies census data about that time is only given the option to refer to the place of birth, which seldom constitutes sufficiently reliable grounds for the study of people's ethnic origin and for the study of their migration background.[1] On the other hand, the lack of reliability of data is strictly connected to the way European immigration policies have changed in the eighties. The fact that expulsion policies were strengthened and that additional regulations aiming to curtail the presence of foreign workers were adopted, provoked an increase in illegal immigration. Illegal immigration is a difficult domain to investigate, and it often goes beyond the possibility of researchers to provide reliable data about its numbers.

As a consequence of the difficulties related to the collection of reliable data, the following presentation of Chinese immigration to Great Britain and Italy will only partly be based on figures, and the description of present Chinese communities in Great Britain and Italy will mainly draw from other researchers' studies and from personal fieldwork carried out during summer 1998.

1.2.2 EVALUATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUSH AND PULL FACTORS: THE ADJUSTMENT OF CHINESE MIGRATION TO IMMIGRATION POLICIES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND ITALY

In order to study the phenomenon of Chinese immigration and settlement in foreign countries, researchers often refer to the pattern device:[2] for each phase, they individuate the dominant features of the phenomenon. I shall follow their example and, as a first step, divide the history of Chinese adjustment to life in Great Britain and Italy into phases. Elements for this outline derive from the above description of the three main periods of immigration to Europe since the end of the Second World War, and from the description of the main characteristics of Chinese immigration throughout its development in Britain and Italy.

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[1] ROBINSON, V.: "Une minorité invisible: les Chinois au Royaume-Uni" in: MA MUNG, E. (Editor) (1992) *op. cit.*, p. 10
[2] WANG Gungwu (1991) *China and the Chinese overseas*, Singapore, Times Academic Press, p. 4; ROBINSON, V. "Une minorité invisible: les Chinois au Royaume-Uni" in: MA MUNG, E. (Editor) (1992) *op. cit.*, p. 12

1.2.2.1 GREAT BRITAIN: THE THREE PATTERNS

Great Britain was one of the first European countries to which Chinese people migrated. In the very beginning Chinese people who landed in Great Britain were mainly seamen who had taken advantage of the chance to leave the southern coasts of China and Hong Kong to seek a better living abroad. They sailed on ships of the East India Company and reached ports such as Cardiff, Liverpool and London, where slowly they managed to cope with the new reality that surrounded them. This first phase of immigration, characterized by a predominance of seamen among immigrants,[1] is broadly referred to as the old or the "pioneer" pattern.[2] Although it deserves to be mentioned as the initial phase of the phenomenon, I shall not try to examine it in detail: it developed during the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth, which means that it is beyond the scope of this investigation.

The second phase has three distinctive features: a substantial increase in numbers of immigrants, a larger number of Chinese people starting to settle in Great Britain, and the spreading of the tendency to quit previous employment and look for jobs in different sectors among the Chinese people who had migrated overseas earlier. According to several studies, this pattern developed during the first decades of the twentieth century,[3] whereas Monica Taylor, while examining settlement and demography of Chinese immigration in the United Kingdom, refers to the features of this phase as features that only developed in the post-war period.[4] It is very difficult, in fact, to precisely define the beginning and end of immigration phases. Phases often overlap, in the sense that features that seem to pertain to one period, might well continue to exist, and slowly develop, into others. In order to identify the span of time to which this second pattern of immigration could be assigned, I chose to take into

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[1] Additional factors that concurred to the increase in number of seamen are the opening of the Suez Channel in 1869, and the birth of new companies in Britain which were developing their trade activities with China. [See: ROBINSON, V. "Une minorité invisible: les Chinois au Royaume-Uni" in: MA MUNG, E. (Editor) (1992) *op. cit.*, p. 13]

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 12

[3] See, for example, NG, K. C. (1968) *The Chinese in London.* London, Oxford University Press; ROBINSON,V. in: MA MUNG, E. (Editor) (1992) *op. cit.*; and WANG Gungwu (1991) *op. cit.*

[4] Monica Taylor analyses the phenomenon the other way round: she speaks in fact about emigration (and not immigration) phases. Nevertheless, the three phases she identifies correspond to three phases of Chinese people settlement in the U. K.: one pre-war phase in which immigrants were single men who went to Britain as sailors; and two post-war phases, one in which immigrants were going to U. K. for work, and another one in which they were joined by their families. [See: TAYLOR, Monica J. (1987) *op. cit.*, pp. 30 - 48]

consideration its main characteristics first: the period in which these characteristics fully developed for the first time, will then be referred to as the second phase. A large number of Chinese immigrants, previously recruited as seamen and therefore living in the dock areas in London, Liverpool and Cardiff,[1] started to enter the laundry business during the years after the First World War.[2] Occupational change was concomitant to the movement of the London Chinese community to Gerrard Street, in the area of Soho, where the restaurant activities were rapidly growing in number in the late forties and early fifties. But the steady increase in numbers of Chinese immigrants engaged in activities other than shipping came during the fifties and up to 1962. This seems to have been the consequence of the large number of people arriving from the New Territories and of the lack of restrictions on entering the U. K. for British subjects (a category including the Chinese people born in Hong Kong). The pioneers' experience, together with the development of non-restrictive immigration policies by the British government, opened the way to the wave of immigrants from Hong Kong. And through this new flow an immigration process based on migration chains was eventually fully activated towards the U. K. as well.[3] I shall then refer to the second phase of Chinese immigration as the "chain migration" pattern and indicate the two decades after the Second World War as the period of its development.

The dominant feature of the third phase of Chinese migration to the United Kingdom is that it involved a large number of wives and children. The trend for family reunion began during the sixties.[4] The uncertainties caused by the Chinese cultural revolution, the difficulties for Chinese migrants to fully adjust to British society, and the growing success of Chinese restaurants and takeaways were among the major factors accounting for the decision made by Chinese people settled in the United Kingdom to encourage their spouses and the young members of their families to join them overseas. Therefore I shall refer to this phase as "the family reunion" pattern. Despite the legislative attempts brought about by the Commonwealth Immigrants' Act of 1968 and by the Immigration Act of 1971[5] in order to curtail immigration, it was mainly on the

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[1] Chinese communities of the so called pioneer pattern were settled around Limehouse and Pennyfields, adjacent to the West Indian Docks, in London and around Pitt Street in Liverpool. (*Ibid.*, p. 31)

[2] Monica Taylor reports the figure from the 1931 Census, where the number of Chinese laundries in the U. K. is over 500. (*Ibid.*, p. 33)

[3] Chain migration is a dominant feature of Chinese migration which had already featured in Chinese migration in South East Asia.

[4] TAYLOR, Monica J. (1987) *op. cit.*, pp. 37 - 38

[5] The 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants' Act, forbade entry to Hong Kong Chinese children who were not accompanied by their mothers. Moreover, the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1971 extended work permit quotas and limitations already in force for Hong Kong Chinese since 1962, to Chinese people whose origins were not in the Commonwealth. As a matter of fact the consequences of these new

grounds of the regulations contained in those Acts that, within the context of Chinese migration, the family reunion pattern developed. The upsurge that took place during those years testifies to the way Chinese immigration adapted to the introduction and later extension of the work voucher system.[1] Moreover, the fact that the immigration law in 1968 made it necessary for wives to accompany their children when entering Great Britain, contributed to the success of catering activities: the employment of family members and relatives (cheap labour) made it easier for Chinese catering businesses to keep their prices low and maintain competitiveness.

1.2.2.2 ITALY: A PATH TOWARDS VISIBILITY

While considering the case of Chinese migration to Italy, it is important to keep in mind that it represents a quite recent phenomenon. Despite the fact that a few Chinese had already come to work in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, their numbers only increased during the last thirty years. Moreover, the Chinese presence in Italy has been almost ignored or at least underestimated for a long time. This underestimation is partly derived from the lack of readiness of the country to devise policies addressed to non-EU immigration. The fact that its history in the context of migration both in and out of Europe had made of Italy a country with a strong emigration tradition until the early seventies, accounts for the inadequacy of its immigration policies and immigration monitoring mechanisms.[2] It also accounts for the way in which it has heavily affected immigration typologies, since the lack of adequate policies and regulations has provoked an upsurge of clandestine "hidden" immigration. Both push and pull factors represent key elements for the description of the development of Chinese communities in Italy. I shall therefore identify the phases of Chinese immigration to Italy and relate them to the push factors originating the flows. Then I shall highlight the steps through which Chinese presence has gradually become a visible phenomenon, and discuss the

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regulations were the speeding up of family reunion process and the transformation of Chinese community structure in terms of age and sex. [ROBINSON, V. in: MA MUNG, E. (Editor) (1992) *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20]

[1] "There were three type of vouchers, A, B and C, in the voucher system. Category A voucher were for those who had specific jobs to come to Britain; category B vouchers were for those with skills useful to Britain; and category C vouchers were for unskilled labourers (Gordon and Klug, 1985). According to O' Neil (1972), many of the Chinese in Britain came with the 'A' vouchers." [WONG, Lornita Y. F. (1992) *op. cit.*, p. 25: note 2]

[2] I am referring here to the fact that large-scale monitoring on immigration, including disaggregated data about place of origin, occupation, age and sex ratios, has been produced only very recently. It is mainly through the analysis of data collected after the coming into force of the new immigration policies in the eighties that demographers and statisticians were able to produce relatively accurate figures.

circumstances which have opened the way to this process.

The first phase of Chinese immigration to Italy developed during the first half of the twentieth century. In terms of numbers it almost had no relevance. As in the case of the UK, the importance of this first phase relates to the fact that it laid the basis for the following flows. It consisted of a large majority of male migrants who had set off from China, mainly from the southern region of Zhejiang Province,[1] for temporary migration. Many of them reached the big cities of the north of Italy, Milan and Turin, from previous destination in other European countries, mainly France and the Netherlands.

The second phase developed in the 1950s. During this decade the chain migration pattern started to take shape: the arrival of relatives from Mainland China was encouraged by a shift to new occupational typologies which could grant to the new comers immediate employment. The scant attention focused on extra-European immigration in Italy in those years also constituted an incentive for Chinese immigrants' self-organisation: although on the one hand it meant that they were granted no provisions, on the other it also meant that they could easily take advantage of this general blindness to articulate their activity and become highly competitive in the sectors they had chosen, mainly catering and leather crafts.

The third phase is the most important one. It developed at the end of the 1970s and all throughout the following decade, a period of time to which researchers commonly refer as a turning point in the immigration trend to Italy. The phenomenon derived its importance from the increasing number of people it involved, and from the steps it took towards visibility, in the Italian context. Many Chinese migrants who were entering the country during those years followed the path of their predecessors through other European countries, especially France and the Netherlands. The factor that needs to be underlined in the analysis of this re-migration process is the shape that chain migration has given to it. The majority of migrants landing on these European countries, in fact, were still coming from the southern part of Zhejiang, and mainly from the Wenzhou area. Research work carried out during the 1990s on Chinese immigration in Italy connects the significant number of arrivals from Zhejiang with the economic situation of that province and with the government policies that had determined this situation.[2] Among the relevant push factors for this migration wave were the economic

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[1] THUNØ, Mette "Moving Stones from China to Europe" in PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, pp. 159 - 180 (p. 161)
[2] See for example CAMPANI, G. e MADDII, L.: "Un monde à part: les Chinois en Toscane" in: MA MUNG, E. (Editor) (1992) *op. cit.*, pp. 51 - 17; MARSDEN, A. (1994) *op. cit.*; and TOMBA, Luigi "Exporting the 'Wenzhou model' to Beijing and Florence: Suggestions for a comparative perspective on

reforms promoted in China since 1978, and the consequent population movements within the borders of the Chinese southern provinces. The household responsibility system introduced in the rural areas, for example, had encouraged domestic sideline production and offered incentives for unrestricted use of surplus products. In combination with that, new policies were opening cities' free markets to peasants. The main consequence of this situation was a massive movement of people from rural to urban areas.[1] This trend alone could not have generated Chinese emigration towards European countries; yet, it constituted a strong incentive, especially after some provinces, like Zhejiang, had been opened to foreign investment and trade.[2] The striking result was that the majority of Chinese immigrants who arrived in Italy during the 1980s, had taken off from Zhejiang and followed the steps of their fellows, either temporarily sojourning in the Netherlands or in France, or joining them in Italy straightaway. As far as the host country is concerned, we shall take into consideration the factors that made Italy an appealing destination for Chinese migrants during those years. Apart from the presence of a scarcely visible Chinese community who could open the way to the chain migration pattern, the newly formulated regulations in Italian immigration policy during the late 1980s also emerge as a relevant pull factor. The coming into force of two indemnity acts in 1986 and in 1990[3] granted to non-EU immigrants the chance to regularize their position and apply for residence or work permits. While taking advantage of this opportunity and complying with the new immigration policies, the Chinese community started to openly reveal its presence. Entitlement to independent business,[4] together with the enhancement of family reunion proceedings, gave new impetus to the development of the Chinese "ethnic economy",[5] and encouraged further immigration.

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labour and economic organization in two migrant communities" in: PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, pp. 280 - 294

[1] YANG Xiushi and GOLDSTAIN, Sidney (1990) "Population movement in Zhejiang Province, China: the impact of government policies" in: *International Migration Review*, vol. XXIV, n. 3, pp. 509 - 533

[2] COLOGNA, D. "Dal Zhejiang a Milano" in: CECCAGNO, A. (Editor) (1997) *op. cit.*, p. 27

[3] Sanatorie (Indemnity acts): Law 943/1986 and Law 39/1990. These laws clarified the circumstances of immigration and made it possible to apply to immigrants various social policies. The importance of these two laws derives from the fact that they were concerned with the formal legalization of immigrants without a resident permit provided that they could prove they had arrived to Italy before a given date. [CARCHEDI, F. and FERRI, M. "The Chinese presence in Italy" in: BENTON, G. and PIEKE, F. N. (Editors) (1998) *op. cit.*, p. 262]

[4] The relevant increase in the number of permits issued for "autonomous work" was mainly subsequent to the second regularization, in 1990. [TOMBA, L. in: PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*, pp. 280 - 294]

[5] The definition of "Chinese ethnic economy" is broadly adopted by researchers and is here intended to refer to those sectors of the economy in which Chinese immigrants have acquired competitive skills, conforming to market demand and community structure prerequisites.

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1.2.3 PRESENT CHINESE COMMUNITIES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND ITALY

1.2.3.1 GREAT BRITAIN

Accurate information about the number of Chinese people in the United Kingdom was first given in the Census reports of 1991,[1] which is the main source from which the data I am referring to for the description of the present Chinese community were derived.[2] According to the Census the number of Chinese in Britain in 1991 was 156,938. In order to produce useful guidelines for the description of the shape of the community I analyse this figure along with a further discussion of disaggregated data: namely country of origin (along with some information about migration paths), gender and age distribution, occupation, and education. The structure of the community, and the frame of the relation-networks among its members and between the community and the mother country will be discussed in a following section.

The Chinese ethnic minority group is a relatively small one if compared to the number of people that constitute other ethnic groups in Great Britain.[3] The largest percentage of Chinese people comes from Hong Kong, they amount to 53,473, i.e. 34.07 per cent. Chinese people born in the United Kingdom constitute the second sub-group according to size. This is an interesting piece of data: although the Chinese community is a young one compared with the other ethnic communities in Britain, the fact that the second generation - i.e. British born Chinese population - amounts to 28.44 per cent (44,635) of the total of Chinese people gives evidence of a fairly advanced stage in the process of settlement and adjustment to British life. Significant figures also refer to South East Asian Chinese who come from the Chinese communities in Malaysia and Singapore (20,001; 12.75 per cent). The group of Vietnamese Chinese (9,448; 6.02 per cent)[4] deserves some attention too: it should be noted that, as a consequence of their

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[1] Before 1991 figures about the size of the Chinese population in Great Britain were based either on the estimates produced by the local councils or on the country of birth of the head of households, and therefore failed to be accurate.

[2] OPCS (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys) (1996) *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census - Volume Two.* London, HMSO

[3] The Chinese group is the eighth group according to size. The largest ethnic minority group is the Indian (840,255), the second is the Black-Caribbean (499,964), the third is the Pakistani (476,555), the fourth is the Black-African (212,362). The table on ethnic distribution derived from the 1991 Census also includes Other-Asian as the fifth group (197,534), Black-Other as the sixth group (178,401) and Bangladeshi as the seventh (162,835). [OPCS (1996) *op, cit.*, pp. 403 - 406]

[4] See Table 7.3 (Country of origin of Chinese, Great Britain, 1991) in: OPCS (1996) *op. cit.*, p. 162

refugee status, their entry to Great Britain has been regulated by a relatively non selective system. Their admittance did not depend on the possession of transferable skills, since they were not required to be issued with employment vouchers and a large majority among them found it difficult to find a job.[1] As far as Chinese coming from Mainland China and Taiwan are concerned, they only make up 12.83 per cent of the total (20,141 out of the estimated total of 156,938). Finally, some 12 percent of the Chinese people who live in Great Britain, come from about 80 other countries all over the world.

According to data about gender distribution, the Chinese community in Great Britain is a balanced community. Sex ratio figures from the 1991 Census report that there are 102 women for every 100 men. This feature represents a dominant distinction between the Chinese community and the other ethnic groups settled in Great Britain: in fact, especially for those groups with many economic immigrants, a general trend to excess of male members exists. However, further examination reveals substantial differences in sex distribution within some subgroups of Chinese identified according to the country of origin. While Chinese migration from South East Asia is clearly dominated by the migration of women (with an estimated ratio of 161 women for every 100 men in the case of Chinese people from Malaysia and Singapore), together with the British born Chinese who also have a sex ratio of 100:108 with an excess of females, the Chinese from Hong Kong are the only group marked by an excess of men (100:99).[2] Different economic status at the time of migration, as well as different reasons for emigration - hence different expectations -[3] may account for the substantial differences in sex distribution within the Chinese population in Great Britain. The Chinese community has already been defined as a young one. Besides the fact that the Chinese presence in Great Britain is considered a relatively recent phenomenon, its young character is also to be ascribed to the fact that the average Chinese person in Britain is 29 years old - nine years younger that the average White person[4]. Additional statistical calculation indicates that the mean age among immigrant Chinese is 36 while that of a British-born Chinese is 13.

Data about education need to be considered after figures related to age structure:

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[1] JONES, P. (1982) *Vietnamese refugees: a study of their reception and resettlement in the U. K.* London, Home Office Research and Planning Unit.
[2] CHENG Y.: "The Chinese: upwardly mobile" in: OPCS (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys) (1996) *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census - Volume Two.* London, HMSO, p. 165
[3] Refer to the presentation of push factors briefly outlined in the first part of paragraph 2.1
[4] CHENG Y., HEATH, A. (1994) *Education and class: Chinese in Britain and the United States.* Adershot, Avebury Press

a first glance at numbers reveals that British-born Chinese have the lowest level of qualification among all subgroups of the Chinese. But the explanation might partly derive from the fact that being fairly young, a large number of this subgroup may still be engaged in full-time education. Other data on education provide an overall description of high levels of education according to degree standards and qualifications: the Chinese as a whole appear to be better educated than the White population (2.3 per cent have higher degrees and 8.4 per cent have first degrees while 0.6 per cent and 4.6 per cent are the figures respectively related to the White population). The Census does not provide information on the educational level of Chinese people without qualifications.

Occupational distribution is commonly referred to in order to identify the percentage of the Chinese employed in catering and related industries. The general assumption is that the Chinese presence in catering is over-represented. But reports from surveys undergone at different times reveal a significant variation: from 90 percent in the estimates of 1983 published by the Home Affairs Committee[1] down to around 67 percent in 1991.[2] Finally the better reliability of the Census, with data covering the whole Chinese population in Britain, indicates that 55 percent of the Chinese work in distribution, mainly in restaurants, takeaways, and cafes. The same source provides further disaggregation of data which shows that while 58 percent of the Hong Kong Chinese and 42 percent of the Chinese from other parts of the world are employed in this industry, only 10 percent of South East Asian Chinese belong to this occupational category.

1.2.3.2 ITALY

The set of information and data which I have used to describe the Chinese community in Italy is chiefly derived from four different types of source: a) studies on the history of migration movements to Europe;[3] b) recent articles and surveys that focus on the description of Chinese communities in Europe and provide details for comparisons among them;[4] c) disaggregated data contained in the annual reports on

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[1] Home Affairs (1985) *Chinese community in Britain*. London, HMSO
[2] CHENG, Y.; HEATH, A. (1994) *op. cit.*
[3] Articles contained in: DELLE DONNE, M.; MELOTTI, U.; PETILLI, S. (Editors) (1993) *op. cit.*
[4] MARSDEN, A. (1994) *op. cit.*; CAMPANI, G.; CARCHEDI, F.; TASSINARI, A. (Editors) (1994) *op. cit.*, and other articles contained in the monographic issue "La Diaspora Chinoise en Occident" in:

national immigration in Italy; d) information collected during fieldwork in Italy from June to September 1998.[1]

As far as the history of Chinese migration to Italy is concerned, major studies on the subject have pointed out that Chinese people began to migrate there during the first quarter of the twentieth century.[2] They were mainly male migrants and many of them arrived from France where they had been previously granted a temporary permit to stay in order to supply the host country with labour while the native young men were at the front during the First World War. The Chinese community in Italy grew slowly and remained almost invisible to the host country people and institutions throughout the following fifty years. It was only at the beginning of the eighties, after the adoption of the open-door policy by Deng Xiaoping in China and after the changes of the migration policies in force in Italy, that the Chinese presence underwent a sudden increase and gradually became visible (see section 2.1). Chinese migration to Italy is therefore referred to as a relatively young phenomenon.

Migration chains have played a fundamental role in the movement of large numbers of Chinese people from China to every foreign country in which Chinese communities have settled. The shaping impact of migration chains determines a common geographical origin for community members, as does the similar migration path that migrants of different generations have followed. A vast majority of the Chinese migrants who have settled in Italy, in fact, come from the southern part of Zhejiang,[3] and many of those who entered the country up to the end of the eighties had also previously lived in France or in the Netherlands. Moreover, migration chains also contributed to shaping the demographic composition of migration flows: as soon as the coming into force of family reunion procedures had made it possible, large numbers of wives and children started to migrate too. They followed the steps of their predecessors in their migration itinerary, and many of them were recruited into overseas Chinese enterprises.

R.E.M.I. (1992) *op. cit.*, in BENTON, G. and PIEKE, F. N. (Editors) (1998) *op. cit.*, and in PIEKE, F. N. and MALLEE, H. (Editors) (1999) *op. cit.*

[1] Through interviews mainly with staff of some Chinese associations and members of a few organisations that provide services and assistance to local Chinese communities in Italy: the Overseas Chinese Association Office in Milan, the *Ouhua Shibao* editing board in Rome, and the Center for Research and Immigration Services in Prato.

[2] MARSDEN, A. (1994) *op. cit.*; CAMPANI, G.; CARCHEDI, F.; TASSINARI, A. (Editors) (1994) *op. cit.*; COLOGNA, D.: "Dal Zhejiang a Milano: profilo di una comunità in transizione" in: CECCAGNO, A. (Editor) (1997) *op. cit.*, p. 26

[3] Anna Marsden in her book *Cinesi e fiorentini a confronto* (1994), reports of the case of Guifeng, a small village in the district of Rui'an, where around one thousand of the six thousand inhabitants have migrated to Italy.

Despite the power that migration chains have had in bringing about the concentration of Chinese people with common origin in a few main areas of the country, there is no real chinatown[1] in any of the Italian cities in which Chinese people have settled. Yet, the high concentration of Chinese people within certain zones of these cities as well as their occupational distribution within a few main sectors of activity make it possible to speak about Chinese areas (*quartieri cinesi*) and Chinese ethnic business. What needs to be noticed, in fact, is the high adaptability of Chinese entrepreneurial activity to different economic situations: Chinese people in Italy have succeeded in entering sectors of activity which were either no longer or not yet competitive on the Italian market.[2] Profiting from the advantages of high mobility and the low cost of labour recruited within the net of tight relations existing among people from the same province, district or family, Chinese entrepreneurs have succeeded in making these activities more competitive and therefore in making their services appealing to the Italian market. The Chinese distribution pattern has been influenced by the adjustment of the community to the local situations and by its consequent economic growth. From the big urban centres - Turin, Milan, Florence and Rome - where the first communities were concentrated, Chinese people have moved to the suburbs and to some provincial towns in the northern and central areas of Italy, where they could profit from better employment opportunities in new occupational areas. In recent years Chinese people also began to scatter towards the southern regions of the country.[3]

According to the dossier compiled by Caritas Diocesana in 1997, the Chinese presence in Italy at the end of 1996 amounted to 29,073 people,[4] and in June 1998 the Caritas Documentation Centre, in Rome, agreed to provide up-to-date figures about the

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[1] Chinatown is the name used to refer to the area in a town where the following conditions exist: the large majority of its inhabitants are Chinese or of Chinese origin; if the chinatown first took shape subsequent to a process of discrimination and segregation, it then continues to exist when that process ceases, as the result of the independent choice of its inhabitants; the Chinese community that lives there is structured in order to meet the needs (information accommodation, employment advice, education provisions...) of its own members; it survives independently although some activities necessarily connect its inhabitants with the society of the host country; it has a double function: one the one hand it is the first referent for the new comer (who may be provided temporary accommodation and work), on the other it is the place where Chinese culture and traditions are maintained despite the fact that it is located in a foreign country. [MEO, Antonella: *La Comunità Cinese di Torino*, unpublished degree theses, 1989 - 1990, University of Turin, quoted in: MARSDEN, A. (1994) *op. cit.*, pp. 119 - 120]

[2] I may here name the two cases of the catering and textile industries, which will be discussed in detail later on in this section.

[3] The persistence of this distribution pattern in progressively smaller towns and toward the southern regions of the country can be derived from an overview of the results of recent surveys and mainly from the figures reported in the records about immigration compiled by the Ministry of the Interior. [See CARITAS (1996 and 1997) *Immigrazione: dossier statistico*. Anterem, Roma]

[4] Figures reported in the present paragraph refer to the presence of "regular" immigrants. Reliable estimates about the real Chinese presence in Italy, including illegal immigrants who still have not obtained nor applied for a residence permit, are not available.

Chinese presence in Italy at December 1997, amounting then to 37,838 people (see Table I). Data are mainly drawn from the archive of work and resident permits compiled for the Ministry of the Interior (Police Reports). Additional information has been provided by ISTAT (Institute for Statistics), INPS (National Institute for Pensions and Social Security), and by the two Departments of Education and Labour. While taking into account the following figures a few points need to be made clear:

a.   An overestimation for figures provided by the Ministry of the Interior has been detected: these figures include permits which have recently expired.

b.   There is an underestimation related to the number of sojourners: exact information about under age immigrants is not always included in the Police Reports on which the estimates from the Ministry of the Interior are based.

c.   It has been observed that during the past years overestimation and underestimation (as for point I. and II.) eventually balanced out. On the grounds of past years experience, then, the resulting figures are taken as reliable.

d.   Illegal immigration still represents a problem for the collection of reliable data. Additional information about illegal immigrants was derived from a report by the Ministry of the Interior addressed to the Parliament at the end of May 1998, and taken into account for the compilation of the table.

As appears from the table, Chinese presence scatters all over the country. Yet, the largest numbers of Chinese people are still concentrated in the northern and central regions of Italy, chiefly in Lombardy, Tuscany and Lazio. It is in fact in a few cities within these three regions that the largest communities have settled. I will focus my attention on the Chinese communities of three cities, each of them representative of one of the three regions: Milan, representative of Lombardy, is the place where the first Chinese community in Italy was settled. Prato, which I chose as representative of Tuscany, hosts a quite young Chinese community: it shares some common features with the community settled in Florence, the capital of the region; yet its demographic composition, distribution pattern, and size are of particular interest for additional unique traits. And finally Rome, representative of Lazio, which is the first halting place in Italy for a large number of Chinese immigrants. As the capital of the country and the Italian city that hosts the largest number of immigrants from all over the world, Rome has also been an interesting sample for comparisons among the settlement patterns of different communities.

The Chinese community in Milan, besides being the largest in Italy, is also the oldest in the country: it was in Milan that the first Chinese community took shape

during the twenties and thirties, although its original nucleus has hardly anything to do with the present community. Originally, the community was mainly made up of male migrants who had given up their chance to go back to China from France and other European countries after the First World War.[1] Many of them eventually got married to Italian women. Among their children only a few speak and understand Mandarin and most of them do not even speak the dialect of their Chinese parents and grandparents. The main contribution of this first group of Chinese people to the present community in Milan is that it laid down the basis for forthcoming migration. The activation of chain migration, in fact, made it easier for newcomers during the following decades to adjust to life in the host country: they could follow the steps of their forebears who had already settled in the city of Milan, and profit from their experience in order to solve many problems related to their arrival and settlement without addressing their queries to the host country services. Migration from China has been following a rather different pattern over the last two decades: whole families, including children, rather than single males have been migrating. Moreover, a large majority of the Chinese people who have been arriving in Milan during the last few years come from the area around the city of Wenzhou (see reference map in Illustration I). This fact features in the new character of the community: Southern Zhejiang continues to be the place of origin for most of the Chinese people who settle in Milan as well as in the whole country; yet, while in the past the majority of them came from Qingtian district and were mainly made up of professionals with some job qualifications, more recent migration flows include large groups of rural people from small villages scattered in the mountains in the district of Wencheng. Their increased numbers have turned the dialect of Wencheng into a lingua franca for the community in Milan.[2] Further evidence of the difference between the original settlement and the present Chinese community of Milan is to be seen in the way the so called "chinatown"[3] has changed. The small area including via Canonica, via Rosmini and via Paolo Sarpi, next to Garibaldi railway station, is the place where the first Chinese people in Milan began to settle during the thirties; it was then a peripheral area of the town. But the growth of the city itself turned the area into part of the city centre, while its liveliness and the development of local craftsmanship gradually made it

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[1] COLOGNA, D. "Dal Zhejiang a Milano: profilo di una comunità in transizione" in CECCAGNO A. (Editor) (1997) *op. cit.*, p. 26
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 29
[3] Although there is no real chinatown in Milan (and nowhere in Italy) the English word *chinatown* is the name commonly used by the people who live in Milan as an alternative to *quartiere cinese* [Chinese area or district] when talking about the area Canonica-Sarpi, where many Chinese people have been living and working since their first arrival in town.

one of the centres for commercial activity. During the eighties, when the number of Chinese people suddenly began to rise and the Chinese presence finally made itself visible, a large number of new shops were opened and a wide range of services were set up by members of the community. Among these were Chinese food-stores and Chinese supermarkets, travel agencies and international phone-call services, Chinese book-shops and Chinese videotape rentals. The growth of Chinese activity within the area, together with the gradual saturation of the market (in particular the sectors of catering and leather-crafts) pushed many Chinese immigrants to move to other parts of the city: since the early nineties new Chinese restaurants and shops have been opening in less central areas of Milan. In the north-eastern part,[1] for example, the settlement of Chinese people during the last decade has been following the steps of the first Chinese settlement in the area Canonica-Sarpi. Once again a non central area has been chosen for the advantageous conditions it offers to the new settlers: less fierce competition and availability of low cost accommodation in large workshops. However, the area next to Garibaldi train station, not far from the Chinese consulate, continues to be the original Chinese centre, and the Association of the Overseas Chinese in Milan (米兰华侨华人共商会 - *Milan huaqiao huaren gongshanghui*) is located there. The Association provides several services for the Chinese community in Milan, such as referring people to the competent offices for documents, and making contacts between Chinese people who look for work and Chinese and Italian people who look for workers. Part of the staff is also in charge of the collection of news from China, from the Chinese communities settled in other parts of the world, and news about life and work in Milan, to be spread within the community through a monthly newsletter. Among the initiatives promoted by the association over the last three years is the organisation of Chinese language classes for Chinese children. These classes have been taking place during the school year on Saturdays and Sundays but only a relatively small number of pupils attend them, mainly because of logistical problems and difficulties related to the work schedules of their parents and relatives. Still the desire of Chinese immigrants to make their children aware of their mother culture through the study of Chinese language is strong,[2] and this is also witnessed by the large numbers among them who have been sending their children back to China for a few years at pre-school and primary school age.

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[1] The area that lies between viale Padova and viale Monza.

[2] Interviews in June 1998 with some Chinese people settled in Milan demonstrated that: among the reasons why Chinese consider Chinese language mastery important for their children are the value of the cultural heritage it represents and the better chances this knowledge would offer their children for careers.

The situation in Rome is quite different. The capital, in fact, hosts a large number of immigrants from all over the world: it is mainly a halting place for people who arrive in Italy looking for work and seeking better living conditions. Chinese restaurants are nowadays scattered all over the town, but many Chinese food-stores and other Chinese shops are still located in the area next to Termini railway station, which has long been the area with the closest resemblance to what could be called a chinatown. However, many other ethnic groups, mainly from the Philippines, India and northern African countries, live and work in the same area and this is one of the reasons why it is not possible to refer to that part of the city as the Roman Chinatown. Other groups of Chinese people have settled in the semi-peripheral area that includes most of the working-class neighbourhoods along the Prenestina, the Casilina and the Tuscolana, where many leather and garment workshops are located, and in the residential suburb area Nona, where they are mainly engaged in domestic work.[1] Along with the history of Chinese settlement in Italy, the development of the Chinese community in Rome can be divided into two main phases:[2] during the first phase people who had left Mainland China in the two decades from 1930 to 1949, began to settle in the capital. Among them a large number were from Zhejiang. The second phase is partly characterised by the arrival of people from Hong Kong and Taiwan with the intention of making investments in the catering business; but the largest group of Chinese still comes from Zhejiang province. Despite the fact that in Rome, where thousands of people from non-EU countries live, the government and some non governmental organisations have made some attempts to set up services aimed at providing assistance for the housing, health and employment of immigrants, Chinese people have seldom taken advantage of such provisions. It is mainly within the community that these problems are dealt with, either through personal informal contacts among its members, or through the services provided by the Chinese associations. There exist in fact a few Chinese associations in Rome that gather people who either originate from the same province in China or have common business interests. However, in some cases, co-operation between Italian and Chinese people has proved to be successful. An outstanding example is represented by the *Ouhua Shibao* (欧华时报) editing board where a staff made up of teachers, cultural mediators and students is committed to the organisation of Chinese language

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[1] CARCHEDI, F.; SARAVIA, P. "La presenza cinese in Italia, uno sguardo d'insieme" a paper presented at the conference *Scuola e Immigrazione: I Cinesi in Italia* held at the University of Florence in May 1993.
[2] GALLI, Susanna: "Le comunità cinesi in Italia: caratteristiche orgnizzative e culturali" in: CAMPANI, G.; CARCHEDI, F.; TASSINARI, A. (Editors) (1994) *op. cit.*, pp. 82 - 85

classes and to the publication of a newspaper for the Chinese community. They co-operate with the *Forum Comunità Straniere in Italia* (Italian Foreign Communities Forum) and have sometimes been sponsored by the local authorities in order to set up initiatives and services addressed to the Chinese community.

Prato is a small city next to Florence, in Tuscany. The Chinese community in this area is much younger then those in the cities of Milan and Rome. The number of Chinese residents in Prato, in fact, only started to rise remarkably at the end of the eighties. It rose from 38 to 1,009 people during the two years from December 1989 to December 1991,[1] and numbers grew gradually over the following six years. According to the data provided by Caritas (as in Table I) the number of Chinese people resident in Prato in December 1997 is 2,417.[2] In order to appreciate better the peculiarities of the Chinese community in Prato it is necessary to consider some aspects of the history of Chinese immigration in the broader context of the whole province of Florence.[3] It is in fact in the regional capital, and mainly in the central area of S. Lorenzo, that Chinese people who had first reached Tuscany started to settle. After the development of the catering business, which had almost reached the limit of expansion within the city area by the end of the eighties, new employment opportunities started to be taken up by the Chinese community in the leather and textile industries. This occupational diversification has been playing a fundamental role in the distribution of Chinese people all over the Florentine area. The success of Chinese enterprises, mainly due to their prices and competitive speed of production, led to a further development of the leather and tailoring industries and to the organisation of subsidiary activities in some peripheral areas of the province. Among new Chinese settlements resulting from the growth of these activities are the community of San Donnino, in the area of Campi Bisenzio,[4] and the community of Prato. In these areas Chinese enterprises could take advantage of the existence of ready built workshops and infrastructures left behind by the local textile and leather industries which had not recovered from the market crisis of the preceding decades. Large scale migration to Prato is therefore fairly recent, however the local Chinese community has been profiting from the longer experience of the community previously settled in the Florentine area, from which it has originated. In

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[1] These figures were provided by the Center for Research and Immigration Services (Centro Ricerche e Servizi per l'Immigrazione) of Prato.

[2] The figure provided by the Center for Research and Immigration Services is slightly different: 2,457 Chinese people resident in Prato at the end of 1997.

[3] I refer to Prato as part of the province of Florence while considering the history of the Chinese community in the area. It should be pointed out, though, that as from a few years ago Prato no longer officially belongs to the province of Florence.

[4] Campi Bisenzio is the name of the area that spreads out north-westwards from Florence to Prato.

1994 the Welfare Council of Prato (*Assessorato ai Servizi Sociali e Sanità*) set up a Service Centre for Chinese immigrants: the aim was to help Chinese people who live in Prato to deal with almost any kind of matter related to their adjustment to life in the city. The staff who work at the Centre include translators and interpreters who often co-operate with legal consultants: together they have been producing up-to-date translated information about procedures to go through in order to be issued with work or resident permits, and in order to solve legal matters related chiefly to business. Moreover, Chinese families have been asking the Centre for advice on health and housing services, language classes for adults and children's education. Since 1994 the staff of the centre, with the support of the University of Florence, has also set up a data bank on the Chinese community of Prato. Every year they publish the results of their investigations focused on the growth of the community, its distribution pattern over the neighbouring area, the changes in its demographic composition and its economic development. According to the resulting profile, the Chinese community of Prato has an overall balanced gender distribution and includes a large percentage of youngsters and children.[1] A large majority of its members come from Zhejiang, with the district of Wencheng predominating although the number of migrants who come from Rui'an and from other small towns and villages next to Wenzhou is not much lower. A quite interesting feature of the Chinese community in Prato seems to be the fact that it includes a large number of children who were born in Italy, which may account for the short time needed by the Chinese community to adjust to the new environment. Among the occupational sectors entered by the majority of the Chinese people who live in Prato is the textile industry: this confirms a trend which is common all over Tuscany. What might be noticed, though, is that the catering industry, which has meant so much to the initial development of the community within the city of Florence, is a relatively new field of activity for the Chinese people of Prato, which began to grow only recently.[2] This shift from one occupational area to the other has been chiefly induced by the increasing competition among Chinese firms engaged in the textile and subsidiary industries, which eventually led to the saturation of the market and opened the way to new food-stores, bars and takeaways.

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[1] Over 14 percent of the Chinese people registered as residents in Prato are under 6, and 34 percent are under 20. ("Demographic composition of the Chinese community in Prato" - 1998 report edited by the Centre for Research and Immigration Services)

[2] Information derived from "Chinese enterprises" (section in the 1998 report edited by the Centre for Research and Immigration Services)

<u>CHAPTER 2</u>

"LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN CHINESE COMMUNITIES: PERSPECTIVES ON MANDARIN AS AN IDENTITY MARKER AND AN ASSET"

Introduction

This chapter investigates literacy and language use among the overseas Chinese communities. It points to the discussion of the symbolic power of language for the members of the Chinese communities settled in Europe, including both immigrants and their overseas-born descendants.

In the opening section I will refer to some relevant features of the overseas Chinese communities. I will take into account the data derived from the previous presentation of the history of Chinese migration to Europe and from late comparative research on the present Chinese communities in order to gather a first picture of language use within the Chinese communities, among the Chinese communities, between the overseas communities and the mother land, and between the Chinese communities (or its members) and the local communities of the host countries.

I will then discuss the issues of language choice and code shift, and refer to their relevance to the case of overseas Chinese and their sense of identity. The role of Mandarin will be taken into account too, while engaging in further comparisons between the case of the Chinese communities in Italy and the case of other overseas Chinese communities on which major research has already been undertaken.

Finally, I will refer to the case of literacy in Chinese among the members of the overseas Chinese community, with particular attention to the present situation among the people of Chinese origin in Italy, about which I was able to gather information through interviews, personal communication, and direct observation during my fieldwork in summer 1998 and winter 1999.

2.1 RELEVANT FEATURES OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON LANGUAGE USE

2.1.1 STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

In the last few years, many disciplines have contributed to the study of Chinese communities. Historians have devoted their attention to the study of the historical background and circumstances in which Chinese communities first took shape, and aimed at identifying the causes and effects of their consequent development. Demographers have investigated the significant changes originated by the population movements that generated the birth of Chinese communities. Sociologists have mainly focused their attention on the process of adjustment of overseas Chinese to life in the host countries. Great contributions to the understanding of Chinese community development have also come from those works that combined the outcomes of research undertaken in different fields. At times this combination has been addressed to the study of a particular context, either geographical, or historical, or defined with co-ordinates from both domains. At times the investigation has been focused on defined topics, and has drawn arguments from side research fields.

Among the most important achievements of recent combined research is the focus on issues that greatly contributed to the overcoming of widespread stereotypes about the Chinese community. The investigation of background experiences, migration causes, aims and patterns, has been a complementary tool for the understanding of Chinese communities' needs, and for the adoption of better ways to meet them.

The Chinese community has been defined as a self-sufficient, self-centred and closed system.[1] To what extent might these definitions be considered valid? to what extent are they stereotypes? The kinship network and the concentration of employment in specific sectors of the economy are elements which account for such definitions. Yet it might be noticed that these elements bear clear evidence of the way the Chinese community has indeed been adapting its growth and development to the situation available for them in the host countries. For instance, the concentration of employment in catering in the United Kingdom owes much to the economic success of the pioneers

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[1] The insistence on these features of the community is also evinced by the use of terms such as: "Urban 'Enclaves' ", "Un Monde à part" (les Chinois en Toscane), "Une Minorité invisible", "Immigrazione sileziosa" to refer to the Chinese communities.

in this sector, whose activity seemed to perfectly adapt to the local market and demands of the time in which it developed as a major trend. And the high concentration of employment in leather-ware and textile manufacturing in Italy testifies of a process of adjustment of the Chinese community to policies and work opportunities available in the country: it is with the coming into force of the indemnity acts of 1986 and 1990, that leather-craft business has become a fundamental sector of Chinese ethnic economy. It had already offered good chances of employment to a relevant number of Chinese people who were still working under illegal conditions; but when permits for autonomous work became available, it was also viewed as a domain in which entrepreneurship could be easily pursued. New employment opportunities for new immigrants could be offered in the leather-craft industry; moreover, the fact that Chinese entrepreneurs could rely on the commitment of relatives' and kin's work had made Chinese business highly competitive, especially in those sectors of industry, such as leather-craft, which were no longer competitive on the Italian economic scene. These examples show that the Chinese community should actually not be described as a closed and unwilling to change group, for it has succeeded in being flexible enough to adjust profitably to new circumstances.

In the light of such examples I will now focus on the outstanding characteristics of the Chinese communities in Great Britain and Italy. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the nature of Chinese immigration accounts for the structure of the present overseas communities. Moreover, the process of settlement of Chinese people into the territory and the socio-economic profile of the communities account for the different ways overseas Chinese relate to the other Chinese communities, to the mother country and to the outer world (the host society), after which the expression diaspora-like structure has been adopted. I will discuss to what extent this expression applies to the Chinese communities in Great Britain and Italy.

2.1.1.1 THE DIASPORA-LIKE STRUCTURE

The word diaspora means dispersion, and is used collectively to refer to the dispersed Jews after the Babylon captivity and to the settling of Jews in various non-Jewish communities outside Israel. As R. Skeldon has pointed out in his article about migration from Hong Kong, diaspora is a word heavy with implicit meaning: in fact, while referring specifically to the dispersal of the Jews from their homeland and

thereafter implying the idea of exile, it is not commonly used to describe migration of Europeans towards the New Worlds of America and Australia. These movements are better described through phrases such as conquest or settlement.[1] But diaspora has been adopted for the description of Chinese migration out of China because it provides the elements for a deeper understanding of the peculiar structure of the overseas Chinese community.[2]

The spreading of the notion of diaspora into present sociological and historical sciences seems to lack a proper theorisation: scholars do not always agree with its application to the Chinese community context. On the one hand, it appears to be too strictly connected to Jewish history; on the other, the use of the term diaspora appears to be out of place while simply referring to Chinese ubiquity in different parts of the world: under those circumstances diaspora merely happens to be a synonym for geographical dispersion. It should also be noted that the lack of a real geographical reference is another characteristic associated with the original meaning of diaspora: it has made it impossible to maintain contacts with the place of origin and consequently it has heavily affected and tightened the link to the mother culture. As I previously pointed out, Chinese migration has not been generated by one traumatic event but by a series of push and pull factors.[3] Yet, the link to the mother culture has always remained very tight. It is mainly this aspect, coupled with the effective geographical dispersion of the overseas Chinese communities, that makes it more meaningful to speak about a diaspora than simply about communities settled in foreign countries.

The sense of cultural belonging is manifest in several traits of the Chinese community. It is manifest in the existence of Chinatowns. Although immigrant communities all over the world are changing, and they no longer develop in a purely assimilative context, but look for ways to express their cultural identities, the birth of Chinatowns is not to be ascribed to this late trend. Their history dates back to the first arrival of Chinese people in foreign countries, and might be taken as evidence of the will to maintain Chinese habits and culture.[4] It is in these Chinatowns, as well as in the

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[1] SKELDON, R. "Reluctant exiles or bold pioneers" in: SKELDON, R. (Editor) (1994) op. cit., p. 5

[2] Among the researchers who have adopted the phrase lately is Emmanuel MA MUNG who edited the monographic issue of the Revue Europeenne des Migrations Internationales (1992) titled "La Diaspora Chinoise en Occident", and Pierre TROLLIET in his La diaspora Chinoise (1994), Paris, Presse Universitaire. Moreover the phrase has been used to refer to other contexts of Chinese migration, for example in South East Asia and in the United States.

[3] LIVE, Yu-sion (1993) "Chine-diaspora: vers l'integration à l'economie mondiale" in: Hommes et Migrations, 1165, May, pp. 39 - 43

[4] LE Huu Khoa (1990) "Variations d'integration: insertion, adaptation, appopriation" in: Hommes et Migrations, 1134, July, pp. 4 - 12

Italian *quartieri cinesi* (Chinese areas), that a large selection of Chinese products are made available (food, medicines, household articles, books). Moreover, it is usually in these areas that Chinese associations and organizations are located, at the reach of the large numbers of Chinese immigrants looking for a job or an accommodation, or getting in touch for other services.[1]

The sense of cultural belonging is also fed by the continuous exchanges that take place between the overseas communities and the mother country. In their recent work, some scholars who have been investigating into the shape and character of the Chinese diaspora, point to the pragmatic attitude at the base of these exchanges all throughout the twentieth century:[2] Chinese government has been granting privileges, honours, and titles to the members of the Chinese communities overseas in return of - or in order to encourage - their financial support. This pragmatic connotation also extends to the present contacts among the sections of the diaspora, even at a less formal and official level. It is for the sake of convenience, in fact, that migration chains are regenerated as the channels through which new migrants join their relatives or people from the same homeland district to work in the host countries. Meanwhile, the economic success of Chinese migrants' activities abroad plays a determinant role in the economic transition that is taking place in some areas of South-eastern China. Even in this way, the sense of cultural belonging is kept alive: families are the nuclei around which business preferably develops, and inside which cultural identity is regarded as a most precious part of a shared Chinese heritage.

Additionally, the sense of cultural belonging seems to have arisen also as a consequence to the feeling of exclusion experienced in the host society. It has taken the shape of a nationalist feeling, for which many overseas Chinese have become proud to identify with the successful image of China after the reforms that since 1978 have turned the country into a strong nation.[3]

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[1] WICKBERG, E. "Overseas Chinese Adaptive Organizations, Past and Present" in: SKELDON, R. (Editor) (1994) *op. cit.*, pp. 68 - 84

[2] LIU Dilin and LIN Canchu "The pride of *zuguo:* China's perennial appeal to the overseas Chinese and an emergent civic discourse in global community" in: KLUVER, R. and POWERS J. H. (1999) *Civic discourse, civil society and Chinese communities.* Stamford, Ablex Publishing Corporation p. 218; DUARA, P. (1997) "Nationalists among transnationalists: Overseas Chinese and the idea of China: 1900-1911" in ONG A. and NONINI D. M. (Editors) *Ungrounded Empires.* New York, Routledge, pp. 39-60; and WANG Gungwu (2000) *The Chinese Overseas.* Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London, Harvard University Press, p.103

[3] CHRISTIANSEN F. (1997) "Overseas Chinese in Europe: an imagines community? *Leeds East Asia Papers*, n. 48, p. 11

2.1.2 CHINESE LANGUAGE IN SETTLED COMMUNITIES

Additional elements of the description of the Chinese presence in Great Britain and Italy need to be considered. They relate to the use of Chinese languages and dialects in the overseas communities. When a comparison with other non-EU immigration is made, the balanced gender distribution of the Chinese community stands out as one of its overall distinctive traits. Even though Chinese migration to Europe began with a pioneering movement of male workers, it did not take long for a gender-balanced community to emerge. Chinese immigrants were keen to take immediate advantage of all opportunities to reunite their families abroad, calling for their brothers and sisters as well as for their wives and children, which largely contributed to the average youth of the community. The structure of the Chinese community in terms of sex-ratios and age, and the consequent growth of Chinese ethnic economy have played a key role for the survival of circumstances in which Chinese language continues to be the main medium for communication. Despite the fact that the ambits in which Chinese "ethnic business" developed necessarily engendered contacts with the host countries' communities, mediation tasks have been taken up by a limited number of persons, while among enterprises of the community and among Chinese workers themselves, Chinese dialects have continued to be either the only or at least the more commonly used medium.

I have described Chinese immigration in Europe as a relatively young phenomenon, a feature which accounts for the lack of fully satisfactory and accurate data, and which leads to the description of the composition and development of the Chinese communities in Great Britain and Italy as mainly derived from the study of Chinese migration trends and patterns. Researchers refer to the same type of sources also in order to produce estimates about the future. For instance, the gathering of data on the emergent trend of family reunion since the sixties in Great Britain and since the middle eighties in Italy, reveals the will of an increasing number of Chinese immigrants to undertake a further step towards long lasting settlement. Accordingly, concern for the education of the community children overseas grows too. In Italy, where up to a few years ago many young children of Chinese origin were sent back to the mother country to be educated (at least for their first grade education), the number of overseas born Chinese children who are being sent back to China is currently lowering. This reversed trend, of course, could be the response to a wide variety of circumstances; nonetheless, it also accounts for a deeper sense of stability experienced by the community in the host country. And again it gives evidence of the attempt by the Chinese community to

undertake a further step in the settlement process.

Projects for long lasting migration, though, have not implied a complete turn away from exchanges with the mother land and its culture. The Chinese language, besides being widely in use within the community, is still regarded as a fundamental part of the cultural heritage to be passed on to the second generation. The large majority of the Chinese people who have settled in Great Britain and Italy speak the dialects of their home provinces. Still, Mandarin is the dialect many overseas Chinese parents would nowadays encourage their children to study. This is partly the case to be seen in Great Britain, where due to the remarkable number of Cantonese speaking Chinese, Mandarin language classes set up by the local Chinese Associations and Community Centres for Chinese children, have been flanking Cantonese classes during the last two decades.[1] A similar trend is eventually emerging within the Chinese communities in Italy as well, where Sunday Schools offering Chinese language classes for the community children have been opening in the last few years. Despite the fact that the large majority among the pupils who speak Chinese only knows the Chinese dialect of their parents' home village in China, many children are being taught Mandarin in these schools, and Mandarin is usually also the medium teachers are required to use in the classroom.[2]

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[1] Information derived from WONG, Lornita Y. F. (1992) *op. cit.*, p. 74 and confirmed by personal communication with a Chinese school headmaster in London (1998)
[2] Personal communication: Dr. Zhang (language assistant at the University of Milan and teacher of Saturday classes for Chinese children), February 2000

2.2 LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

When referring to the study of the relation between people and the languages they speak, Ben Rampton[1] criticizes the two concepts of 'mother tongue' and 'native speaker' as too fixed for the reality they ought to apply to: these concepts are based on the false assumptions that one only has one mother tongue which he or she somehow inherits through birth, and that native speaker mastery of a language stands for absolute proficiency in that language. Rampton discusses these assumptions by turning the focus on the social settings in which *particular* languages are acquired, and by drawing attention on the fact that people do not belong to a single social group. Instead, they usually participate in many groups, defined by ethnicity, age, affiliation, region, gender, and so on. Membership changes over time together with language, and being born into a group does not mean that one automatically speaks its language well. Moreover, the fact that many countries are multilingual is extremely relevant too, and, as Rampton consequentially points out, it should lead researchers to taking into account the possibility that children from an early age encounter and use two or more languages.

Rampton's analysis turns very useful when the case of migrant groups is taken into account. By suggesting the development of an alternative and more differentiating set of terms with which to describe a person's linguistic identity, he helps casting due light on the diversity of circumstances which also relate to the case of the second generation. I shall follow his steps and refer to expertise and allegiance as the new terms to substitute for nativeness and mother tongue in the cultural interpretations of a person's relation to language. Expertise serves for considering language proficiency, without necessarily implying innateness, identification, or exclusiveness of a language. Allegiance refers to a person's attitude towards language, to his or her affective ties and sense of loyalty. It needs to be distinguished into inheritance and affiliation, as both socially negotiated among people and groups through individual or institutional ascription as well as through conflict, the first within social boundaries, and the second across them.[2] My attention focuses in particular on multiplicity and change as two basic features of allegiance. People belong to many groups, and feelings of group belonging change as does the definition of groups themselves.[3]

An example of the way to interpret the relation between people and language

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[1] RAMPTON Ben (1995) *Crossing: Language and ethnicity among adolescents.* London and New York, Longman, pp. 336 - 344

[2] RAMPTON, B. (1995) *Op. cit.*, p. 342

[3] RAMPTON, B. (1995) *Op. cit.*, p. 343

with a similar concern for flexibility is provided in Tan Chee Beng's work,[1] which refers to the case of people of Chinese descent who have adjusted to different socio-cultural environments. He takes the case of the Chinese in Malaysia to illustrate the various modes and levels of identification as possible constituents of ethnic identity. He sees ethnic identity as comprising three major components: the label, the subjective identification, and the objective features which constitute the recognizable characteristics of identification.[2] Yet he points out the important distinction between ethnic and cultural identity. Whereas "as far as ethnic identity is concerned the persistence of Chinese ethnic identification does not depend on the persistence of the use of any Chinese language, [...] culture - especially the language component - serves to portray the type of identity, and different levels of acculturation give rise to different perceptions of Chinese identity".[3] He argues against the belief in any kind of global or transnational Chinese identity, and turns to language as to an important but subjective identity indicator. In his analysis of the relationship between language and identity he points to the distinction between the different functions and domains of use of a language. He distinguishes among language of intimacy, language of literacy, and intra-group language. His research work shows agreement with Rampton's position, for it stresses mixing and change as intervening also within these three functional domains of language use. There does not necessarily need to be only one language of literacy, as there does not necessarily need to be only one language of intimacy, nor one single intra-group language. Diversification, is likely to take place in time and in space continuously.

The same can be said of the majority of overseas Chinese groups, wherever and as many times as - with due regard to the risks implied by generalizations - a group can be talked about. And it holds true for the case of people of Chinese descent who live in Italy.

The Chinese community in Italy is composite. It is composite in the sense that it includes people who belong to quite different age cohorts, both male and female. But it is also composite due to the different length of these people's settlement overseas, to the different kind of interaction they have with other people, groups, and institutions, and to the way these differences affect their use of - and their relation to - language. While the

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[1] TAN Chee Beng "People of Chinese Descent: Language, Nationality and Identity" in: WANG Ling-chi and WANG Gungwu (Editors) (1998) *The Chinese diaspora. Selected essays.* Singapore, Times Academic Press, pp. 29-47
[2] *Ibid.* p. 29
[3] *Ibid.* p. 41

inclusive label of Chinese is often used to address members of such a composite and heterogeneous group, either for convenience by the group members themselves, or for a number of other reasons - including ignorance of circumstances - by the other groups in the host society, a better insight into language use, language choice, and code-switch in the different domains of communication, may still reveal something about a more general, yet flexible, *sense* of identity. Expertise and allegiance, as they are expressed through the use of languages in everyday life, stand for important indicators of the subjective perception of identity.

As discussed in depth by Li Wei in the research work he carried out on the Chinese community of New Castle upon Tyne,[1] social networks, and partly also the time one has had to build them up or to enter them, play a fundamental role in determining the kind of language competences one makes use of. After his findings, Li Wei suggests a typology of bilingualism which covers the range of language use patterns observed in the community he has studied. The model, based on the interpretation of language use patterns as network specific strategies of a socially symbolic kind, is also applicable to the present Chinese community in Italy. The typology includes: 1. *monolingual community language speakers*, i.e. people whose social networks are all within the community and only extend to kin- and ethnic- based relations. They therefore are monolingual in their community language regardless of the length of time they have spent abroad because they have had no need to learn other languages in order to maintain their network of relations. In Italy, as in the case of the Tyneside Chinese community, this category mainly consists of women and elderly who have joined close relatives overseas; 2. *functionally monolingual community language speakers*, whose primary interactions are still with members of the community, and who therefore use the community language in the largest part of key social contexts. They may understand or even speak - although with limited proficiency - the host language, but they usually tend to avoid circumstances in which they have to confront with any other languages but Chinese. In Italy, as it is for the case reported by Li Wei, this category is generally made up by parents, especially mothers; 3. *functionally bilingual speakers* are people who need to use both the ethnic language of the community (which Li Wei defines as their first language) and the host language. The term functional refers to the competence members of this category have in the host language, which is usually just enough to fulfil specific tasks in specific contexts. It could for example be the case

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[1] LI Wei (1994) *Three generations two languages one family. Language choice and language shift in a Chinese community in Britain*. Clevedon - Philadelphia - Adelaide, Multilingual Matters Ltd.

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of those people who work in shops or restaurants and often have direct contacts with "foreigners" being their customers. Due to their competence in the host language, these people often also cover the role of mediator between the first two categories on the one hand and the wider world in which the host language is necessary; 4. *mixed bilingual speakers* are proficient speakers of both Chinese and the host language, who frequently switch between them. In order for this category to be represented there ought to be circumstances in which code-switching is a praxis. Li Wei provides the example of the case of British-born Chinese youth who belong to the True Jesus Church in Newcastle. In the Italian context one such ambit seems to be the Chinese Embassy in Rome, where both Italian and Chinese play key roles. Yet, here too, mixed-code discourse is usually limited to specific contexts; 5. *functionally bilingual host language speakers* learned the community language as they grew up, and they do still do speak it in the family and within the community. However they have gained proficiency in the host language through education, and their network of relations has extended to a wider and more diverse set of contexts, where they use the host language. It is usually the case of the overseas-born generations. The older they have grown, the wider the network of relations they have built outside the community; 6. *functionally monolingual host language speakers* like members of all the other groups, acquired the community language as they grew up. Yet, they maintain only a minimum and often passive knowledge of it, being sometimes able to understand it but not to speak it fluently, while they use the host language as their primary language in all key social contexts. The vast majority of their exchange network ties are therefore outside their own ethnic community. Even this category gathers overseas-born Chinese, mainly people who speak the host language most of the time. In Italy, where the large majority of the second generation members are youngsters who have not yet developed an extended net of social relations - with relations that may pertain, for example, to the context of employment - there are very few people who fall within this category.

Although categories may remain fixed, the people within it move. I may here briefly refer to an exemplifying case I personally came across: the case of a Chinese woman I met in a hospital when I was working as mediator in 1996. She spoke Chinese - both the local dialect of her district of origin and Mandarin - and, as I only found out later on, as we became friends, she also spoke some Italian, although at that time she would rather avoid making the effort. She had been a monolingual community language speaker for five years, but had shifted to the functionally monolingual community language speaker category after her two children had arrived from China and entered

the Italian education system. She also had a third child, who was born in Italy. Due to the consequent need to refer to a wider network of relations, which also included Italian people and institutions, she became a functionally bilingual speaker. Her elder son, who had only moved to Italy when he was 9, and who during the first years of his life in Italy was a functionally monolingual community language speaker, has currently shifted to the category of the functionally bilingual host language speakers. Although he was not born overseas, and he is still competent in the community language which he uses at home and in a few other social contexts, the number of his non-Chinese social networks has grown, together with his affective involvement, and his host language expertise.

In the model provided by Li Wei the Chinese language is only referred to as community language. When speaking about bilingualism, the author therefore actually fails to acknowledge the extra effort which may be required in some contexts where one Chinese dialect additionally needs to be spoken as the lingua franca to bridge a dialectal gap. Besides this shortcoming, which may well have played a secondary role in the case of the Tyneside Chinese community, the model allows the provision of a detailed picture in which greater emphasis is given to the relation between language competence and social networks, with regard to the implications of flexible and changing sense of identity and cultural belonging, too.

Again, when this model is extended to the transnational level, bilingualism is no longer enough to refer to all types of social network exchanges which take place. Transnationally a common medium of communication is needed, and it is mainly after such need that the status of Mandarin - i.e. Modern Standard Chinese - is growing. Mandarin has and will become more and more important for the Chinese globally.[1] Its increasingly prestigious role, though, is not determined by identity instances. It feeds on the pragmatic opportunities that the mastery of Mandarin opens up: as the national standard of China it already holds the position of an officially recognized and codified lingua franca in the most populous nation state of the world, where it occupies the first place of a five tiered language hierarchy[2]. The Chinese government has established that education be conducted nationally in Mandarin, and it is through *pinyin*, i.e. the

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[1] TAN Chee Beng "People of Chinese Descent: Language, Nationality and Identity" in: WANG Ling-chi and WANG Gungwu (Editors) (1998) *op. cit.*, p. 39

[2] 1) The national standard, Mandarin Chinese; 2) Regional standards languages, including regional varieties of Mandarin Chinese, and regional minority standards; 3) Primary minority languages, i.e. those with historical and/or modern prestige, usually large populations, and moderate political clout; 4) secondary minority (or sub-minority) languages, which include the low-prestige, usually unwritten languages; 5) Unrecognized languages, usually unclassified mixed languages. [DWYER A. M. "The texture of tongues: Language and Power in China" in: SAFRAN, W. (Ed.) (1998) *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China*. London, Portland - Oregon, Frank Cass, p. 71]

phonetic scheme based on the pronunciation of Modern Standard Chinese (Mandarin) that literacy is acquired in formal education. Moreover, the status of Mandarin is being enhanced across Chinese national borders by being often chosen as the medium for international meetings among Chinese-educated Chinese, and in contacts among Chinese of all countries and of all ideologies. As economic status reinforces the use of language, Mandarin grows more and more prestigious with the expansion of the transnational investments of China and the expansion of business and investments in China. Paradoxically, while Chinese mass media improve and bring the global Chinese reading public closer, the diversity of Chinese cultures and identities world-wide becomes more clearly understood. And this diversity includes the languages overseas Chinese may need to learn and speak locally, for which again an immediate implication is that a common language be adopted across the borders of the countries in which they live. If English may turn as the easiest and more functional solution in the United States, where it coincides with the locally dominant language, the more viable option that applies to the Chinese in Europe is Mandarin.[1]

[1] CHRISTIANSEN F. (1997) "Overseas Chinese in Europe: an imagines community? *Leeds East Asia Papers*, n. 48, pp. 12-15

2.3 LITERACY IN CHINESE WITHIN THE DIASPORA

Due to the late development of research work on the Chinese communities in Europe, to the consequent shortage of reliable figures, and to the scant attention paid to the problems of immigrants' language education,[1] it is difficult to appreciate to what extent and how Chinese written language is currently studied and maintained by the members of the Chinese communities overseas. The path I shall follow in order to refer to the case of literacy in Chinese among people of Chinese origin who live overseas again draws elements from the description of the Chinese communities that I am studying, from their history, their development and, most of all, from the profile of their present composition. Instead of trying to provide an estimate of the average level of literacy in Chinese (i.e. instead of referring to numbers that would need to be based on classifications and definitions which have not yet been formulated for this specific context), I will overview circumstances and then refer to the factors which are most likely to affect Chinese literacy acquisition and maintenance.

The Chinese community in Italy includes adult migrants who only recently arrived from Zhejiang, who therefore speak one of the dialects in use in that province, and who might have acquired literacy through the teaching of Modern Standard Chinese during their formal education. It includes adults who might have settled in Italy during the 1980s, and whose mastery of Modern Standard Chinese depends on their age at the time when they left their mother country, and on whether they completed their formal education in China or not. It also includes children: among them children who emigrated before accessing compulsory education in China, and who therefore are likely to have learnt a Chinese dialect from their parents and/or from other relatives and members of the community overseas, but have not yet acquired any literacy; children who attended a few years of compulsory education in China and then moved overseas, where they completed or are completing their education in the host country schools; and overseas-born children, who might have acquired a Chinese dialect within the family environment, and who then attended compulsory education in Italy, where they are being taught to read and write in Italian. This only represents a very simplified sketch meant to suggest the variety of basic circumstances related to migration history on which the acquisition as well as the maintenance of literacy in Chinese may depend. Besides whether formal instruction in Modern Standard Chinese has been completed or

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[1] The difficulties related to research work on overseas Chinese communities have been discussed in Chapter 1.

not, in fact, migration history, age, geographic origin, length of sojourn overseas, together with a set of priorities which may characterize everyday life in the host country all play a role in the acquisition and maintenance of literacy skills.

As far as Chinese adults are concerned, it should be noted that complete illiteracy is a condition that only to a limited extent pertains to those people who joined the overseas communities directly from China in recent years. Education in China has always been highly prestigious, and the mastery of the language, particularly of its written form, has continued to hold a pivotal place in Chinese culture.[1] It traditionally constitutes the grounds on which the line of demarcation between the elite and the common people is drawn. But since the founding of the People's Republic of China, literacy has been considered as a possible universal achievement which has continuously called out for the commitment of the government and of the common people. The great concern for literacy, together with the strong determination to face the difficult task of eliminating illiteracy, has generated a variety of measures meant to involve the population of the whole country.[2] In the mid fifties official action on language reform took a twofold direction: on the one hand it addressed the simplification of the traditional script, and on the other it promoted popularization of the common speech[3] (*Putonghua*, the "Common Language" with its standard pronunciation based on the Beijing dialect).[4] Several efforts were also meant to support the development of compulsory education: new provisions and instruments were made available in order to adapt to different circumstances. Since the whole population was seen as the target of the literacy campaign that was launched at the end of the fifties, different strategies besides language reform were adopted: among these were the mobility of teachers, the use of second-hand textbooks in rural areas, the adoption of *pinyin*, and the spreading of the use of *Putonghua* through teaching in compulsory education as well as through broadcasting and journalism. It might therefore be noticed that no matter which part of China Chinese adults who lately migrated to Europe come from, the majority of them would necessarily be literate to some degree (having at least acquired basic literacy skills) because of the way the Chinese government has been encouraging literacy, making it one of the main objectives of education. Yet, a remarkable impact on different literacy achievements could have been played by the

[1] LEWIN, Keith M. (*et. al.*) (1994) *Educational innovation in China.* Essex, Longman, p. 33
[2] ZHAO Wenqin (1988) *op. cit.*, p. 15
[3] National Conference on Script Reform (*Quanguo wenzi gaige huiyi*), held in Beijing in October 1955 [Reference drawn from: CHEN Ping (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 23]
[4] CHEN Ping (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 24

urban or rural character of the specific area of origin. Despite the powerful attempt to promote education and literacy universally, in fact, major gaps still encumber the way. Education in the rural areas, in China as in many other countries all over the world, suffers from the disadvantages of uneven distribution of resources: while only in less than half of the populated areas of China primary education has been made universal, these are mainly urban areas;[1] moreover, unequal distribution of qualified teachers among urban and rural schools, makes good teaching a commodity at the reach of urban residents, mostly.[2]

However, Chinese immigration in Great Britain and Italy is not solely composed of people coming directly from Mainland China. Indeed, Chinese people who arrive straight from China only constitute a portion of these immigration waves. To what extent then is illiteracy in Chinese a dominant condition among people of the other groups? In order to answer this question a wide variety of circumstances need to be taken into consideration. The identification of a few outstanding models to refer to and to focus on in order to derive generalisations, appears to be almost impossible, or at least highly inaccurate. According to the points which have so far been made clear by recent research on Chinese population movements, chain migration contributes in large measure to the temporary dispersion of the community along the paths that lead to their final destinations. This means that although they arrive from the Netherlands or France, a large majority of the Chinese people who reached Italy during the last twenty years, may have been brought up and educated in China.[3] Although we cannot derive a detailed picture of the current literacy attainments of these groups, their migration history provide useful elements for a better understanding of the spreading of illiteracy in Chinese: under migration circumstances, illiteracy cannot uniquely derive from the complete lack of education. As for the case of Chinese adults who might have acquired only low levels of literacy in their mother country, a determinant role is played by their migration history. There is no need to investigate the single steps of their migration itinerary (which appears to be an impossible task, anyway). But drawing attention to the aims of their migratory projects helps to shed light on the current literacy level of many among the Chinese people who have migrated to Great Britain and Italy. Although Chinese migration has not followed the patterns of migration from other areas of the

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[1] HAYHOE R. (1984) *Contemporary Chinese education.* New York, M. E. Sharpe, Inc., p.52

[2] PAINE Lynn "Teaching and Modernization in Contemporary China" in: HAYHOE R. (Ed.) (1992) *Education and modernization. The Chinese Experience.* Oxford, Pergamon Press, p. 196

[3] The case of Chinese immigrants to Italy is quoted as an example, and of course the situation may vary when other countries are considered.

world, which responded to the labour demands of the destination countries, the economic factor has played a fundamental role in Chinese migration too. Overseas communities have been growing around independent enterpreneurships, and work has sometimes been substituting for money[1] in the interpersonal transactions among Chinese when a new immigrant joined the community. Work opportunities, broadly speaking, have been a major reason for Chinese people to migrate,[2] and have determined both the direction of migration waves and the shape of the communities. In this context, literacy might have become a secondary issue, and the chances for a large majority of immigrants to maintain their literacy skills might therefore have been rare or not necessarily sought for. Moreover, it should be noticed that even the maintenance of already acquired literacy skills, especially in Chinese, is very demanding, for it requires continuous practice. And particular efforts are needed to compensate for the lack of independent learning skills, i.e. when basic literacy alone has been acquired. While it can be easy to make a distinction between basic literacy and illiteracy, it is my intention here to draw attention to two aspects of basic literacy that also bear upon the spreading of illiteracy among Chinese immigrants: first of all the fact that basic literacy can be the product of retrogression from a more advanced level of literacy when opportunities for practising diminish. This is for example the case of many Chinese children and youngsters: through participation in the host country mainstream education they move from a situation in which Chinese (both in its spoken and written forms) is the sole medium for communication to a situation in which the second language (the language of the host country) becomes dominant. The first and the second languages play different roles in the lives of the children. Their bilingualism is basically functional in nature: the second language is studied and used at school and among peers, and becomes a major vehicle for cognitive development and conceptual formation, while Chinese is gradually demoted to the language used for basic communicative needs, mainly at home.[3] The second element bearing on the spreading of illiteracy in Chinese is the fact that basic literacy is not transferable: it does not include the mastery of basic learning skills which

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[1] I am referring for instance to the fact that new immigrants who join the community are likely to work for very low salaries because through their work they are supposed to pay back the debt they have contracted to migrate. A debt in terms of money or in terms of application forms filled in by another Chinese already settled in the host country in order to sponsor the new comers.

[2] Moreover it might be added that work opportunities have played a fundamental role in directing migration flows as well as in encouraging further migration. The transient character of migration, in the Chinese case, is mostly determined by the work opportunities made available by pioneer or previous migration.

[3] This situation has been described for the case of Dutch Chinese in BENTON, G. and PIEKE, F. N. (Editors) (1998) *The Chinese in Europe*. London, MacMillan Press Ltd., p.148, but it holds true for the Chinese community in Italy as well.

enable the learner to absorb knowledge and develop his literacy independently, and, as a consequence, it can hardly be taught. Although part of this knowledge could be transferred, it would not include the fundamental instruments which give access to a further development of literacy skills.

I shall finally point to the case that constitutes the target for my research work, and describe the phenomenon of illiteracy as it relates to it. The study case consists of adult people of Chinese origin who were born in Italy. They speak the Chinese dialect of the place their parents originally emigrated from. This dialect shall then be referred to as their "heritage language".[1] As far as their literacy is concerned, it should be noticed that since they were brought up overseas and attended primary and middle school in Italy, they are competent in the use of the Italian written language and should therefore not be referred to as illiterate people. Their knowledge of Chinese, though, is mainly confined to a certain degree of familiarity with the spoken language: they have learnt it at home and within the community, but have seldom had or taken up any further chance to study *Putonghua* and the written language besides those provided by the short courses held in the community's Sunday Schools.[2] The sample that constitutes the study case is restricted: the majority of people of Chinese origin who were born in Italy are still of school-age, and have not reached adulthood yet. But the sample is likely to grow, and the rise in number of children of Chinese origin who were born in Italy during the last two decades provides evidence of that.

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[1] I chose to use the name "heritage language" instead of the phrase "mother tongue" in order to point out the distinction made by Rampton, between the languages one may naturally acquire within the family environment, and the languages chosen through individual ascription as the one to identify with. As shall be discussed below, some of the members of the Chinese community in Italy in fact actually refer to Italian as their mother tongue.

[2] The case of Chinese literacy instruction for children of Chinese origin will be discussed in the fourth Chapter (see Chapter 4, Section 3)

CHAPTER 3
"CHINESE CHARACTERS AND LITERACY STANDARDS"

Introduction

This chapter takes literacy and literacy standards as its focus. The concept of literacy is multifaceted and therefore complex to define. Since the last quarter of the twentieth century a growing number of scholars[1] have extended the scope of their investigation to the study of the implication determined by participation in all form of discourse, and literacy has come to be interpreted in the complex framework of various disciplines: linguistics, sociolinguistics, and education, together with psychology, history, politics and economics. The term of literacy itself has come to be used in ways that are very different from its traditional meaning of knowing how to read and write, and referring to literacies in a plural form has currently become more widely accepted than attempting to provide a single definition of literacy.

I take these as the premises of my own approach to the concept of literacy. But in this part of my work I need to go back to the traditional definition of literacy, where reading and writing are taken as the crux of the matter. As pointed out by Halliday[2] the problem resulting from the recent interdisciplinary approach to the study of literacy - or literacies - is that literacy has indeed come to be dissociated from reading and writing, and written language altogether, and generalized to the extent to cover speaking, spoken language, and discourse of the so-called 'oral cultures'. This implies that a new term would be needed for what was called literacy before, especially if there is the necessity to distinguish reading and writing practices from listening and speaking practices. Such a term may include further specifications of the field it refers to, as in Halliday's work, where she defines the scope of her investigation as pertaining to the field of linguistics. Or it may refer to a subclass of the wider and more comprehensive meaning associated

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[1] Among them is the group of scholars who promoted the New Literacy Studies movement (Barton, Gee, and Street)

[2] HALLIDAY, M. A. K. "Literacy and linguistics: a functional perspective" in HASAN, R. and WILLIAMS, G. (1996) *Literacy in society*. London, Longman

with literacy, like Green's[1] acceptation of "operational literacy". Here too, I refer to this branch of literacy. Yet, since my own orientation is not intended to imply a separation of one type of literacy from the rest, but indeed to focus on one aspect of it, i.e. competence in reading and writing, I will simply call it with its traditional name. One more reason for choosing this path is that in the first section of the present chapter I will overview and discuss the different definition of literacy and literacy standards as they have been formulated at an international level by trying to overcome the difficulties implied by referring to the different languages, different orthographies, and different education systems of different countries. Through this overview and through the arguments upon which it is articulated I intend to provide the elements for a better focused analysis of what criteria to use for describing operational literacy and the way it is affected by different orthographies.

In the second section of the chapter I turn to the case of Chinese language and investigate the extent to which the nature of its writing system affects the acquisition of reading and writing skills. The description of the most outstanding features of Chinese written language is based on the comparison with other writing systems, and it deepens through the analysis of the main differences between Chinese characters and the alphabetic writing system. This overview of the nature and features of Chinese written language contributes to a better understanding of the current definition of literacy in Chinese.

The third section is a presentation of the different requirements to which the definition of literacy has been associated in China. The brief description takes into account the different historical periods in which these requirements were set and the different social contexts for which they were designed. The work is based on the study of both English language and Chinese language sources. Among these are the official sources issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education on the standard literacy requirements, which I was able to gather during my fieldwork in China in spring 1999.

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[1] Quoted in :CROWTHER, J. and TETT, L.: "Democracy as a way of life: literacy for citizenship" in: CROWTHER, J.,HAMILTON, M., and TETT, L. (Editors) (2001) *Powerful literacies*. Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, p. 114 [from: LANKSHEAR (1998) "The educational challenge of the new world order: globalization and the meaning of literacy" in: *Concept*, 8 (2), pp. 12-15]

3.1 A DEFINITION OF LITERACY STANDARDS

In 1956 UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Science, and Cultural Organization) defined literacy as *"the minimum acceptable level of skill required by the society in which an individual lives."*[1] The definition, however, was far too general and therefore incomplete. A universal definition of literacy needs to be general enough to be applicable to the variety of cultural and linguistic contexts that exist in the world, but it also needs to be concrete in describing the standard requirements to which basic literacy needs to adjust. In 1963, in a further attempt to illustrate the meaning of literacy, UNESCO declared that a person is literate when he/she has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him/her to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in his group and community, and *"whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his/her own and the community's development and for the active participation in the life of his/her country".*[2] Despite the more concrete level of analysis, the definition still lacked indications relating to the content of literacy.

Research aimed at a clearer definition of content has been carried out at different periods by literacy educators who have tried to define the level of acquired literacy in terms of number of school years attended.[3] An internationally accepted idea is that basic literacy can be achieved through completion of grade four to grade six, which corresponds to primary school education. Again the idea that four to six years of schooling could provide a minimum standard of literacy proved unsatisfactory. Besides the fact that not all education systems are structured in the same way, this criterion also has to confront the problem of adults' relapse into illiteracy,[4] and the fact that, especially for some writing systems and their orthographies, even four to six years of education may not be enough for the acquisition of basic literacy skills that give access to independent learning.

More recent and articulated attempts to define literacy have moved away form the habit of referring to literacy as uniquely concerned with reading and writing skills. From the first steps taken in the fields of socio-linguistics and education, with the taking into account of multilingual environments and the role played by language choice and

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[1] SEEBERG, V. (1990) *Literacy in China.* Bochum, Herausgeber Chinathemen, p. 17

[2] Ibid.

[3] CHAAL (1987); LOCKHEED, JAMISON and LAU (1980); COOMBS (1973) [Quoted in SEEBERG, V. (1990) *op. cit.,* p. 18

[4] UNESCO assumed that in low-income countries permanent literacy may be achieved by reaching grade five (World Bank 1979, 19)

code-mixing in literacy practices and events, research on literacy has also entered the fields of psychology, economics and politics, by addressing the issue of the relation between literacy on the one hand, and identity, negotiation, and power on the other. Through this turn of research the interest of many scholars - such as Street, Barton, and Gee, who gave birth to the movement of New Literacy Studies - has gradually shifted away from the description of contents and the definition of universal standards, to plunge into the study of different contexts and formulate new questions about their impact on discourse.

The questions relating to what it means to be literate and how one shall *become* literate, though, have remained unanswered, while a number of nation states have continued to formulate definitions pertaining to the number of actual skills required to be literate. I shall point to the necessity to discriminate between a linguistic definition of literacy and literacy as it has been re-interpreted by the trend of research carried out in the new interdisciplinary framework in recent years. My aim is to define literacy as it relates to languages and to the differences among different writing systems, the form of their symbols and the function they cover in the language concerned. In this ambit I see literacy as the combined ability of a person to put into written form what he/she can say and understand from other people's speech, together with the ability to transpose into spoken language what he/she or other people have written in the language they have acquired as their first languages. This ability, namely the linguistic operational skill, derives from the study and eventual mastery of the rules and conventions according to which a spoken language is converted into writing and vice versa. To provide a detailed definition of the requirements to which literacy in this linguistic sense corresponds, and to accordingly derive information about the way such literacy skills can be acquired, it is therefore necessary to take into account the orthographic rules of the language we are referring to.

3.2 BASIC FEATURES OF THE CHINESE WRITING SYSTEM

3.2.1 CHINESE WRITING: A DEFINITION

The traditional classification of writing systems includes three types of script: alphabetic, syllabic and ideographic. Such a classification, as M. A. French has pointed out in the article "Observations on the Chinese script and the classification of writing-systems",[1] is open to criticism: it does not give relevance to the common nature of the first two types (classes) of scripts, as opposed to the third. On the one hand, both the alphabetic and the syllabic writing-systems are based on some degree of correspondence between graphemes and phonemes, and their graphemes typically represent meaningless linguistic items. On the other hand, in the ideographic writing-systems there is no constant correspondence between graphemes and phonemes, while their graphemes, which directly refer to the meanings of the morphemes, typically represent meaningful linguistic units.[2] A limitation of the traditional classification, then, is that it fails to allot among the existing writing systems a "class" to the Chinese script. Given the nature of Chinese writing, which can be defined as *pleremic*[3] (made up of graphemes which represent meaningful linguistic units) the tripartite classification would force Chinese script into the class of ideographic writing systems. Yet, such systematization is far from effective and consistent, for it takes into account only one facet of the Chinese script. When taking strictly into account the relation between writing and phonetic units, in fact, the classification could otherwise lead to the definition of Chinese script as a syllabic writing-system, for each character in Chinese also corresponds to one syllable.

The weaknesses of the traditional classification do not help us to shed light on the unique nature of Chinese script. I will therefore base my analysis on a comparison with the alphabetic writing system, and accordingly on the overview of the alternative definitions that other scholars and researchers have commonly given of the Chinese script.

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[1] FRENCH, M. A. "Observations on the Chinese script and the classification of writing-systems" in: HAAS, W. (Editor) (1976) *Writing without letters.* Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp. 101 - 129

[2] In describing their graphs as meaningless or meaningful linguistic units, French mainly refers to scripts with empty (meaningless) or full (meaningful) repraesentata. (*Ibid.,* p. 118)

[3] The distinctive definitions "pleremic" and "cenemic" (from the Greek roots *pleres* and *kenos*, meaning full and empty respectively) reported by M. A. French in his paper on Chinese script, are taken from Hjelmslev, L. (1970) "Essay d'une theorie des morphemes" in: *Essais Linguistiques* Copenhagen, Nordisk Sprog-og Kulturforlag. [Refer to: FRENCH M. A. in: HAAS, W. (Editor) (1986) *op. cit.* p. 118]

One of the major differences between Chinese character script and alphabetic writing systems relates to the grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence. The Chinese writing-system has occasionally been defined as "pictographic", in which graphs tend to represent things directly by means of drawings. This definition is directly connected to the idea that Chinese characters have pictographic origins. But the fact that a script's origins lie in pictography, which is true of many other writing systems,[1] has little contemporary relevance. That modern Chinese writing is not a pictographic script, although it includes among its graphs a number of characters which do have pictographic origins, can easily be demonstrated by the fact that a page of Chinese characters is totally incomprehensible to anyone who has not studied the writing system.

Another widely used term to define Chinese script is "ideographic". An ideographic writing-system is one of which the graphemes are used to symbolize the idea of a thing without expressing its name. Again such a definition for Chinese writing is maintained to be misleading by a number of scholars, including linguists and sinologists.[2] The main reason for rejecting the labelling of Chinese writing as an ideographic script is the fact that ideographic writings, given their nature as idea-conveyers, do not need to be related to one spoken language. No matter in what language the meanings they express are processed, they can still be understood. Yet this is not the case with Chinese characters: the detailed study of the development of Chinese script undertaken by Boltz and Qiu,[3] has shown that the formation of new characters throughout the centuries has been subject to rules and conventions that were strictly related to the spoken language in use.

As may be observed, both definitions (pictographic and ideographic) aim at pointing out the relation existing between graphs - the representational writing units, characters in the case of Chinese script - and meanings in the spoken language. The striking fact is that little if any relevance is given to the relation between those signs and the sounds into which they are translated. Although these definitions may not be appropriate, they do give emphasis to the basic difference between the nature of Chinese writing, and the phonetic representational value of an alphabetic writing system.

A further attempt to define Chinese script has resulted in the use of the term

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[1] As John DEFRANCIS has pointed out: "It is the general if not quite unanimous opinion among specialists on this subject that all writing originated in the drawing of pictures" [DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *The Chinese language: fact and fantasy.* Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. 78]
[2] Among them are BOLTZ, W. (1994) *The origin and early developments of the Chinese writing system.* New Heaven, American Oriental Society; DEFRANCIS J. (1984.b) *op. cit.*; and QIU Xigui (裘 锡 圭) (1988) *Wenzixue gaiyao* 文字学概要 (*A short introduction to Chinese philology*). Beijing, Shangwu Yinshuguan.
[3] BOLTZ, W. (1994) *op. cit.*; QIU Xigui (1988) *op. cit.*

"logographic". Supporters of this definition[1] advocate that Chinese characters represent words. This could have been an *almost* valid definition when referring to Chinese classical language with its monomorphemic nature. Characters, in fact, would more properly be said to represent morphemes and not words. And for this reason the term logographic looses its validity when associated with modern Chinese, in which the large majority of words are polymorphemic, hence polysyllabic and therefore represented in writing by more than one character.[2]

The best fitting definition seems to be one that takes into account the relation between the graph (the character) on one side, and the corresponding minimum signifying unit (the morpheme) with its phonological form (the syllable) on the other. As John DeFrancis observes, the term logographic does not clarify what the pathway leading from graph to meaning is. The pathway becomes clear by reference to the corresponding phonetic element as well. Therefore the term "morphosyllabic" (or syllabomorphemic) is a better definition of Chinese character script. Chinese characters, in fact, are not merely pictures created by the random combination of strokes: they are often composed of meaningful components. Since the Chinese spoken language uses relatively few distinct syllables,[3] resulting in a large number of words with the same sound (homophones), a purely phonetic system of writing would not have been easily adaptable to this feature of the spoken language without becoming far too ambiguous. *Pinyin* (拼音, the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, adopted as an official auxiliary alphabet since 1958), and *zhuyin zimu* (注音字母, the National Phonetic Alphabet) before,[4] have provided graphemic notation for discriminating tonal differences among homophone sounds. Yet, the number of homophones within the discriminated categories remains large, and China's non-alphabetic orthography, with its wide range of stroke combinations into graphs, perfectly fits in with this feature of the spoken language.[5]

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[1] Among them: COOPER, Arthur (1978) *The Creation of the Chinese Script*. The China Society, London; GAUR, A. (1984) *A History of Writing*. Exhibition notes. London, British Library; and NEWNHAM, R. (1971) *About Chinese*. Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd. [See: HANNAS, Wm. C. (1997) *Asia's orthographic dilemma*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. 111]

[2] NORMAN, J. (1988) *Chinese*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 84

[3] There are 398 basic syllables in Standard Chinese [DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *op. cit.*, p. 27]

[4] The National Phonetic Alphabet, which is still in use in Taiwan to gloss characters for primary instruction, was devised in 1913 [HANNAS, Wm. C. (1997) *op. cit.*, p. 25] and promulgated in 1918 by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China. It was the first phonographic writing of Chinese that was sanctioned and promoted by the language planning institution of the government [CHEN Ping (1999) *Modern Chinese*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 180]

[5] HAYFORD, C. W. (1987) "Literacy Movements in Modern China" in: ARNOVE, R. F. and GRAFF, H.G. *National literacy campaigns. Historical and comparative perspectives*. New York and London, Plenum Press, p. 152

3.2.2 CHINESE CHARACTERS: PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION

The study of the composition of Chinese characters can avail itself of the traditional division of characters into six classes (六书) described by Xu Shen (许慎) (ca. 58 -147 AD) in the preface to his *Shuowen jiezi* (说文解字 *The explanation of simple graphs and analysis of compound graphs*).[1] The six classes to which characters belong, depending either on the type of information or the phonetic indication conveyed by the graph are:

1) *zhishi* 指事 [indicators of event] graphemes whose representation convey iconic information of the meaning.

2) *xiangxing* 象形 [resembling shape] also referred to as pictographs: graphs that schematically represent the object they mean.

3) *xingsheng* 形声 [shape - sound combination] either referred to as radical-plus-phonetic compounds: these graphs are usually composed of two parts, one reminding of the semantic field they originate from, the other referring to the way the character sounds.

4) *huiyi* 会意 [association of meanings] also referred to as ideographs. These are graphs consist of figurative elements whose association convey the intended meaning.

5) *jiajie* 假借 [false borrowing] Graphs of this category are mainly used for their phonetic value, i.e. for the way they sound when they are used for other characters.

6) *zhuanzhu* 转注 [transfer of the meaning] there is no clear and consistent description of this category.

The first four classes describe the four basic ways through which characters have been formed since the very early stages of the history of Chinese script. While the other two, as Yip Po-ching points out, are better defined as two more underlying linguistic motivations which consecutively prompted the formation of new characters.[2]

An outstanding feature in the history of Chinese script is the progressive increase of *xingsheng* 形声 [radical-plus-phonetic compounds]. This increase was prompted by the already considerable number of homophones and near homophones among Chinese morphemes. Characters of this class consist, in fact, of one part indicating the semantic field or at least somehow relating to the meaning of the morpheme represented by the

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[1] WOON Wee Lee (1987) *Chinese writing: its origin and evolution.* Macau, University of East Asia, p. 4
[2] For a detailed description of such motivations refer to YIP Po-ching (2000) *The Chinese lexicon.* London and New York, Routledge, pp. 41 - 42

character, and one part giving indication of the phonological conversion (the sound) of the character. Although phonetic compounds (this is the short name commonly given to this type of characters) are almost 75% of the most frequently used characters,[1] their phonetic roots do not always provide exact clues to the pronunciation of the character in which they appear. As a matter of fact, only a very small number of phonetic compounds can be defined as "consistent" in representing sounds when a proper definition of consistency is provided: a consistent phonetic compound is a character that sounds the same as its component stem, regardless of possible tonal discrepancy (an exception character would then be one whose pronunciation deviates from that of its component).[2]

These are among the most relevant features of the Chinese writing system that bear on literacy acquisition. Whereas some of these features, especially when a comparison with alphabetic writing systems is brought forth, seem to hinder and slow down the pace of the literacy acquisition process, some others, as will be seen and discussed in the next chapter, actually constitute useful elements for the devising of effective pedagogic devices.

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[1] According to several statistics, *xingsheng* characters constitute more than 80% in the *Shuowen jiezi*, and around 90% in dictionaries from the Northern Song Dynasty (1011 AD) onwards. However, as observed by QIU Xigui, the percentages lowers when commonly used characters only are referred to [see: QIU Xigui (1988) *op. cit.*, p. 32]

[2] The consistency measure is defined as the relative size of a phonological group within a given activation region. For example the activation region of the stem /you/ [由] (second tone; meaning "cause") contains 12 items, among which 迪 and 笛 are associated with the phonological alternative /di/, 袖 and 岫 are associated with the phonological alternative /xiu/, and 舳 and 宙 are of the phonological alternative /zhou/. Their consistency in pronunciation is ratio of the size of the phonological group to the size of the whole activation neighbourhood, which is 0.17 (i. e. 2/12). The character 抽 is the only one associated with the phonological form / chou/ and its consistency value is 0.08 (i. e. 1/12). The characters 由 油 柚 釉 鈾 are all pronounced /you/. They form the dominant phonological group in the activation neighbourhood with a consistency value 0.42 (i. e. 5/12). (FANG, HORNG and TZENG (1986) "Consistency effects in the Chinese character and pseudo-character naming tasks" in: KAO, Henry S.R; HOOSAIN Rumjahn (Editors) *Linguistics, psychology and the Chinese language*, Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, pp. 11 - 22)

3.3 LITERACY ACCORDING TO CHINESE STANDARDS

The dominant features of Chinese script have a strong impact on literacy acquisition. Research work on Chinese language education carried out during the past decades has resulted in a wide number of teaching methodologies based on the characteristics of the writing system itself, such as the teaching of radicals with an emphasis on their semantic cues, or the "concentrated character-recognition method" (集中识字法 *jizhong shizifa*), which promotes literacy through the study of characters with common components).[1]

The Chinese writing system was reformed during the twentieth century and it underwent large scale changes aimed specifically at making literacy an easier and more widespread achievement among the Chinese people. During the fifties the project for Chinese character simplification began, and in 1964, after a few years of planning and testing, the Chinese government issued the *Comprehensive list of simplified characters* (汉语简化字总表 *Hanyu jianhuazi zongbiao*). Simplification consisted of two main changes: the reduction of the number of strokes per character, and the reduction of the total number of characters.[2] The list of simplified characters included three tables in which a total of 2,238 simplified characters were introduced to substitute for 2,264 traditional characters. The traditional characters in the first two tables (characters which cannot be used as radicals, and characters which can be used as radicals plus 14 simplified radicals) averaged 16 strokes per character, which were reduced to an average of about 8 strokes per character. The average number of strokes for the characters in the third table (a list of 1,754 characters derived from the second table) was reduced from 19 to 11.[3]

Recent studies[4] have investigated the major impact of character simplification on pedagogy: on the one hand research has shown that, as a result of character simplification, learners find it easier to remember how characters are written - which

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[1] The teaching methodologies together with the underlying principles which gave rise to their featuring and implementation are discussed in Chapter 3.
[2] CHENG, Chin-chuan (1975) "Directions of Chinese character simplification" in *Journal of Chinese Linguistics*, 3.2/3 pp. 213 - 220
[3] CHAN M. K. M. and HE Baozhang (1988) "A study of the one thousand most frequently used Chinese characters and their simplification" in the *Journal of Chinese Language Teachers Association (JCLTA)*, vol. 23, n. 3, pp. 49 - 68
[4] HANNAS, Wm. C. (1997) *op. cit.*, p. 222; SAMPSON, G. (1985) *Writing systems: a linguistic introduction*. London, Hutchinson, p. 160; FU Yonghe 傅永和 (1981) "Tantan xiandai hanzi de dingxing gongzuo" "谈谈现代汉字的定形工作" ("A discussion on the formalization of modern Chinese characters" in: *Yuwen xiandaihua*, 5, pp. 22 - 32

means that their writing skills are enhanced - while they would find it more difficult to retrieve from memory the combination of a higher number of strokes; on the other hand, debate is still open as to whether visual complexity of non simplified Chinese characters would not enhance the recognition skills of the learner, providing him or her with a higher number of differentiating features and cues for discriminating among shapes.[1] Despite the advantages that the major change of simplification in Chinese writing system was meant to produce in the teaching of Chinese characters, teachers and researchers have not yet fully succeeded in giving a systematic pattern to literacy education in China.

During the second half of the twentieth century various opinions have been expressed on the extent and significance of literacy achievement in Chinese. Often definitions of literacy have been based on a minimum number of characters as a basic requirement. The People's Congress, in 1950, declared that knowledge of 1,000 characters was the objective of literacy courses for adults, and could be proof of literacy. In 1953, new objectives were pointed out: 3,000 characters for workers and cadres (a measure that equalled the Chinese language requirements for primary school completion), and 1,000 characters for peasants. In 1956 the minimum requirements became 2,000 and 1,500 respectively[2] and were to change again several times before 1979, tending towards lower numbers but always suggesting higher requirements for urban people.[3] On the basis of research work done for the World Bank's first country study of China, in 1979 Chinese educators from the Ministry of Education in Beijing defined "reasonable literacy" as the capability of recognizing and writing 3,000 characters, which could be achieved within the five years of primary school education. Accordingly, modern Chinese textbooks reveal remarkable fluctuations regarding the indication of the number of characters primary school pupils should learn during grades I and II, and such fluctuations were even more striking during the eighties, when new interest in children's needs for language education arose. Literacy requirements reached their highest points at the very beginning of the century (1,807 characters in 1904), during the sixties (2,199 in 1961), and after 1977 (1,700 characters). While they were at their lowest point during the thirties (below 1,000 characters in 1933) and towards the

[1] KE Chuanren (1996) "An Empirical Study on the Relationship between Chinese Character Recognition and Chinese Character Production" in: *The Modern Language Journal.* Vol. 80, 3, pp. 340 - 350
[2] ZHAO Wenqing (1988) "Literacy and postliteracy adult education" in WANG, Maorong; LIN Weihua; SUN Shilu; FANG Jing (Editors) *Lessons from practice.* San Francisco, New Direction for Continuing Education, n. 37, p. 15
[3] SEEBERG, V. (1990) *op. cit.,* p. 20

end of the Cultural Revolution (1,316 characters in 1973).[1] This discrepancy of opinions relating to the minimum number of characters to be learned in order to be regarded as literate is eloquent enough. Variables need to be considered: on the one hand pedagogical fashions together with the state's political interest in people's formal education strongly affect the definition of the minimum literacy requirements; on the other hand, such a definition cannot depart from considering the learner (whether he/she is a child or an adult and whether he/she speaks Mandarin or any other Chinese dialect) and the cultural environment in which he/she lives and for which such objectives are pointed out.

It is important to note, however, that the criterion for measuring literacy does not relate exclusively to the number of characters to be learned. It also relates to the question of the utility of the characters which one learns: the list of characters needs to be based on a selection of frequently used characters. Research on high frequency of Chinese characters for the purposes of literacy education had already begun during the 1920s. *"The earliest such survey came in 1921, when the American-trained Chen Heqin analyzed half a million words in newspapers, magazines, novels, and children's book and concluded that 4,261 words were commonly used, and ought to be the staple of literacy in China".*[2] Numerous lists of frequently used characters have been compiled since:[3] the sources on which such studies are based are different (mainly newspapers, novels, and other contemporary publications), and their validity from a statistical point of view relates to the size of the sample under examination. Though based on different research works on frequently used characters which usually include several thousands of characters, the number of characters selected for literacy education and for the compilation of literacy primers keeps fluctuating from around 1,000 to 3,000. Moreover the order according to which characters are introduced within these lists varies. This suggests that there ought to be additional criteria for the selection and ordering of a

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[1] LI Botang 李伯棠 (1985) *Xiaoxue yuwen jiaocai jianshi* 小学语文教育简史 (*A short history of primary school Chinese language education*). Jinan, Shandong Jiaoyu Chubanshe, pp. 243 - 248

[2] WOODSIDE, A. (1992) "Real and imagined continuities in the Chinese struggle for literacy" in: HAYHOE, R. *Education and Modernization: the Chinese experience*. Oxford, Pergamon Press, p. 30

[3] For example *Changyong ci he changyong zi* 常用词和常用字 (*Common words and common characters*) (1985) Beijing, Beijing Language Institute. It is a list of simplified and most frequent characters used in Chinese textbooks of both primary and high schools in the People's Republic of China. Or the list of 3,000 most commonly-used Chinese characters: Zhongguo wenxue gaige weiyuanhui - Guojia biaozhun ju bian 中国文学改革委员会 - 国家标准局编 (1986) *Zui changyong de hanzi shi naxie?* 最常用汉字是哪些？ (*Which are the most commonly used characters?*) Beijing, Wenzi gaige chubanshe - Zhongguo biaozhun chubanshe, which is a computer generated list from millions of characters of running text. Additional information on more recent lists and the sources on which they are based can be found in: DEW, J. E. (1997) "The frequency factor in graded vocabulary for textbooks" in: *JCLTA*, Vol. 32, n. 2, pp. 83 - 92

specific number of characters from the overall number of frequently used ones. And it may also lead to the assumption that, given the particular nature of Chinese script, these additional criteria, along with the teaching methodology adopted, ought to take into account the needs of the different categories of learners.

PART TWO

CHAPTER 4

"CHINESE CHARACTERS: THE TEACHING CONTEXTS"

Introduction

This chapter includes a survey of the teaching of Chinese written language in four different contexts: 1) Chinese language classes in primary school education in China, 2) Chinese language beginner courses in western universities, 3) Chinese language teaching for overseas Chinese children in the Sunday Schools, and 4) adult literacy education in China.

The aim of this investigation is to gather detailed information about the most frequently adopted devices in the teaching of Chinese characters, with reference to the main features of each teaching context. "Teaching context" refers to the overall setting in which the teaching takes place. For the description of each context I take into account two main elements: learners and environment. The description of the type of learners refers to age, background knowledge, and motivation as three features that highly affect the learning process. The environment is described via reference to the dominant language of the *milieu* in which the teaching takes place, and to the position the target language holds within this environment.

The main reason why I selected these four teaching contexts is that in each of them I could find grounds for the comparison with the context of Chinese language literacy education to adults of Chinese origin in Italy, which will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5. Although I intend to articulate the comparison between the four teaching contexts and the study case in the next chapter, I shall illustrate the reasons for the selection of each context at the beginning of each section.

The study of the teaching of Chinese written language in each context includes four parts: the presentation of the context and its features; the overview of the teaching programme with the presentation of the main objectives it aims at; the teaching devices in use with an estimate of the extent to which they fit in the context itself; and the presentation of the teachers' background and training when it appears to be relevant to a better understanding of the way the teaching takes place.

A large percentage of data and information included in this chapter has been

gathered through the fieldwork I carried out in China, Italy and Great Britain from June 1998 to February 2000. Through this fieldwork, which took place at different stages, I was able to examine the material I had first gathered through questionnaires and interviews, and thereafter to look for supplementary sources to fill in the most relevant information gaps. Questionnaires were handed out to teachers of each context.[1] Questions are arranged into the four topics that make up the skeleton for the analysis of the teaching: the context, the programme design, the teaching devices and aids, and the teachers' training and experience. Since the number of questionnaires I could gather for each teaching context varies significantly, I sometimes drew additional information from reference to other available sources: I studied the recent research work on the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language illustrated at the conference held in Paris in 1998;[2] I attended the National Workshop on Adult Literacy and Education held in Beijing in July 1999; I interviewed officers of the education departments in China, and staff members of the organisations that work with the Chinese communities overseas; and I also attended classes and analyzed the teaching material in use when feasible.

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[1] See Appendixes 1 to 4.
[2] Association Française des Professeurs de Chinois (AFPC): "Deuxiemes journees d'etudes internationales sur l'einseignement du chinois". Paris, 6-7 February 1998

4.1 PRIMARY SCHOOL CHINESE LANGUAGE CLASSES IN CHINA

4.1.1 THE CONTEXT

Learners I refer to for the study of this context are Chinese children in their primary school years age, who have not yet learned or have either just started learning to read and write in Chinese although they have mastered the spoken language. Research on language acquisition in past decades has shown that children in their first years of life undergo steady progress in the organisation of their linguistic knowledge.[1] This does not mean that their linguistic competence equals that of an adult, for there are aspects of grammar, vocabulary and language use that they would necessarily acquire during the years of formal education. By the time they are five, though, children have mastered the core linguistic system of their native language.[2]

In many provinces all over China, the language that children learn and speak at home in pre-school years can be quite different from the language that they are taught in mainstream compulsory education. I chose to focus most on the case of the province of Zhejiang. The reason for this choice is that the large majority of Chinese people who have been migrating to Europe from Mainland China come from Zhejiang Province. Therefore a large number of Chinese adults who live in Europe (with the notable exception of Great Britain) are likely to speak a dialect of Zhejiang. The investigation of primary school language education in Zhejiang province, then, makes the parallel between Chinese children and overseas Chinese adults more valuable and consistent.

The learners' age deeply affects their literacy learning process. Children rely quite easily on their memory skills,[3] and, especially in the case of first language acquisition, they draw from experience in their everyday life. Chinese pupils' literacy education is part of their formal education, therefore motivation is only partly relevant among the factors affecting their literacy acquisition. It may affect the pace of their learning process, but it has a minor impact on their decision to attend classes, since

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[1] For a discussion on the acquisition of communicative competence in childhood see: ROMAINE, S. (1984) *The language of children and adolescents. The acquisition of communicative competence*, Oxford and New York, Basil Blackwell; HARRIS, M. and COLTHEART, M. (1986) *Language processing in children and adults: an introduction*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul; JAMES, S. L. (1990) *Normal language acquisition*, Austin, PRO.ED

[2] *Chinese language education for the 21st century: a Hong Kong perspective* (1995) Education Papers 21, Hong Kong, Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong. Chapter 3, pp. 29 - 38

[3] BAER, E. R. (Editor) (1976) *Teaching languages ideas and guidance for teachers working with adults*. London, BBC, p. 8

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primary education is compulsory anyway. On the contrary, the language environment plays a key role in Chinese children literacy education. Chinese pupils' knowledge of the spoken language is acquired and maintained through natural exposure to the linguistic environment of their home country. *Putonghua* is the official language spread all over the country and it is through *Putonghua* that children all over China ought to learn to read and write Chinese characters.[1]

4.1.2 THE PROGRAMME DESIGN

Through the reference to the Chinese language syllabus (语文教学大纲 *Yuwen jiaoxue dagang*) I intended to gather detailed information about the language course structure and progression, and about the fundamental tasks to be achieved in primary school language education. Literacy tasks in primary school education are indicated by the number and the selection of characters to be learned throughout the first five or six years compulsory education.[2] Pupils who attend the first year have to learn 400 characters; in the second year they have to learn another 750 characters; 550 during the third; 400 during the fourth; 250 during the fifth, and 150 during the last year.[3] The analysis of the characters chosen, as well as the analysis of the order and progression according to which these characters are introduced and taught to pupils, help to understand the pedagogic criteria along which the programme has been designed.

One of the main tasks I committed myself to while carrying out my fieldwork in China was the gathering of information about the list of characters taught to primary school pupils: the teaching programme for language education included in the National Chinese Language Syllabus contains no list of the characters to be studied, and it contains no description of the criteria according to which characters should be chosen either. Moreover, teachers themselves are often not aware of the main principles which are taken into account for the selection of the characters included in the textbooks. They seldom question the teaching material - i.e. language textbooks and textual reference books for teachers [语文教学参考书 (*Yuwen jiaoxue cankao shu*)] - and they mainly

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[1] CHEN Ping (1999) *Modern Chinese.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 23 - 30
[2] Compulsory education in China consists of nine years and includes primary education (5 or 6 years) and junior middle education (4 or 3 years).
[3] These are the numbers indicated for 6 year primary school cycle in the Chinese language syllabus (语文教学大纲) *Yuwen jiaoxue dagang,* formulated by the State Education Commission and published by the People's Education Press (Beijing) in 1996. The numbers of characters indicated for 5 year primary school cycle are: 450, 800, 600, 400 and 250.

rely on the guidelines contained in it in order to plan their lessons. As has been pointed out in a study by Lynn Paine,[1] courses for teachers' education follow an approach to teaching that is text-centred. The teaching method course for would be teachers "is designed to help students master the teaching materials, apply these teaching materials, and help the student master the basic functions of each instructional segment - in short, to help the students learn how to use the text".[2] And, the answers that teachers gave to question 3.2 in the questionnaire ("Which Chinese characters does the teacher teach first? Why?") also suggest that the teaching material is usually their main reference, when it is not the only one.[3] Interviews with teachers during the fieldwork carried out in Beijing, Wenzhou, Yueqing and Baixiang[4] confirmed this opinion. As a consequence, the questionnaires handed in by the teachers could not provide sufficiently useful data to enquire about the principles according to which characters are actually chosen.

I consequently contacted the State Education Commission (中华人民共和国国家教育委员会 - *Zhonhua Rengmin Gongheguo Guojia Jiaoyu Weiyuanhui*) whose staff are in charge of the designing of the National Syllabus, and I was advised to refer to the Research Institute for the Compilation of Primary School Teaching Material of the People's Education Press (人民教育出版社 - 课程教材研究所 - *Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe. Kecheng jiaocai yanjiusuo*). I interviewed Mr. Cui, Senior Editor of the People's Education Press and vice-chief of the Chinese Language Department of the Research Institute. As I was told, the department examines the National Syllabus and, on the basis of the guidelines given by the State Education Commission, selects the contents for the language textbooks. Mr. Cui provided me with the list of the characters included in the language textbook published by the People's Education Press.[5] Then he illustrated to me the basic principles according to which the Department chooses and arranges the characters to be included in the teaching material for language education grades I and II. The decision to limit the scope of my investigation to the first two grades of primary school language education is motivated by the fact that grades I and II are devoted to most intensive literacy instruction. Mr. Cui confirmed the fact that the National Syllabus prescribes that primary school children learn a total of 2,500 Chinese

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[1] LYNN Paine (1992) "Teaching and Modernization in Contemporary China" in: HAYHOE, R. (Editor) *Education and modernization: the Chinese experience.* Oxford, Pergamon Press, p. 185-203
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 189
[3] When answering this question, some of the teachers only wrote the characters as they are listed in the textbook. And they referred to the fact that these are the first characters listed in the textbook as the main reason for teaching them first.
[4] Yueqing and Baixiang are two towns of the Yueqing administrative district which extends northwards from Wenzhou city (refer to the map in Illustration I).
[5] Personal communication: Mr. CUI, Senior Editor at the People's Education Press

characters and told me that these characters should all be derived from a list of "high frequency characters". Research work for the compilation of high frequency lists is based on the analysis of a broad corpus of written material which includes journalistic writings, articles about science and technology written for ordinary readers, plays and everyday speech materials, and literary sources - mainly famous novels and short stories. Each character appearing within these lists may be supplemented with a number indicating the total occurrences of the character within the selected material. The larger the sample under examination, the more accurate the statistical selection of characters. Among the outcomes of this research work is the *List of Common Characters in Modern Chinese*,[1] which is one of the basic sources used by the compilers of the teaching material for Chinese language teaching in primary schools. The book includes 3,500 Chinese characters, divided into 2,500 high frequency characters (常用字 - *Chang yong zi*) and 1,000 less (/next) frequently used characters (次常用字 - *Ci chang yong zi*). The large majority of characters for each grade of primary school language education is derived from the high frequency list. These characters, being the most frequently used ones according to statistics, are considered fundamental from a social point of view, therefore they have to become part of the vocabulary of the learner. But there are also a limited number of characters which are drawn from the second set of the source book. They are chosen according to their purported suitability to the context of children's language education.[2] On the one hand they are part of childhood vocabulary: some characters are chosen not only because they are among the most frequently used characters, but, more selectively, because they are the characters a child would most frequently use. Again the frequency of use appears to be a most relevant factor for the selection. On the other hand, some of the characters derived from the second set are chosen because they are "productive" characters. Productivity of a character refers to the number of ways in which its features can lead to faster and easier learning of other characters. Productive characters are therefore characters whose structure exemplifies the use of frequently used components in combined characters.

As far as the order according to which characters are introduced in the teaching material, the leading principles are the simplicity of their shape, relating both to their stroke number and structure (笔画简单 - *bihua jiandan*), and the structure frequency ratio (构字率高 - *gouzi lu gao*), which refers to the number of occurrences of the

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[1] *Xiandai hanyu changyong zibiao* 现代汉语常用字表, the latest version of which was published in 1988 by the Chinese language press.
[2] Personal communication: Mr. Cui

character components and position among other characters. Characters in use also as radicals for other characters would therefore be taught first, and single-component characters (独体字 - *duti zi*) would be taught before combined-structure characters (合体字 - *heti zi*). Mr. Cui also pointed out that the main purpose for adhering to such principles is to train children and gradually enhance their writing skills (培养识字能力 - *peiyang shizi nengli*) which is in fact the main objective in primary school language education for grade I.

The teaching programme for grade II is equally important for literacy education: the third and the fourth volumes of the language textbooks (in use during the two terms of grade II) include the largest number of new characters (生字 - *shengzi*). New characters are arranged into classes and groups that suggest the teaching strategies for expanding pupils' vocabulary:

a. 看图归类 (*kantu guilei*) [classifying according to illustrations]

E.g: 动物归类 (*dongwu guilei*)[animal class]

事物归类 (*shiwu guilei*)[object class]

树类 (*shulei*)[tree class]

b. 基本字带字 - 独体带偏旁 (*qiben zi dai zi - duti dai pianpang*) [key characters to learn new characters - single components to learn radicals]

E.g.:   人 - 认; 市 - 柿

c. 反义词比较认字 (*fanyi ci bijiao ren zi*) [learning characters through comparison with antonyms]

E.g.:   多 - 少；大 - 小

d. 部首字归类 (*bushou zi guilei*) [characters with the same radical]

E.g.:   女 - 妹, 妈

e. 减部首归类 (*jian bushou guilei*) [characters derived from subtracting radicals from other characters]

E.g.:   近 - 斤

f. 会意 (*hui yi*) [associative compounds]

E.g.:   小+土=尘

In order to supplement this information with complementary data on the selection of characters I also surveyed the lists of characters included in other two textbooks in use for primary school language education grade I. The comparison among different sets of textbooks helped me to appreciate the extent to which the principles described by Mr. Cui are de facto applied to other cases. During the last decade, in fact, the publishing and implementation of different teaching material, also at the local level,

has been allowed provided that it be examined and approved by the NCEASTM (National Committee for Examining and Approving School Teaching Materials) before being adopted.[1] One of the lists I chose for comparison is taken from *Chinese Language*, the course textbook published by the Beijing Press in 1996;[2] and the other one is taken from *Chinese language and ideology* (语文。思想品德), the course textbook published by the Zhejiang Education Press in 1993.[3] The resulting sample I got, therefore includes the textbook by the People's Education Press, which is being used in 70% of primary schools all over the country[4] and is therefore considerably representative for its wide distribution; the textbook by the Beijing Press, which I chose for the fact that it is published in Beijing as well, and could therefore be an interesting source to detect differences among textbooks published in the same province; and the textbook published in Zhejiang, which was in use in the primary schools I visited while carrying out my fieldwork in the Wenzhou area (spring 1999).

Despite the fact that the three books were published in different years and in two different provinces, they all list more or less the same number of characters (440; 438; 442) for language education grade I. I focused my attention on the first hundred characters introduced in each textbook.[5] Again the reason why I chose to refer only to the first hundred characters in order to appreciate the devices illustrated by Mr. Cui is that it is in the beginning of literacy education that the most intensive efforts on character acquisition are required. The selection included in the volume published by the People's Education Press begins with characters to be learned independently, continues with characters that can be studied as part of polysyllabic words and expressions, and ends with characters which, in the textbook, are used for the composition of short texts. The selection published in the textbook by the Beijing Press begins with characters to be studied with the aid of pictures: simple structure characters (with a single component) are introduced first (lessons 1 to 12), and combined-structure characters next (lessons 13 and 14). Pictures are also used for the study of new words (看图学词 - *kan tu xue ci*: lessons 15 to 17) and then for the study of sentences (看图学句子 *kan tu xue juzi*: lessons 18 to 23). Characters introduced in the textbook published by the Zhejiang Education Press are simply grouped under two main

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[1] LEWIN, Keith M; LITTLE, Angela W.; XU Hui; ZHENG Jiwei (1994) *Educational innovation in China: tracing the impact of the 1985 reforms*. Essex, Longman, p. 147
[2] *Yuwen* 语文 (Chinese language) (1996) Beijing, Beijing chubanshe
[3] *Yuwen. Sixiang pinde* 语文思想品德 (Chinese language and ideology) (1993) Zhejiang, Zhejiang jiaoyu chubanshe
[4] Data refer to 1999, when I was on fieldwork in China.
[5] See Table II: List of the first 100 characters selected in three primary school language textbooks

headings: character learning (a section that includes simple structure characters mainly), and reading practice.

The close study of the teaching material in use in language education grades 1 and 2 leads to the recognition of the important position held by pictographic characters in the learning process of children. As a matter of fact, only a small percentage of the overall number of characters are pictographs (if we refer to the traditional division of characters into classes, formulated by Xu Shen [ca. 58 -147 AD] in his *Shuowen jiezi* [*The explanation of simple graphs and analysis of compound graphs*],[1] where the total amount of characters analysed is 9,353, only 364 (3.89%) are pictographs, whereas the largest class is made up by phonetic compounds (7,697 characters, i.e. 82.29%). And new generated vocabulary is likely to be made up by phonetic compounds as well, for this type of characters has features that make use of the existing characters and of their semantic or phonetic cueing values.[2] Yet, despite the relevance of the phonetic compound class, it is to the iconic value that pictographs retain, that emergent literacy mainly turns to in order to make it easier for children to recognize their meanings and remember their shapes. The reference to the iconic value of characters is in fact a major criterion for the ordering of characters taught to primary school pupils. And pictographs [象形 (*xiangxing*) literally meaning "resembling shapes"] and indicative characters [指事 (*zhishi*) literally meaning "indicators of events"][3], which also retain strong iconic value, are in fact the first two types of characters taught to children at school.

The common principle observed in the selection of characters for building up the primary school language teaching programme is to follow a well structured path from simple graphs and easily accessible meanings to more complex graphs and more abstract ways of representing meanings. Consequentially, the arrangement of characters in the teaching material begins with single characters (simple-structure characters first and combined-structure characters then), and continues with words (monosyllabic first and polisyllabic then). Only afterwards are short phrases and sentences introduced. Such a path besides adhering to the principle of progressing from simple to complex, also provides for the reinforcement of character memorization while expanding the children's vocabulary.

Literacy during the first and second grade of language education is derived 50%

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[1] WOON Wee Lee (1987) *Chinese writing. Its origin and evolution.* Macau, University of East Asia, p. 4

[2] WANG Jing 王静 (1990) *Hanzi guilu yu shizi jiaoxue* 汉字规律与识字教学 (*Patterns of Chinese characters and Chinese language teaching*). Beijing, Guangming Ribao chubanshe, pp. 151

[3] Pictographs may be defined as graphs that schematically represent the object they mean; indicatives may be defined as graphs whose representation convey iconic information about the meaning.

from the classification system (归类识字 - *guilei shizi*) and for the remaining 50% from text-based classroom teaching (随课识字 - *sui ke shizi*).[1] Efforts are first focused on training the learner's character acquisition process through guidance and models. Meanwhile independent learning is encouraged through further instructions on the way to use *pinyin* and the dictionary.

This overview of the teaching programme for primary school language education is complemented by supplementary information gathered during the fieldwork that I carried out in China. The fieldwork in fact also included the study of sources available at Beijing Normal University (北京师范大学 - *Beijing Shifan Daxue*) and at the National Library of Beijing (北京图书馆 - *Beijing Tushuguan*), the semi-structured interviews with teachers and researchers, and the questionnaires that I handed out to primary school language teachers in the Wenzhou area.[2]

One section of the questionnaire that I gave to primary school language teachers in Wenzhou, Yueqing and Baixiang focuses on the teaching of *Putonghua* (关于语言 "1.7 to 1.10").[3] This section includes questions on the main differences between *Putonghua* and the local dialects, on the age and circumstances under which students usually start learning, and on the traditional methods and most effective teaching aids available to teach students *Putonghua*. According to the teachers there are multiple differences between *Putonghua* and the dialects in use in the Wenzhou area. Yet, the teachers themselves were not always able to classify the nature of these differences. As Table III shows, all the teachers I interviewed agreed in acknowledging one major difference between the dialects and *Putonghua*: the pronunciation. But there was no unanimous agreement as to the differences relating to semantics (the meaning of words), vocabulary (the set of words used) and syntax (the structure of the sentence).

There are a variety of dialects throughout the whole province. The majority of the dialects in use in the Wenzhou area belong to the Wu dialect group, which is itself divided into six subgroups.[4] As I understand it from the answers given by the teachers to question 1.7 ("When do pupils usually begin to study *Putonghua*?"), a large majority of pupils already speak *Putonghua* when they enter grade I in primary school (see Table IV). Children learn *Putonghua* during the first years of their life and much of this learning process seems to depend on the language environment in which they live (see

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[1] Personal communication: Mr. Cui
[2] Fieldwork: China (April - May 1999)
[3] See Appendix 1
[4] LI Rong and XIONG Zhenghui (1988) "Chinese Dialects - the Wu Group" in: *Language atlas of China*. Hong Kong, Longman Group Ltd.

Table V). At home they listen to television and radio programmes broadcast in *Putonghua*. Teachers in kindergartens also foster this learning process: they talk to children in *Putonghua*, let them listen to song tapes for children with standard pronunciation, and encourage parents to speak with their sons and daughters in *Putonghua*.

Once they enter primary school, practising *Putonghua* becomes a fundamental task pupils should confront with every day. During the first weeks of primary school language education they also have to learn is *pinyin*, with the related set of rules for the correct pronunciation of consonant and vowels sounds, diphthongs, and whole syllables. *Pinyin* is the main instrument through which students maintain and improve their knowledge of *Putonghua*, and learn how to read and write Chinese characters. This is also suggested in the answers that teachers gave to question 1.10: "What is the most effective instrument to help students to learn *Putonghua*?", while referring to the set of instruments available during primary school language education (see Table VI). In fact the teaching of new characters through the use of *pinyin* is also implemented throughout the second term of grade I. For example, during the language classes that I attended in Wenzhou primary schools, teachers often referred to the use of flash-cards. The teacher would show to the students the card with the character and the *pinyin* wanting them to read aloud and clearly the character first, and then provide some examples of words or expressions in which the same character appears (see Illustration II). Moreover, *pinyin* continues to be a complementary tool for the study of new characters in language education for grade II, when students have to refer to *pinyin* in order to look for the meaning of new words in the dictionary.

4.1.3 TEACHING DEVICES

Interviews and answers given in the questionnaires, as well as the information contained in the research studies I referred to, suggest that primary school language teaching relies on different strategies in order to teach literacy to Chinese pupils. Literacy teaching methodologies consist of a combination of different devices, which are sometimes used consequentially and sometimes simultaneously. Therefore it is impossible to correctly estimate the effectiveness of each device within the whole teaching programme.

Among the more common devices adopted for literacy teaching in primary

school language education are:

- 看 图 拼 音 识 字 [(*kan tu pinyin shizi*) learning characters and their pronunciation through illustrations]: a device that makes simultaneous reference to both images (drawings) and *pinyin* phonetic writing.

- 看图学词学句识字 [(*kan tu xue ci xue ju shizi*) literacy method for learning words and sentences through illustrations]: this device is widespread in primary school language teaching, grade I. Instructions have to be given by the language teacher: pupils look at images and learn how to pronounce syllables after the model given by the teacher. They study radicals first and then combined characters, monosyllabic words before polysyllabic words, short expression before sentences.

- 归类集中识字 [(*guilei jizhong shizi*) concentrated literacy through characters grouping] widely implemented in language education grade II (textbook: volumes 3 and 4). Contents are organised according to the specific features of characters: their pronunciation, their shape and their meaning. The teacher has to encourage comparisons among characters helping pupils to learn about their structure. Pupils are trained to expand their vocabulary through comparisons, associations, and additional class types (e.g. antonyms) that help them to recall the meaning of characters.

- 集中识字 [(*jizhong shizi*) concentrated literacy]: it started being implemented in Liaoning province in 1958 as a method that would quicken literacy acquisition.[1] Through the concentrated method it is possible to learn 2,500 characters within two years. The concentrated literacy method itself combines different devices according to the following progression: 1. literacy through images (images as the basis and *pinyin* as a complementary tool); 2. study of homophone characters (characters corresponding to the same syllable are taught together); 3. Basic characters to learn new characters (whereby *basic* refers to the character structure, therefore a character is introduced and studied as the main component of other combined characters. E.g.: 里 to study 理, 量, 厘, 狸). This method has also been referred to as the Concentrated Character Recognition Method [集中汉字识字法 (*jizhong hanzi shizifa*)][2] for it makes full use of the visual, semantic and phonetic relations among characters. 80 to 90% of the common characters are composed of sound cueing phonetics and/or meaning cueing semantic components. Once the basic character is learned its components can ease the learning of many other characters which share either the phonetic or the semantic

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[1] "Shizi jiaoxue gaige yi lan" "识字教学改革一览" ("Reforming literacy education: an overview") (1997) in: *Renmin Jiaoyu* 人民教育 (*People's Education*), vol. 1, p. 32
[2] DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *The Chinese language: fact and fantasy.* Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, pp. 213 - 214

component. Therefore characters are learned together regardless of their different degree of complexity.[1]

- 随课文分散识字 [(*sui kewen fensan shizi*) disperse literacy (based on text contents)]: according to the disperse literacy method, students have to learn only *pinyin* first (which would be a variation from the guidelines pointed out in the National Syllabus that prescribe the teaching of *pinyin* in combination with characters). They study the rules for *pinyin* pronunciation first and then acquire familiarity with *pinyin* through continuous practice.[2] The following step consists in the use of *pinyin* to study single component characters. Characters are derived from the texts contained in the textbook, for one of the fundamentals of the disperse literacy method is that reference to the content of short passages would make it easier for learners to remember the meaning of the new characters it includes.[3] The disperse literacy method is usually implemented in primary school language education grades I and II in combination with the concentrated literacy method.

Questionnaires given to primary school teachers include three questions for gathering information about teaching devices:[4] question 3.3 ("According to which criteria does the teacher arrange the vocabulary to be taught during each class?") focuses on the way characters are selected and grouped.[5] Question 3.6 enquires about the more suitable devices to help students remember new characters. And question 5.2 asks for teachers' opinion about the most useful ways to study Chinese characters. All the teachers (total 54) referred to more than one device, which again proves that a combination of devices is preferred to a single-device method. Moreover, the teachers' answers are constantly derived from the material in use in their school, and this results in the uniformity of answers given by teachers in service in the same school. I shall therefore summarise the major trends that emerge from the analysis of the answers they gave. There are two major trends. 28 teachers mainly rely on the implementation of devices that focus on the study of the character structure (analysis of components, study of radicals, study of simple-structure characters first and of combined characters

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[1] TAYLOR, I. and TAYLOR, M. (1995) *Writing and literacy in Chinese, Korean and Japanese.* Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, p. 133
[2] When the disperse literacy method is adopted as the basic teaching method, *pinyin* is used for character learning throughout all six grades of primary education
[3] "Shizi jiaoxue gaige yi lan" (1997) *op. cit.*, p. 32
[4] See Appendix 1
[5] The criteria adopted to select and introduce new characters throughout the teaching programme planning is strictly related to the teaching devices that the teacher would adopt.

afterwards, study of radical-plus-phonetic[1] characters, analysis and comparison of characters with a similar shape). This strategy makes it easier for pupils to access literacy through a progressive understanding of the different classes of characters arranged according to their shape. While attending language classes in Zhejiang I had the chance to see teachers implementing some of these devices. Characters with similar shape were taught and revised together according to the following group arrangement: changing one component (换部件 - *huan bujian*. Eg: 清；请 - *qing; qing*) adding a stroke (加笔画 - *jia bihua*. Eg: 问；闻 - *wen; jian*). And some additional explanations were provided by the teacher in order to help the students remember the different meanings of similar characters (as for the explanation of 口 - *kou*, the character for "mouth" and 曰 - *yue* the character for "say", where the added stroke in the second character is described to pupils as actually representing words that come out of the mouth while speaking).[2] These types of association are usually provided by the teacher him/herself, but need to be probed and discussed with other teachers before being used in class teaching.[3] The other major trend is represented by 18 teachers who would rather refer to devices that insist on the study and use of the phonetic aspects first (*pinyin*, association of characters with similar pronunciation, dictation). While attending primary school classes in the Wenzhou area I collected a few examples of the way these devices are implemented: one teacher insisted on comparison between characters with the same pronunciation (坐 and 座, both pronounced *zuo* or 再 and 在, both pronounced *zai*). First she explained the different meaning of the characters under examination, then she suggested expressions and sentences in which the character sound was introduced (一座楼: *yi zuo lou* - one building; 请你再说一遍 : *qing ni zai shuo yi bian* - repeat it once again, please). Afterwards the teacher pronounced these expressions and asked the pupils to refer to the context and recall the meaning of the sentence in order to find out which character had to be used.[4] Teachers reckon that referring to the phonetic aspects of characters helps students expand their vocabulary independently, chiefly through the use of *pinyin* and of the dictionary, which they consider the basic instruments for

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[1] 形声字 - *xingsheng zi*: this is a class of combined characters, by far the largest among the Six Classes included in the *Shuowen jiezi* (*The explanation of simple graphs and analysis of compound graphs*). Characters from this class consist of two simple components, the semantic component (which usually refers to or gives clues about the meaning), and the phonetic component.

[2] Grade I language class in Puxieshi Primary School (Wenzhou) attended on 24 April 1999

[3] I happened to attend a class taught by a would-be teacher in which the teacher introduced 果 as the phonetic component for 课 and 颗 (which are both pronounced *ke*). She was obviously making a mistake (since the character she referred to as a phonetic component is actually pronounced *guo*) in order to establish a relation between the two characters under examination that share a common component.

[4] Puxieshi Primary School: 22 April 1999

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literacy acquisition.

It should also be remarked that the majority of teachers consider very helpful to promote literacy in primary school language education by means of aids and devices that make use of images and stories (flash-cards, label system, characters-tell-stories).[1] Some teachers would also encourage students to implement their own strategies for remembering the characters shape, meaning, and pronunciation. They would ask students to illustrate these strategies so that these could be discussed in class and, if valuable, taken as a model by the other students as well. I may here recall two such occasions I had the opportunity to observe during my fieldwork. On one of these, the character to be studied and remembered by the pupils was 扛. One student suggested to refer to two other characters or words he and his classmates had already studied, each of them exemplifying the use of one of the two components of the target character. On the other, the path for remembering how to read, write and remember the meaning of the character 瓢 used in the polysyllabic word 瓢虫 was suggested by the teacher herself. The teacher provided hints through simple questions, but let pupils draw their own conclusions (first she pointed to the association between the ladybird (瓢虫) and its beauty (漂亮) while putting the emphasis on the common phonetic cueing component in 瓢 and 漂; then she addressed the case of similarity between the colours of the ladybird and (a slice of) watermelon (西瓜), to draw the pupils attention on the meaning cueing component (瓜) used in target character.[2]

4.1.4 TEACHERS' TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

The teaching programme for would-be language teachers in Chinese primary school consists of three years of education at the normal school.[3] Students have to attend classes for 156 weeks. The teaching programme includes 107 weeks for education studies and 10 weeks of practice (36 weeks for vacation and 3 additional weeks that should be devoted to attending primary school language classes with other students). Classes are divided into compulsory and complementary. All students have to

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[1] Flash-cards show the character on one side and *pinyin* plus some examples of words or expressions in which the character is usually used on the other side; the label system consists in labelling objects with signs that show the characters for their names; and by the expression "characters tell stories", teachers mainly refer to the stories that can be made up according to the shape of characters in order to help pupils remember their meaning.

[2] Direct observation in school language teaching in the Wenzhou area (April and May 1999)

[3] The length of the course will soon be changed to 5 years

attend a minimum number of classes in politics (190), Chinese language (570), mathematics (420), physics (170), chemistry (130), biology (130), history (130), geography (130), psychology (100), children's education (130), gymnastics (190), music (190), arts (190), and work education (150). These classes are meant to instruct students with the basic knowledge for primary school teaching. Special emphasis is given to politics, civilization and theory of education.

Would-be teachers also have to master *Putonghua* (which they will have to use while teaching) and to become familiar with the teaching strategies which can be implemented in the teaching of primary school children.[1] Language classes focus on the mastery of the common instruments for language teaching: would-be teachers need to be able to understand children's speech and they have to learn how to address children. They need to be trained in making quick judgements on pupils' performances, and thereafter to plan suitable strategies to progress with their teaching programme. First year language classes at the Normal School are centred on mastering *Putonghua*, being able to use dictionaries, and learning useful text paragraphs by heart. Students also need to master the rules for writing characters properly and clearly. Moreover, during the first year they are also instructed in the way to plan *pinyin* and literacy exercises. Second year language classes insist on the importance of speaking *Putonghua* correctly and fluently. Exercises for reading aloud clearly contribute to make would-be teachers able to propose suitable models for primary school pupils. The second year programme also includes learning to analyse and evaluate children's written exercises. During the last year students have to learn how to implement *ad hoc* teaching strategies. This means that they have to discuss teaching outcomes with other teachers and learn how to plan full teaching units according to the teaching material and to the aims pointed out in the teaching programme for each grade of language education.

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[1] Information was derived from visiting and discussing with teachers at the Normal School of Yuecheng, in Zhejiang Province, from interviewing would be teachers who attended primary school language teaching in some primary schools Yuecheng and Baixiang, and from reference to the Normal School Syllabus [Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia jiaoyu weiyuanhui 中华人民共和国国家教育委员会 (1992) *Zhongdeng shifan xuexiao jiaoxue dagang* 中等师范学校教学大纲 (*Teachers' training school syllabus*) Beijing, Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe]

4.2 CHINESE LANGUAGE CLASSES FOR EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

4.2.1 THE CONTEXT

The study of this teaching context aims at identifying the devices adopted to teach Chinese written language to western adults, mainly university students. Learners within this context are adult learners of the Chinese language, which is the main reason why I consider that the study of this context and its comparison with the study case could produce relevant contributions to my research work. The fact that learners of both teaching contexts are adults is the main reason for drawing the parallel and highlighting the devices specifically designed for adult learners of the Chinese written language. Moreover, the teaching of foreign students of the Chinese language does not take place in the target language environment. This would also be the case for the teaching of overseas Chinese adults.

Western university students are likely to approach the study of Chinese written language as part of a programme that also includes the study of Chinese spoken language. In adult education, the learners' motivation is a prior condition for success. "Study of a foreign language consciously chosen is likely to engage motivation and concentration more closely than a language simply encountered on a school timetable. Motivation to learn a language begins to emerge as the most important factor in determining success".[1] The teaching programme is designed for achieving specific skills, and the teaching material also underpins the progressive steps towards this aim. Western students generally use primers during their first year of Chinese language education, and start reading original Chinese texts - including classical and modern Chinese texts - in the second year, after having learned from five hundred to about one thousand characters. Since the characters they have learned during the first year (500 to 1,000 characters) are not sufficient to enable them to understand texts, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language generally looks for ways that would help learners to build up a systematic knowledge of the vocabulary and of the grammar. And it also aims at providing students with a schematic knowledge of the culture, history, and social life of China. In my investigation, though, I will mostly be concerned with that part of the

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[1] BAER, E. R. (Editor) (1976) *op. cit.*, p. 10

teaching programmes that relates to the teaching of characters.

The investigation was carried out in Great Britain and Italy and the information was gathered by means of questionnaires filled in by the teachers,[1] personal attendance at classes, and reference to the textbooks in use.[2] The questionnaire was distributed to teachers in Great Britain and Italy: five questionnaires were filled in by teachers in London (SOAS, Language Centre, Guildhall University), and eight questionnaires by the teachers of four different Italian universities (4 from the University of Venice, 2 from the University of Bologna and 2 from La Sapienza in Rome). Through the questionnaire I enquired about the specific course aims as designed for university students, and about the teaching methods teachers most frequently rely on when teaching Chinese writing to western adults. Questions are arranged in the same order as in the questionnaire distributed to the primary school language teachers in China, a device intended to make comparisons between the two contexts easier. Attendance at classes took place in London. I attended two university courses designed for beginner learners of Chinese[3] in order to gather additional data about inferences of the background knowledge of a language with a different writing system on the study of Chinese language writing. Whenever I considered it useful I also referred to my personal experience as a student of the Chinese language[4] in order to provide complementary information about the textbooks and about the pace of the teaching programme. Among the other sources I referred to are the presentations discussed at the Second Conference on the teaching of Chinese characters, which I attended in Paris in February 1998,[5] and the research outcomes relative to the topic published in the *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association* (JCLTA).

4.2.2 THE TEACHING PROGRAMME

[1] See Appendix 2
[2] The textbooks are: ABBIATI M. (1998) *Grammatica di cinese moderno*, Venezia, Cafoscarina; REN Yuan, ABBIATI, M. (1994), *Hanyu. Cinese moderno*. I vol., Beijing-Venezia, Yuyen Xueyuan Chubanshe - Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina; LU Jianji, LI Jiyu (*et. al.*) (1994) *Modern Chinese beginner course* (Second Edition) vol.1, Beijing, Sinolingua; Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan (1986) *Practical Chinese reader*, Elementary Course, Book I, Beijing, Commercial Press; POLLARD David E. and T'UNG P. C. (1982) *Colloquial Chinese*. New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul
[3] Term one, Academic Year 1998 - 99
[4] I have been a student of Chinese at the Eastern Languages and Cultures Department of Venice University from 1989 to 1994
[5] Association Française des Professeurs de Chinois (1998) *Deuxiemes Journées d'Etude Internatonales sur l'Enseignement du Chinois. L'einseignement des caractères.* Resumés des intervention. Paris, Librairie Le Phenix

The teaching programme of the language course for western adults who enrol for the first year of a degree in Chinese usually includes reading, writing, listening and speaking. Whether foreign learners should begin with the study of the spoken language first or simultaneously approach the study of characters is a much debated question.[1] Two different schools of thought exist: according to the first school[2] introducing the written language and the spoken language simultaneously emphasizes conceptual learning as an integrated part of language learning. Conceptual learning as applied to the case of the study of Chinese characters means that by mastering radicals first, students recognize them as recurring elements in the characters that constitute their reading material, and they also learn to recognize the different arrangements of the radicals in different characters. Learners are enabled to build up a body of repetitive semantic components. Under the instructions of the teacher, they first associate the meaning of these components with the character, and then associate the character with sounds. The second school[3] argues that a delay in the introduction of Chinese characters is intended to encourage the development of oral and aural skills as a basis for the study of reading strategies. Reading could be easier when the reading material is already familiar to the learner in the spoken form. This school insists on the fact that the phonetic element has much greater importance than the semantic one in helping to predict the meaning of individual characters.[4]

My personal experience as a student and, more recently, as an observer[5] shows that the teaching programmes for foreign students of the Chinese language promote the study of Chinese characters right from the start, along with the study of the spoken language. Moreover, the teaching of radicals holds a key position in this teaching context.[6] Radicals may be introduced and explained in class, and their original shape and meaning discussed in detail, especially when they convey information about the

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[1] MATSUNAGA, S. (1995) *The role of phonological coding in reading kanji: a research report and some pedagogical implications.* Honolulu: Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Centre, University of Hawaii, p. 40

[2] LIU, Irene (1983) "The learning of Chinese characters: a conceptual learning approach" in *JCLTA*, vol. XVIII, pp. 65 - 75

[3] DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.a) "Phonetic versus semantic predictability in Chinese characters" in *JCLTA*, vol. XIX, n. 1, pp. 1 - 21; EVERSON, M. (1998) "Word recognition among learners of Chinese as a foreign language: investigating the relationship between naming and knowing" in: *The Modern language Journal*, vol. 82, n. 2, pp. 200-201.

[4] *Ibid.* DeFrancis examines and compares semantic and phonetic classes in Chinese characters and gives statistical evidence of the superior capacity of the phonetic element in predicting pronunciation as compared to the capacity of the semantic element in predicting meaning.

[5] I attended classes for first year students at SOAS and at Guildhall University in London from October to December 1998.

[6] For a discussion of the applications of radicals in the pedagogy of written Chinese see: CARR M. (1981) "Pedagogy, radicals and grapho-semantic fields" in *JCLTA*, vol. XVI, n. 3, pp. 51 - 66

meaning of the characters in which they are included. But students are advised to carefully study the character by heart if no useful association between the radical and the character can be derived. The importance of radicals is also attached to their use in lexical indexes: their identification allows students to look in dictionaries for the pronunciation and meaning of new characters. Therefore it is a tool that fits in the positive development of independent learning. Little emphasis is given on the contrary to the study of the phonetic components of characters. Students usually happen to learn to recognize the phonetic component of characters subsequently, and only then do they appreciate the cueing function of that component. As a matter of fact, despite the major relevance and efficacy of the phonetic element[1] contained in radical-plus-phonetic compounds, the progression suggested by the second school of thought is not so popular among the teachers I met. Getting to the meaning of characters through phonological coding implies a high degree of familiarity with the spoken language, which means that the role of the phonetic element in the reading process would acquire greater relevance in the case of literacy classes for native speakers.[2]

Details about the teaching programmes derive from the description of the structure and the progression of the two courses I attended in London, from the one I attended as a student at Venice University, and from the information given by the teachers through interviews and questionnaires. The first of the two courses I attended as an observer is the Minor in Chinese Language (also Chinese Proficiency for beginners) held at the London Guildhall University. The course can be taken as a complementary subject (in addition to a full-time study programme). It consists of a total of four hours per week during which simplified Chinese characters are introduced by the teacher, although most of the teaching time is devoted to the explanation of colloquial Chinese speech patterns enabling the students to participate in simple conversation. The target figure for written characters is three hundred for the first unit (term one, September - January). According to the *Course Handout*, during this initial stage of character acquisition, the stroke order and radical composition of each symbol should be fully explained.[3] The second course is Chinese First (beginners) at SOAS. I attended Dr. Wang's classes on Chinese characters (two hours per week out of a total of 15 hours of Chinese language teaching per week). The programme includes the teaching of full-form characters during the first and second term (from October to December and

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[1] Refer to the analysis carried out and summarised in the table by DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *op. cit.*, pp. 126 - 129

[2] DEFRANCIS J. (1984.a) *op. cit.*, p. 18

[3] Information derived from the section "General course aims and objectives" of the Course Handbook.

from January to April). Full-form characters are visually more complex than simplified ones, therefore, the principle "from simple to difficult", which is a fundamental in the teaching of Chinese characters to primary school pupils in China, does not equally stand for the case of Chinese language students at SOAS. This difference might be related to two factors. The first is the learners' age and background knowledge: the visual complexity of full-form characters may sometime work as an aid for western adult learners, by implying a richness in details that may enhance access to the meaning of characters. The second factor relates to the function at which literacy is aimed. As far as the case of university Chinese language students is concerned, they are required to gain familiarity with full-form characters in order to refer to Chinese sources written until the fifties, which they would need to study already during the first year as part of the programme. Moreover, it is believed that since these students have to learn both forms, the shift from full-form characters to simplified ones may turn out to be easier than the shift the other way round.

The teaching of Chinese characters to university students usually begins with the presentation of some basic features of the Chinese script history and development. Teachers give an introductory explanation of the structure of Chinese characters and refer to the six categories (or principles) according to which characters are traditionally classified. The strategy is adopted by several teachers in Italy as well[1], and the introductory explanation is usually illustrated through examples in the textbooks.[2] Another common trait of the programmes for foreign learners of the Chinese written language is the teaching of *pinyin*. To learn *pinyin* stands as a prerequisite for the study of characters also in the case of language teaching to Chinese primary school pupils. Yet, there is minor emphasis on this part of the programme when the teaching is addressed to foreign adults: their attention is mainly drawn to understanding the way a writing system that has no spelling to sound correspondence works. Since university students in Great Britain and Italy are already familiar with Latin letters, teachers usually limit their efforts to explaining the general rules of *pinyin*, and may then briefly focus on the differences between the spelling rules of *pinyin* and those of the Italian or English writing system.

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[1] The strategy has been described by one of the teacher of the University of Bologna. Although the other teachers who returned the questionnaire did not mention the introductory presentation of the history and development of Chinese writing among the strategies in use, my assumption is derived from reference to my personal experience as a student, from reference to textbooks in use, and from discussion with other teachers and learners

[2] ABBIATI, M. (1985) *Corso introduttivo di lingua cinese moderna*. Venezia, Libreria Editrice Cafoscarina, pp. 1-2

The study of the teaching programmes also includes an overview of the vocabulary that foreign students have to master by the end of each course. Besides the number of characters that students have to learn, which necessarily depends on other features of the course mainly -- such as its length, the aims and objectives it is designed for, and whether it is only a *tranche* of a further articulated course or not -[1] I also gathered information about the criteria for the choice and selection of characters. Questions 3.3 (According to which criteria do you select characters to be taught first?) and 3.5 (How is the progression of characters to be taught afterwards organized?) in the questionnaire were mainly addressed to this purpose. The majority of the teachers asserted that the main source from which they derive the list of characters to be taught is the textbook. Yet, some of the teachers also gave additional clues to the principles they would follow for deciding the progression according to which characters are introduced and explained to the students. Such principles mainly rely on the structure of the textbook itself, but they are also determined by the general guidelines of the teaching programme, which means that the selection of characters, as well as their number, is strictly dependent on the orientation of the course. One of the principles or criteria for establishing this order is whether characters can be combined into *theme-groups*. The arrangement of characters from words that belong to a common theme or subject makes it easier for the student to establish links among characters, and eventually also to recognize the meaning of words because they are part of a specific context. As some teachers have pointed out in the questionnaires as well as during interviews, the extension of the learner vocabulary in the target language can be greatly enhanced by the fact that characters that belong to the same semantic field are used to form words that belong to the same theme-group. For example the study of the character 学 - *xue* (study/ learn), would be followed by the study of words such as 学习 - *xuexi* (study), 学生 - *xuesheng* (student), 学校- *xuexiao* (school), which include it and which also belong to the same theme-group.[2] Another widespread criterion for choosing and ordering the characters in the syllabus is whether characters belong to everyday-life vocabulary or not. This principle results in a selection that goes far beyond the selection based on characters frequency as applied to the case of teaching to Chinese primary school pupils. The high-frequency factor in a corpus of written material that includes

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[1] Sometimes the course combines the work of different teachers (that is the case of Venice University, Rome, and SOAS). Each teacher may therefore be in charge of the teaching of a part of the programme only. (For example, while one teacher focuses his/her lessons on the teaching of *pinyin* and grammar, other teachers, usually native speaker language assistants, focus on the teaching of characters and writing, or listening and speaking skills).

[2] TAYLOR, I. and TAYLOR, M. (1995) *op. cit.*, p. 55

journalistic writings, articles on science and technology, plays, literary sources, and everyday speech material diffused in China has little impact on the teaching of foreign learners of the Chinese written language when they approach the study as beginner students. On the contrary, getting started with the study of characters and words that learners would actually immediately understand and use as part of their everyday-life vocabulary is considered an efficacious device.[1] It helps catching the interest of the learner, and it makes the new knowledge immediately applicable, two prior conditions for success in the teaching of adults.[2] The criteria for the selection and progression of characters introduced in the teaching programme for foreign adults differ from those featuring the syllabus for language education in Chinese primary schools also for another fundamental reason. Chinese pupils have already mastered the spoken language, and the fact that they are already familiar with the basic everyday-life vocabulary allows literacy classes to be based on a selection of items that focus on the characters' shape and structure mainly, in a progression from simple to complicated characters.[3] The *usefulness* of characters in the teaching programme designed for primary school pupils then does not only depend on the frequency factor: characters are regarded as useful also when they lead to the assimilation and retention of other characters which share similar structure features.[4] The structure of characters is a determining factor also in the teaching of foreign adults. But only to a much shorter extent is it determining in the selection of items to be included in the syllabus for this teaching context. The attention of the designers of the teaching programmes for western adult learners is strategically more focused on words and on meaning relations among them.

4.2.3 TEACHING DEVICES

Research relating to the teaching of Chinese to foreign adults is fairly new. It

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[1] For instance the characters used for 威 尼 斯 大 学 (*Weinisi daxue* - Venice University) are not necessarily part of the syllabus of primary school language education in China, but they would be frequently used and therefore easily retained by learners of the Chinese language who attend classes at the university of Venice.

[2] ROGERS, A. (1986) *Teaching adults*. Milton Keynes, Philadelphia, Open University Press, p. 19; and PROSSER, R. (1967) *Adult education for developing countries*. Nairobi, East African Publishing House, pp. 94 - 101

[3] Refer to Chapter 4, Section 1

[4] The structure of characters is a determining factor also in the teaching of foreign adults. But only to a much shorter extent it is determining in the selection of items to be included in the syllabus for this teaching context. The attention of the designer of the teaching programme for western adult learners seems in fact to be focused more on words and their meanings.

only lately began to draw contributions from other research fields such as comparative linguistics and psychology of learning (psycholinguistics). Among the major outcomes of this development is the understanding that for designing an efficient teaching method it is necessary to specify and consider the type of learner who will be receiving the language instruction. Accordingly, the teaching of Chinese characters also has to rely on specific devices that take into account the peculiarities of the teaching context.[1] It can therefore be expected that the teaching of foreign learners who have to learn both the spoken and the written language in a language environment that is not Chinese relies on devices that are different from those applied for the teaching of Chinese children in a Chinese primary school and for the teaching of learners of other contexts as well.

One of the greater difficulties a beginner learner of the Chinese written language confronts is the retention of the large number of characters required for attainment of literacy standards in the target language. Question 3.7 ("What kind of devices are used to help students to memorize characters?") has been included in the questionnaire with the specific purpose of investigating the strategies adopted to deal with this difficulty. A range of eight different devices was provided to the teachers to select from: a- Mnemonics; b- Learning proverbs; c- Copying and rewriting; d- Reading aloud; e- Dictation; f- Flash-cards; g- Games; h- Referring to original shape and meaning.[2] Teachers were also required to provide the description of additional devices and explanations wherever necessary. As to the data gathered through the questionnaire, 10 out of 13 teachers consider referring to the original shape and meaning of the new characters a useful device to help students commit characters to memory. 9 teachers consider writing under dictation as effective for memory, because it makes learners associate the character pronunciation with its shape. Copying and rewriting new characters (again chosen by 9 out of 13 teachers) is viewed as a good exercise for reinforcing memorisation of new characters too, but since it is time consuming learners are usually required to practice it on their own: they are urged to do this by referring to the tables for the correct order of strokes that the teacher or the textbook may provide.

Primary school Chinese pupils need to confront the difficult undertaking of memorizing a large number of characters as well. The most remarkable difference between the teaching devices in use to help Chinese children remember characters and those adopted with foreign university students is that in the first case teachers often refer to images, games, songs and rhymes, while these devices are seldom chosen in the

[1] LIU, Irene (1983) *op. cit.*, pp. 65 - 75
[2] See appendix 2: Questionnaire for teachers of the Chinese language to western adults

teaching of foreign adults (proverbs: 1/13, games: 1/13). Textbooks do not usually refer to these devices either. This applies to the contextual differences: beside the different age of the learners of the two contexts, the language environment and the resulting low degree of applicability of the newly acquired knowledge in the living context bear on the efficacy of the devices. Some researchers have argued that in the teaching of adults whose native language uses an alphabetic writing system, a rather effective device to help students overcome their initial apprehension in confronting the task of learning such a large number of characters, would be to refer to Chinese characters as to a system of categories.[1] Even more recent findings in the field of psycholinguistic have shown that radicals, when providing cues to meaning, typically indicate general semantic categories.[2] So far radical awareness (i.e. the insight that radicals convey information about the meaning of characters)[3] has just started being studied as a powerful tool in Chinese children literacy acquisition, thereby demonstrating that reference to the semantic components of characters may help building up these categories, and that explanation of the character internal structure[4] and of its components' original meaning may provide the logical patterns for the organization and gathering of characters into classes or groups.[5] Sometimes teachers also make use of whatever combination of categories has proven most efficient, or they encourage students to build purely subjective categories that would help them retain characters, regardless of the fact that the criteria for making up these categories cannot systematically be extended to a wide sample of items.

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[1] MICKEL, S. (1980) "Teaching the Chinese writing system" in *JCLTA*, vol. XV, n. 1, pp. 91 - 98

[2] TAN, L. H., HOOSAIN, R., &PENG, D. L (1995) "Role of early presemantic phonologic code in Chinese character identification" in *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition.* Vol. 21, pp. 43-54 (quoted in FELDMAN, Laurie Beth and SIOK, Witina W. T. (1999) "Semantic radicals contribute to the visual identification of Chinese characters" in: *Journal of Memory and Language* 40, pp. 559 - 576)

[3] SHU Hua and ANDERSON R. C. "Learning to read Chinese: the development of metalinguistic awareness" in WANG Jiang, INHOFF, A. W., CHEN Hsuan-Chih (Editors) (1999) *Reading Chinese script. A cognitive analysis.* London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 9

[4] TAFT, Marcus and ZHU Xiaoping (1999) "Positional specificity of radicals in Chinese Character recognition" in: *Journal of memory and language* 40, pp. 498 - 519

[5] LIU, Irene (1983) *op. cit.*, pp. 65 - 75

4.3 SUNDAY SCHOOLS

4.3.1 THE CONTEXT

The third field of investigation in the present part of the research is Chinese language teaching to overseas Chinese children. The study was carried out in Great Britain and Italy, and the information relative to the teaching of Chinese written language to overseas Chinese was gathered through questionnaires, interviews with the teachers, and reference to the textbooks in use. In addition, I also carried out a survey of the related available literature and referred to it constantly.

Research on language education for overseas Chinese learners is not a new issue in Great Britain. It has focused chiefly on the problem of the acquisition of English by Chinese children, and on the difficulties these children confront once they enter mainstream education. Research on Chinese language teaching to overseas Chinese children, on the contrary, is fairly new.[1] It has drawn attention to the fact that among the Chinese in Great Britain Chinese language is the main vehicle for the transmission of Chinese cultural values to the second generation,[2] and to the fact that, despite great concern for the maintenance of Chinese culture among their children, parents are seldom in a position to engage in the teaching of their daughters and sons. This has proved to be the case especially when literacy instruction is considered: on the one hand parents may lack time and effective teaching aids; on the other, their own literacy education may not be sufficient to enable them to transfer this knowledge to their children. Provisions for teaching children of Chinese origin have therefore been made available within the community itself, and have resulted in voluntary part time Chinese language classes organized by community centres and associations. Moreover, premises and accommodation, when not directly available from the Community Centres and Associations, have been made available from the LEA (London Education Authority) or from the churches.[3] The number of courses held at the week-end has risen noticeably throughout the past two decades. Still, despite the requirement for the EEC Member States to offer nationals and children of nationals of non-member countries better facilities for their education and training, and to adopt positive attitude to pupils'

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[1] TAYLOR, M. (1987) *Chinese pupils in Britain.* Oxford, NFER-NELSON, p. 159 - 161
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 175
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 183

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biligualism helping them, wherever possible, to maintain and deepen the knowledge of their heritage languages, little has been done to date in Italy. Research related to the teaching of Chinese language to Chinese children who live in Italy barely exists. The teaching of the Italian language itself, as a research topic, is confined to a very limited number of studies that mainly focus on the history and development of the Chinese communities in the country.[1]

During my fieldwork[2] I got in touch with the Chinese community centres and associations in London and in three Italian cities.[3] I enquired about the initiatives for Chinese language teaching and then distributed the questionnaire to be filled in by the teachers.[4] In London several Chinese community associations exist: I gathered information about the Chinese language classes for Chinese children from previous studies carried out on the spot, and from the community associations through questionnaires[5] and interviews, when feasible. In Italy the structure and the number of Chinese language classes for Chinese children varies according to the place and according to the time of the year: Prato, Milan and Rome host large communities of people of Chinese origin, and classes for their children have lately become available. Chinese language courses in Prato are set up during the summer, as an initiative promoted by the Centre for Research and Immigration Services that also takes into consideration the needs and disposal of time of the Chinese pupils and their families.

The focus of my research work being Chinese literacy education in Italy, I decided to refer to the material I collected about the present situation of Chinese language teaching to overseas Chinese learners in Great Britain mainly as a complementary source for a better understanding of the much younger Chinese communities in Italy. The different geographical origin and the different dialects in use within the overseas communities in Great Britain and Italy have necessarily been taken into account too.

Because of the late development and spreading of Chinese language classes for children of Chinese origin in Italy, only little relevant information is available directly

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[1] Among these studies are: CAMPANI, G., MADDII, L. (1992) "Un monde à part: les Chinois en Toscane" in: MA MUNG, Emmanuel (Editor) La Diaspora Chinoise en Occident. *Revue Europeenne des Migrations Internationales*, vol. 8, n.3, pp. 51 - 71; CAMPANI G., CARCHEDI, F., TASSINARI, A. (Editors) (1994) *L'immigrazione silenziosa. Le comunità cinesi in Italia.* Torino, Fondazione Agnelli; CECCAGNO, Antonella (Editor) (1997) *Il caso delle comunità cinesi.* Roma, Armando Editore; MARSDEN, Anna (1994) *Cinesi e Fiorentini a Confronto.* Firenze, Firenze Libri

[2] The fieldwork in Italy was carried out during the summer 1998 and from November to January 1999.

[3] The three Italian cities that constitute my sample are Milan, Rome and Prato, consistent with the first part of the research (see Chapter 1, Section 2.3: Present Chinese communities in Great Britain and Italy)

[4] See Appendix 3 and Appendix 3.a

[5] I collected two filled-in copies of the questionnaire from teachers of the Qinghua Chinese School

from the teachers in the Italian cities which constitute my sample, therefore the study of the methodologies adopted for the teaching of Chinese written language to overseas Chinese learners in Italy has drawn supplementary data from different types of sources as well. I discussed the topic with the Italian officers and the Chinese community members who have set up the Chinese language classes or designed some of the teaching material in use.[1] Moreover, I widened the geographical boundaries of my study sample, and also included in my survey the information gathered through interviews with some of the teachers who work for the Chinese community Sunday School in Bologna.[2]

It is difficult to draw a picture of this teaching context. Sunday School students come in fact from a wide variety of backgrounds. As I shall discuss in the following sections classes are joined in by pupils of different age; some of them were born in China and have moved overseas during their childhood, some others were born overseas and may or may not have been sent back to China in the first years of their lives. Therefore their background knowledge also varies significantly. Some of them have learned to speak Mandarin, some only speak the dialect they have learned from their parents (which is not necessarily the same their peers speak). Some among the children who currently attend the Sunday School classes have been raised in Great Britain or Italy and may therefore be fluent speakers of the local languages. Moreover, as they might have attended mainstream education in the country in which they live, some of them may also be literate in the language of that country. There is little to say about their motivation for engaging in the study of the written language as well. Parents usually play a dominant role in this matter. The few students I was able to talk to would not refer to the Sunday School experience as to their personal choice. While their parents would insist on the importance of retaining some of the basics of their mother culture as the main reason why, according to them, their children ought to attend Sunday School classes.

The language environment in which learning takes place is relevant to my research work. I concentrated my attention mainly on the case of Sunday Schools in Italy, which should provide elements for a consistent comparison with the study case.

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[1] Although the majority of the textbooks in use in Sunday schools in Italy are textbooks designed for primary school language teaching that come from China, the language course set up in Rome has adopted a textbook which has been specifically written for the context.
[2] Fieldwork, February 2000

4.3.2 STRUCTURE OF THE COURSES

The first piece of information I was able to derive about the teaching of Chinese written language to overseas Chinese children in Italy is that there is no fixed structure for the design of the courses. The main reason for that is that the age and the background of the pupils who join the classes vary considerably. Classes gather pupils within an age span that goes from 2 to 5 years of difference, and it can be assumed that their competence and understanding of the language structures also vary accordingly. Differences also pertain to the place of origin of the students: some of them were born overseas, while some others were not.[1] And much of their background knowledge differs according to the place where they grew up and began their formal education (if any). Moreover, although the large majority of the Chinese people who have migrated to Italy during the last twenty years come from Zhejiang province, they come from different districts within that province and may therefore speak different dialects.[2] All these differences necessarily bear on the structure of the courses held for overseas Chinese children, and accordingly on the devices adopted to teach them to read and write the Chinese language.

In Milan I contacted the Overseas Chinese Association which has set up the Overseas Chinese School (米兰华人中文班 - *Milan huaren zhongwen ban*) with the financial help of some members of the local community. Classes are held every Saturday from October to May (no classes are held during winter vacations - the last two weeks of December and the first of January). The school offers three courses (小班 - *xiao ban*; 中班 - *zhongban*; 大班- *da ban*) that students join in according to the degree of familiarity they have with the Chinese language. The age of the students[3] who join in the classes goes from 6 to 15 years. The majority of them know Latin letters while only a few of them have already approached the study of the Chinese written language at all. Approximately one third of the total number of students can speak *Putonghua*, while two thirds of them only speak their home-town dialect. Yet the medium used for explanations and teaching in class is *Putonghua*.

In Rome I contacted the teachers of the Chinese School (中文学校 - *Zhongwen xuexiao*) set up by the *Ouhua Shibao* (欧华时报) and the Forum for Foreign

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[1] The number of children of Chinese origin who were born in Italy has risen especially during the last decade. Moreover there are children who were born in other European countries, such as France or the Netherlands.

[2] LI Rong and XIONG Zhenghui (1988) *op. cit.*

[3] The number of students enrolled in 1998 - 1999 is 50.

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Communities, with financial support from the European Community. Classes are held only on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., during two terms that go from October to December and from mid January to June. There are three courses and each course takes pupils according to their age and to the level of familiarity they have acquired with the Chinese language. The course for beginner students (底 - *di*) is joined by pupils from 5 to 10 years of age, who speak Italian mainly and have never studied the Chinese language before. The majority of them, though, speak a Chinese dialect. The objective for this course is to give children some basic knowledge of the Chinese language and to get them used to understanding Chinese *Putonghua*. Classes for this level do not focus on the written language. The second course is a middle course (中 - *zhong*) and it gathers students whose age approximately goes from 10 to 15 years, and who speak a Chinese dialect. They have not studied *Putonghua* mainly because they grew up in Italy or somewhere out of China. The course aims at teaching them *Putonghua* and a number of frequently used Chinese characters that varies according to the pace of the students' learning process. The advanced course (高 - *gao*) gathers the largest number of students.[1] They all speak their home-town dialect, and a few of them can speak *Putonghua* as well. Students who have attended primary school in China usually join this course, but only a small number among them have attended more than grades I and II. They were taught the main principles and rules for writing Chinese characters, but life and education in a different language environment has made it difficult for them to retain such knowledge.

Information gathered about the Chinese language classes in Prato refers to the summer course set up by the local Centre for Research and Immigration Services. I interviewed a teacher who is in charge of the elementary level (初级水平 - *chuji shuiping*) course. Classes are attended by 60 odd students whose age goes from 7 to 14 years. According to the answers the teachers gave in the questionnaire, almost all of the students can speak *Putonghua* and their home town dialect, and they all know Latin letters. Learners can be divided into two groups: one group, which consists of the majority of students, were born in China where they also attended at least one year of primary school education. The objectives of the course designed for these pupils are: helping them to retain what they have already learned, extending their vocabulary in written Chinese, and giving them the instruments for progressing in their study of the spoken and written language independently. The second group gathers children who

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[1] Usually more than the 50% of the total number of students enrolled in the school (e.g.: Year 1998/1999 50 students out of 90)

were brought up in Italy. They are younger than pupils in the first group, they never studied the Chinese language before, and they speak Italian. Therefore classes for them have a different structure and rely on different teaching devices: among these are story telling and singing Chinese songs for children. The teaching focuses on the spoken language, and only a very limited number of Chinese characters is taught to the pupils.

In Bologna classes take place on Saturdays and on two week days as well, usually in the afternoon so that the local Chinese association can use the premises provided by a primary school.[1] Chinese language classes have been working for three years already and the course is organized jointly by the Emilia Romagna Chinese Association and the City Council (*Comune di Bologna*), which arranges for the provision of the primary school premises. In 1997 only a small number of students joined the classes (about 10) and there only was one course. Currently there are more than 40 students, but not all of them attend classes continuously. Classes are therefore divided into two courses, both at beginner level, so that pupils are given the chance to attend lessons on different days, and catch up in case they miss classes.[2] The average age of the pupils is 12; they all speak Italian and attend mainstream Italian education. The majority of them also speak or at least understand a Chinese dialect, but only a few of them have already been taught some *Putonghua* and have already learned some Chinese characters. Teachers usually prefer to use Mandarin to provide explanation in class but, as a matter of fact, they often have to turn to the use of the Italian language as well. The teaching is partly based on the use of the primary school textbooks from Mainland China, which are being provided by the Chinese Consulate. Yet, because of the different environment and the different needs of pupils who attend classes in Italy, the teachers themselves would also sometimes edit additional texts and lists of words for their students to be learned in class.

4.3.3 TEACHING DEVICES

The teachers who returned the questionnaire all refer to the study of *pinyin* as a necessary prerequisite for learning characters.

When selecting the characters to be taught in the beginning they would all choose characters with a simple structure first. Among simple structure characters, they

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[1] Scuola di Via Casaralta, Bologna

[2] Personal communication: Ms. Zhang Xing (Chinese Language Teacher) Bologna, February 2000

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would choose characters that are more frequently used; and among these, they would introduce characters that are also used as radicals first. Radicals hold a very important position in the teaching programmes and teachers believe that the teaching of radicals is a very helpful device to progress rapidly in the study of the Chinese written language: on the one hand radicals may help students to remember the meaning of characters; on the other, radicals are very useful for students who intend to continue studying Chinese writing independently through reference to dictionaries.

The crux of the study of Chinese writing is to remember the shape, meaning and sound of Chinese characters. As to the answers given in the questionnaire, the more common devices adopted to help students within this context to memorize Chinese characters consist of copying and rewriting, and practising writing under dictation.

For a better appraisal of the methods adopted by Chinese language teachers in Italy I also referred to the teaching material in use. The source I referred to is the language textbook used for classes at the Chinese Language School of Rome.[1] The teacher in Prato edits the teaching material herself, and she sometimes derives texts from Chinese primary school language textbooks. The school in Milan and the school in Bologna, on the other hand adopt textbooks from China which have been designed for primary school language education.

The *Language textbook for the sons and daughters of the overseas Chinese in Italy* (意大利华侨子弟语文教材 - *Yidali huaqiao zidi yuwen jiaocai*) was compiled by the staff of the *Ouhua Shibao* (欧华时报) in 1998. A major feature of the textbook is that it was specifically designed for children of Chinese origin who live in Italy. It consists of three volumes, one for each of the three level courses held by the school in Rome. Volume One imparts rudimentary knowledge for beginner students of the Chinese language. It includes 26 lessons: lessons 1 to 14 focus on the teaching of *pinyin*; in the remaining 12 lessons 70 odd characters are introduced. Contents for the teaching of *pinyin* are organized with the same progression as in Chinese primary school language education: a large majority of images and many of the short texts that illustrate them are taken from Chinese primary school textbooks. Characters in the following lessons are divided into theme-groups (examples: odd numbers, even numbers, the elements, earth, man, at school, cardinal points, weather). Simple characters (characters with pictographic origins and composed by a limited number of

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[1] YI Zhou 一洲, LI Xiao 李晓 (1997) *Yidali huaqiao zidi yuwen jiaocai* 意大利华侨子弟语文教材 (*Language textbook for the sons and daughters of the overseas Chinese in Italy*). Rome, Yidali Yi Zhou Zhongwen Xuexiao

strokes) are introduced before more complex ones. This again shows that the design of the language teaching material follows the model of the textbooks in use in Chinese primary schools. Volume Two introduces 317 characters and Volume Three 311 characters. The major differences among the two volumes is that texts are a little shorter in Volume Two than in Volume Three, where contents are more focused on Chinese history, traditions and habits. As far as exercises are concerned, Volume Three is more centred on writing exercises mainly, while Volume Two practises the reading skills. Despite the fact that the teaching material was edited for Chinese language classes to overseas Chinese children who live in Italy, there is a very limited use of the Italian language.[1] This can be considered a valuable feature for a language teaching programme: almost all the texts are written in the target language, therefore learners are constantly required to refer to the language they are studying. But as far as content is concerned, it is very similar to the content of texts included in primary school language textbooks in Mainland China, and this bears on the efficacy of the teaching process: contents seldom refer to the context in which learners are living and are therefore less interest- catching and therefore less appealing to them.

4.3.4 TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE

As recent research studies on overseas Chinese communities have pointed out,[2] Chinese community centres and associations have long been the only organizations involved in the setting up of Chinese language classes for the children of the Chinese communities in many European countries. Premises have sometimes been offered for temporary use by local authorities and churches. Yet, in the majority of cases, expenses have been reduced to the minimum, and the most convenient arrangements chosen. This attitude has necessarily extended to the recruitment of teachers as well: the community centres and associations have appointed Chinese students willing to volunteer regardless of their occupational background.[3] In some cases also the parents of the supplementary school pupils have taken up the responsibility of teaching to the children of the

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[1] Few sentences in the first volume, and no Italian at all in Volumes Two and Three.
[2] For example PIEKE F. N. and BENTON, G. (1995) "Chinese in the Netherlands". *Leeds East Asia Papers*, n. 27
[3] Lornita WONG in her presentation of mother tongue teaching in the Chinese community of London during the eighties reports that 94% (113) of the sample of 120 teachers were unqualified teachers [WONG, Lornita Y. F. (1992) *Education of Chinese Children in Britain and the USA*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters Ltd., p. 82]

community. As I have had the chance to ascertain, a similar situation has been developing in some Chinese schools in Italy as well. It is especially the case of the new born schools, while more competent teachers are appointed for the bigger and better organized communities of Milan and Rome. I believe this to be a transitional phase, a phase in which the lack of structures, facilities and money, together with a rather inconsistent support from the local government and its main institutions, make the members of the Chinese community welcome any easily accessible provision.

4.4 ADULT LITERACY IN CHINA

4.4.1 THE CONTEXT

The study of the teaching to illiterate adults in China makes up an important field of investigation within the scope of my research because of the common features shared by learners involved in this context and learners who are the focus of my study (adults of Chinese origin): age and part of the background knowledge. Learners of both contexts are in fact adults and speakers of a Chinese dialect. The motivation of learners within the teaching context under examination in this section is a crucial matter. First of all, as it always happens in the case of adult education, the learner strong motivation is a prior condition for success. Secondly, in the case of Chinese adult education in China, literacy has been the focus of many campaigns. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China eradicating illiteracy has been viewed as an important task. The commitment to literacy has been written into the Constitution of China, and the Central Government has been calling on the nation to participate in this undertaking. In 1956, by means of *The Decision on the Eradication of Illiteracy* (关于扫除文盲的决定 *Guanyu saochu wenmang de jueding*) released by the Chinese State Council a literacy campaign was launched,[1] and over the years a variety of measures have been adopted to address different working and living conditions.[2] Special emphasis has been given to interventions which could contribute to prevent the generation of new illiterates (such as universalizing primary education or providing a network of rural schools for peasants, hence preventing relapse into illiteracy of the neo-literates). The government has looked for ways to foster people's motivation and to encourage them joining in the literacy classes. Among these expedients are restrictions to accessing economic and housing provisions for adults who refuse to attend literacy classes and have not obtained a literacy certificate.[3]

The language environment in which the teaching takes place is dominated by one of the dialects locally in use by urban and rural dwellers. Since these people have not attended the whole cycle of compulsory education, it is likely that they do not

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[1] State Education Commission of the PRC, National Commission of the PRC for UNESCO (1995) *Eradicating Illiteracy in China*. Beijing, Educational Science Press, p. 9
[2] During the Cultural Revolution (from 1966 to 1976) the work for eradicating illiteracy was suspended.
[3] Personal communication: staff member of the Adult Education Department of Yueqing Commission of Education (April 1999)

usually speak Mandarin. Theoretically, though, they should learn to read and write characters through the aid of *pinyin* and are therefore expected to study or at least gain some familiarity with Mandarin.

4.4.2 THE PROGRAMME DESIGN

The *Regulation for Eradicating Illiteracy*, promulgated by the State Council in 1988,[1] includes the definition of adult literacy standards and the description of the main functions which literacy should serve. Close attention is given to the definition of different goals to be attained in the different environments in which the teaching is being implemented. Literacy involves the study of a minimum of 2,000 characters for urban citizens, and a minimum of 1,500 characters for the people who live and work in the rural areas. As far as functions are concerned, a person, in order to be defined literate, needs to be able to read ordinary books and short articles on general topics, write practical notices, and do simple calculations with the abacus.[2] The same standards are still in force to date all over China.[3]

Despite the attention given to adult literacy education in China during the past fifty years, a first overview of the sources available on the topic gives rise to the suspicion that only little has been produced in terms of methodologies specifically designed for adult learners. A large part of the teaching material adopted for adult literacy education in China is derived in fact from primary school language teaching[4]. Much of the available related literature published in China is either fairly old[5] or not focused on literacy. However, some useful contribution can be derived from research

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[1] DONG Mingzhuan 董明传 (1997) *Chengren jiaoyu juece yu guangli* 成人教育决策与管理 (*Policy making for adult education and its management*). Shanghai, Wenhui Press, p. 149

[2] ZHAO Wenqing: "Literacy and Postliteracy Adult Education" in: WANG Maorong, LIN Weihua, SUN Shilu, FANG Jing (Editors) (1988) *China: Lessons from Practice*. New Directions for Continuing Education, no.37, San Francisco, p. 15

[3] These standards are nowadays considered too low. This is a matter that I had the chance to discuss with the responsible officer of the Adult Literacy Education Department of the Central Education Commission in Beijing (personal communication: Wang Dai. Beijing, June 1999). The issue was also discussed at the National Workshop on Literacy and Adult Education (Beijin, July 1999).

[4] HUNTER, Carman St. John and KEEHN, Martha (Editors) (1985) *Adult education in China*. Sydney, Croom Helm, p. 60

[5] The books I was able to refer to were published in the seventies and eighties. Because of the rapid changes that the system of education has been undergoing in China lately, these books often refer to situations that no longer hold true.

studies that relate to adult literacy education in other countries.[1] These sources do not discuss devices for adult literacy in Chinese. Yet, they refer to the main features of the adult learning process and include useful suggestions on the general principles that need to be taken into account while devising a teaching programme for adult literacy. The first suggestion relates to the importance of identifying the tasks of literacy in accordance with the demands of the target learners. The content of the teaching programme has to be *useful*, which means that it has to be highly relevant to the learner's need in his/her everyday life environment. Moreover, the teaching method has to allow for rapid progress, and it also has to provide the learner with independent learning skills.

It was chiefly during my fieldwork in China that I was able to gather additional information to fill in the gap caused by the lack of sources on the teaching of Chinese written language to Chinese adults. In recent years, teaching and reading material, including literacy textbooks with phonetic notations and agricultural technique textbooks, have been compiled at local level by counties, prefectures and provinces.[2] When feasible, each area would adopt their own teaching material in order to combine literacy teaching with the teaching of popular science and technology locally useful.

In Zhejiang, I attended adult literacy classes and interviewed teachers and officers from the local departments of adult education. I also collected samples of the teaching material in use in other parts of China, and I discussed with both officers and teachers the principles related to its compilation and implementation.[3] The literacy textbooks that I collected are:

(1) *New literacy textbook for rural people*[4] printed in Rui'an, Zhejiang Province

(2) *The modern thousand characters book by An Zijie (revised edition)*[5] printed in

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[1] FORDHAM P., HOLLAND D., MILLICAN J., (1995) *Adult literacy*. Oxford, VSO; MULLER, J. (1974) *International symposium on functional literacy in the context of adult education*. Berlin, German Foundation for International Development.

[2] During the past decade over 150 readers for literacy and post literacy work, and 1,000 titles of booklets dealing with practical techniques have been published in China (State Education Commission of the PRC, National Commission of the PRC for UNESCO (1995) *Eradicating Illiteracy in China*. Beijing, Educational Science Press). Still the main problem of this teaching material seems to relate to its contents. According to late research carried out in China, it fails to provide up-to-date information relevant to the learners' everyday lives. [HUANG Zhongren (黄忠仁) "Saomang jiaoyu yu gonggu" "扫盲教育与巩固" ("Literacy education and its follow-up") Paper presented at the Chinese workshop on Literacy and Adult Education, July 1999, Beijing]

[3] I interviewed officers in Beijing, Wenzhou and Yueqing (April - June 1999)

[4] Rui'an shi jiaoyu weiyuanhui 瑞安市教育委员会 (1994) *Xinbian nongmin shizi keben* 新编农民识字课本 (*New literacy textbook for rural people*). Rui'an, Ruian shi jiaoyu weiyuanhui bianyin (Printed by the Ruian Commission of Education)

[5] Zhejiang Sheng Jiaoyu Weiyuanhui Chengren Jiaoyu Bangongshi 浙江省教育委员会成人教育办公室 (1994) *An Zijie xiandai qianziwen (Xiugai ben)* 安字介现代千字文(修改本) [The modern thousand characters book by An Zijie (revised edition)] Qingtian, Zhejiang sheng jiaoyu weiyuanhui

Qingtian, Zhejiang Province

(3) *Practical literacy textbook for rural areas*[1] printed in Urumqi, Xinjiang Province.

These are all literacy textbooks for beginners. Two of them are being used in Zhejiang province, while the third was in use until spring 1999 in Xinjiang Province.[2] The comparison among the three textbooks may provide information on the common principles referred to for choosing the contents and pointing out the objectives of a teaching programme for adult literacy in Chinese. The comparison focuses on: a) Number of characters b) Selection and arrangement of characters.

a) Number of characters: the literacy textbook edited in Rui'an includes 1,011 characters, but the course is intended to meet the requirements indicated by the literacy standards (1,500 characters).[3] *An Zijie*'s textbook lists about 2,000 characters (within 148 lessons).[4] The Xinjiang textbook lists 2,006 characters, but refers to full mastery (being able to read, write and use) of a minimum of 1,500 characters as the basic goal to be attained.

b) Selection and arrangement of characters: the sample I refer to consists of the initial section of each literacy textbook.[5] Yet, in order to understand the underlying principles for the selection of characters I also refer to the list of characters throughout the whole course book, and to the explanations and guidelines included in the introduction of each textbook. In my perusal I take into account the basic principles for selecting and sequencing characters that I have gathered through the study of other teaching contexts: progression from simple to difficult; productivity (according to which some characters are taught first because they are viewed as useful for the study of new characters), a principle that refers to both the structure of characters and the frequency factor; "memorization"[6] (through rhymes, proverbs, songs); topic centred arrangement of lesson contents according to the learner's living environment; enhancement of independent learning. And I discuss the extent to which each textbook adheres to these

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chengren jiaoyu banggongshi yinshua (Printed by the Adult Education Bureau, Zhejiang Province Commission of Education)

[1] WANG Feng 王枫 (1990) *Nongcun shiyong shizi keben* 农村实用识字课本 (Practical literacy textbook for rural areas) Urumqi, Xinjiang Jiaoyu Chubanshe

[2] It was given to me by an officer of the Education Commission (Adult Education Bureau) in Urumqi, who was not sure whether the textbook would be used again during the following school terms.

[3] Rui'an shi jiaoyu weiyuanhui (1994) (*op. cit.*), "Introduction".

[4] According to what is specified in the introduction the aim of the course is to make students able to recognize, read and explain the meaning of 2,000 frequently used characters.

[5] Consistency with the analysis carried out for primary school language teaching material (see Chapter 4, Section 1.2) is the main reason for referring to the first section of the textbooks.

[6] Memorization is the name I use to refer to the principle according to which characters are grouped or arranged for implementing mnemonic devices

principles.

(1) Rui'an textbook: there is no fixed number of characters per lesson and no progressive increase of the number of characters introduced per lesson either. The first unit focuses on the study of strokes and on the basic stroke-order rules to be observed while writing characters. It also contains a descriptive introduction of the tools for writing, but no section devoted to the teaching of *pinyin* is included. The content throughout the whole textbook is arranged into units: writing characters, numbers and measures, everyday life vocabulary, hygiene, social relationships, travelling, cultivating crops, farming and animals raising, commerce, electric tools, discipline, useful writing forms (models). The textbook also provides additional readings (among them a passage about Zhejiang Province), and appendixes (how to use the dictionary, names of characters' components, literacy examination test). The textbook is a complementary instrument to classroom teaching. Despite the usefulness of the topics included, the textbook itself provides very few elements for enhancing independent learning. Lessons texts are short, when existing at all,[1] and some of them consist of rhymes or songs which are intended to help learners to memorize the pronunciation of characters (see Illustration III). Moreover, learners can refer to the topic being discussed in the lesson in order to recall the meaning of new words. But no clue is provided on how to write the characters (for characters are not arranged into classes according to their structure). Therefore characters have to be studied one by one, which also relates to the fact that there is no specific direction for the study and use of *pinyin*.

The arrangement of contents in this textbook only adheres to two principles out of five: memorization, and topic centred arrangement of lesson contents. Devices such as rhymes and proverbs, used to commit characters to memory, are usually more often applied to the teaching of younger learners. Yet, it is likely that the reference to such devices follows more traditional teaching models. Conversely, the topic centred arrangement of lesson contents and the range of themes selected testify to a higher degree of attention for the aims and objectives of the literacy course addressed to adult learners.

(2) An Zijie's textbook: the textbook is made up of very short lessons, each one including a list of new characters. As with the Rui'an course-book there is no fixed number of characters per lesson. Among the first characters to be learned are numbers, and thereafter contents are mainly arranged according to topics. An Zijie's work[2] is

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[1] Some lessons only list a limited number of characters and words.
[2] An Zijie is the name of the designer of the methodology and the author of this textbook.

widely reputed as an effective methodology for the teaching of Chinese characters to adult learners. Therefore I referred to the lessons plan for teachers (教案集 - *jiao an ji*)[1] and to complementary sources[2] in order to estimate the extent to which the order of characters and the arrangement of contents do effectively contribute to the extension of adults' written vocabulary. The course-book calls for teachers to implement the following teaching strategies:

1: Revising with the students the content of the past three lessons before starting with a new one. This especially holds true in the case of the study of characters: teachers are required to establish links between characters which have already been studied and new characters. Links have to be established through comparison - mainly by emphasizing the common structure of characters or the presence of common components (see Illustration IV).

2: Sketching a plan for each lesson: teachers are urged to prepare questions that would lead the learner to a better understanding of the content. These questions are intended to help the students focus their attention on new characters through an estimate of the common features within a set of words and characters.

3: Breaking down expressions into words, words into characters, and characters into components. In order to implement this strategy aimed at helping students recognize characters while reading, teachers can refer either to their meaning (making up stories derived from the analysis of their components) or to their shape (when teaching pictographic characters).

This textbook adheres to the same two principles as the Rui'an textbook. It also adheres to the principle of productivity: the structure of characters is constantly referred to as the basic for establishing links between familiar characters and new ones.

(3) Xinjiang Textbook: The number of characters introduced within each lesson does not vary too much. And characters are arranged throughout the textbook according to a clear progression from simple to difficult. The content is divided into seven sections: Chinese phonetic alphabet (汉语拼音 - *Hanyu pinyin*); Literacy through phonetic

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[1] Zhejiang Sheng Qingtian Xian Jiaoyu Ju 浙江省青田县教育局 (1995) *An Zijie xiangdai qianzi wen - Jiao an ji* 安子介现代千字文 - 教案集 (*The modern thousand characters book by An Zijie - Teaching notes*). Qingtian, Zhejiang sheng jiaoyu weiyuanhui chengren jiaoyu banggongshi yinshua

[2] ZOU Xiangyang 邹向阳 (1999) *An Zijie shizi jiaoxuefa de tuiguang yu jianli nongcun saomang jiaoyu xin tixi de yanjiu* 安子介识字教学法的推广与建立农村扫盲教育新体系的研究 (Research on the popularization of An Zijie's literacy method and on the establishment of a new system for eradicating illiteracy in the rural areas). Abstract presented at the National Workshop on Adult Education and Literacy (Beijing, July 1999); Zhejiang sheng jiaoyu weiyuanhui chengjiao ban 浙江省教育委员会成教办 (1995) *An Zijie xiangdai qianzi wen - Shizi ban jiaoshi shouce* 安子介现代千字文 - 识字班教师手册 (*The modern thousand characters book by An Zijie - Teacher's handbook for literacy classes*). Qingtian, Zhejiang sheng jiaoyu weiyuanhui chengren jiaoyu banggongshi yinshua

notations (拼音识字 - *Pinyin shizi*); Concentrated literacy (集中识字 - *Jizhong shizi*); Frequently used expressions (常用词语 - *Chang yong ciyu*); Text reading (阅读课文 - *Yuedu keben*); Useful expressions for the rural context (农村常用用应文 - *Nongcun chang yong yongying wen*); Calculation (整数加减乘除法 - *Zhengshu jia jian cheng chu fa*). *Pinyin* is included in the teaching programme (first section), which enables students to use the dictionary and therefore provides them with a useful tool for enhancing independent learning. Characters in the second section are arranged according to their shape and structure (single component characters first, and combined characters next). This somehow slows down the pace of teaching in the beginning, but it promotes a deeper understanding of the principles according to which characters are formed, which is intended as a strategy for more rapid and sound advance afterwards. The concentrated literacy section establishes links among characters with common components, among characters that can be easily confused due to their similar shape, among characters with the same component and a similar pronunciation, among component characters and the characters in which they appear, and among characters and their antonyms. New characters in the remaining three sections are arranged according to topics, and refer to themes intended to catch the attention of the learner (useful and interesting topics).

The textbook adheres to all the principles elicited from the study of the other teaching contexts but one, memorization. This shows a remarkable consistence with the type of learners to whom the teaching course is addressed, for mnemonics are generally viewed as more suitable to the teaching of children.

4.4.3 TEACHING DEVICES

The devices in use to teach Chinese adults how to read and write Chinese characters were discussed with some teachers who work in Zhejiang province. Information was gathered through questionnaires handed out to teachers, and supplemented by interviews with the staff members of two local bureaux for adult education in the districts of Lucheng[1] and in Yueqing county. I also discussed the topic with a teacher of the Normal School of Yueqing.[2] According to the answers teachers provided in the questionnaires, teaching in the context of adult literacy education (as it

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[1] Lucheng (鹿成) is a district in the city of Wenzhou
[2] Personal communication: Mr. Fang Feiqing, May 3rd, 1999

also happens in the case of primary school language education) does not rely on one single device. *Pinyin* is still viewed as the main tool for literacy acquisition, although greater emphasis is given to the study of the shape of characters to provide clues for a deeper understanding of the characters' origin and original structure. As some of the teachers have had the opportunity to gather through direct teaching experience, the learning process of adult learners can successfully rely on their ability to look for ways to make sense of the basic rules according to which characters are composed.

Particular attention is drawn to literacy teaching according to systematization of characters. Despite the fact that in the case of Chinese characters teaching no fool-proof systematic arrangement of contents is possible, a method based on characters principles of composition, hereafter referred to with the name "Characters Principles Method" (字理识字 - *zili shizi*), has been designed. It provides a useful study pattern, and refers to devices which are normally used as a complement in all teaching methodologies for adult literacy in Chinese. The Characters Principles Method implies the teaching of characters together with the explanation of their origin and evolution. This is meant to be a useful way to provide learners with an understanding of the current shape of characters. It prompts devices for the teaching of pictographs through the aid of images and imagery [E.g.: "'*man*' ('人') opens his legs and stretches his arms, and becomes '*big*' ('大')"].[1] And it prompts devices for the teaching of associative compounds through the explanation of their components and of the way they combine to express the meaning represented by the character [E.g.: "In ancient times it was '*male*' ('男') who used his '*strength*'('力') to labour in the '*field*'('田')."][2]. Finally, it prompts devices for the teaching of radical-plus-phonetic compounds through the description of the semantic and the phonetic components of characters. [E.g.: "characters like 妈、蚂、吗、骂 all have '马' as phonetic component, and are therefore all pronounced 'ma'. If these characters are introduced together, learners can easily master their pronunciation. They can then go on to learn the meaning of each word according to the radical (semantic component). '*Mother*' ('妈妈') should be feminine: it therefore has the '*female*' ('女') radical. The 'locust' ('蚂蝗') is an insect, therefore it is written with the '*insect/bug*' ('虫') radical. The use of the '*mouth*'('口') radical refers to the way one speaks. To use a double 'mouth' component implies speaking harshly or to insult someone with rude

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[1] JIA Guojun 贾国均 (1998) *Zili shizi yanjiu yu shijian* 字理识字研究与实践 (*Literacy through the characters principles. Research and Practice*). Beijing, Zhongguo Jinggongye Chubanshe, p. 25
[2] *Ibid.*

words as in ('骂') which means '*to curse*'] ."[1] Since the Characters Principles Method focuses on the shape and structure of characters it suits the adult learning process reasonably well. The 1,500 to 2,000 characters that students need to learn to be literate are selected from the list of frequently used characters. These characters belong to the everyday life vocabulary of the learner, therefore he/she is expected to have some degree of familiarity with the characters meaning and pronunciation, while the main difficulty lies in his/her capability to differentiate the characters shapes and to recognize characters while reading. The Characters Principles Method insists on the study based on comparison among the different shapes of similar characters, and it helps students recall the differences by referring to stories that exemplify the history and formation of each character.

4.4.4 TEACHER'S TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

I was not able to find sources that discuss the training teachers have to undergo in order to learn how to teach literacy to Chinese adults. As a matter of fact the teachers, the researchers and the members of the Adult Education Bureaux that I interviewed confirmed that the large majority of teachers who work in adult literacy education were previously enrolled as primary school teachers. To enhance the training for adult literacy teaching is one of the priorities of the State Education Commission. So far though, the main policy has been to draw literacy teachers from among the pool of literate people in the community. Thus a contingent of literacy teachers has taken shape composed of full time and part time teachers. In recent years governments at the national, provincial, prefectural, county and township levels have taken steps to set up or strengthen managerial bodies for literacy and rural adult education. Since 1988, training courses for cadres engaged in literacy work have been organized by the educational departments at all levels, providing training to a large number of core members. In some provinces of China,[2] institutes or centres of adult education have been established, and additional networks for training have been formed, which provide differentiated training to all cadres engaged in literacy work.[3]

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[1] *Ibid*, p. 74
[2] Shanghai, Hebei, Jilin Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei and Sichuan.
[3] State Education Commission of the PRC, National Commission of the PRC for UNESCO (1995) *Eradicating illiteracy in China*, Beijing, Educational Science Press, p. 31

CHAPTER 5

"THE TEACHING OF CHINESE WRITTEN LANGUAGE TO ADULT LEARNERS OF CHINESE ORIGIN IN ITALY"

Introduction

In Chapter 4 I have examined four contexts for Chinese language teaching. In the present chapter I refer to the context which constitutes the target for my investigation: Chinese literacy teaching for ethnic Chinese in Italy. "Ethnic Chinese" is the term by which I refer to all persons of Chinese or part Chinese descent who - at least in a cultural sense - identify themselves as Chinese although they may be citizens of another country and also identify with that country.

Chapter 5 includes three sections. In the first section I describe the new context. The formal description follows the scheme for the description of the other teaching contexts, and focuses on learners (their age and background knowledge) and language environment as its key elements. As pointed out before, the Chinese community in Italy has a rather short history compared to other countries. Due to its late settlement and adjustment, the number of adults of Chinese origin who were born and grew up in Italy is still very low.[1] For the time being I therefore have to refer to the study case only as a hypothetical teaching context, although my overview of the literature on the history and development of Chinese migration and settlement overseas together with the knowledge gathered through fieldwork and contact with the Chinese community in Italy has provided the foundation to assume that the study case is likely to become part of a Chinese language teaching context. The elements for its description are derived from the comparison with other Chinese communities settled in Europe, and from the investigation of the particular features of Chinese settlement in Italy as reported in Chapters 1 and 2.

In the second section I refer to teaching devices. I select the most important devices adopted for each context analysed in Chapter 4, and I refer to the context features to which they apply. Thereafter, I examine the features of the study case

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[1] I could gather an insight into the aims, interest and expectations of this restricted group of learners from an interview with Feng ze (Luca), an Italian learner of Chinese origin (see Appendix 4)

teaching context, and I discuss their impact on the selection of devices, on the arrangement of contents, as well as on other aspects of the teaching.

Finally, the third section points to the presentation of a teaching programme specifically designed for the study case. After a discussion of the main problems that the teaching would need to confront, I provide a sample of the content to be included in the programme, and illustrate each step I took for its selection, arrangement, and teaching, consistently with the principles which have been adduced and discussed.

5.1 THE STUDY CASE CONTEXT

5.1.1 LEARNERS AND ENVIRONMENT

The study case consists of adults, learners in their twenties or older, who were born in Italy. I decided to include among learners also adults of Chinese origin who were born in other European countries (such as France and the Netherlands, where the large majority of Chinese people also come from Zhejiang), but have moved to Italy when they were young enough to attend compulsory education in Italy.

Learners within this context speak Italian. Those who have attended Italian schools as well as those who were raised in other European countries before moving to Italy are likely to be familiar with reading and writing in an alphabetic writing system. The background knowledge of grown-up learners of Chinese origin also includes a Chinese dialect. It is mainly within the community that they have grown familiar with it and it is usually the dialect of the place of origin of their parents and of other members of the community. Having ascertained that the large majority of the Chinese people who live in Italy come from the Wenzhou area of Zhejiang province, the dialects I refer to as part of the background knowledge of the context learners are Southern dialects in use in that area. Wenzhou natives speak one of the Wu dialects that are spoken in the Yangtze delta and the coastal region around Shanghai. There is a great deal of variation among the dialects of the Wu group.[1] Besides these variations, geographic isolation together with the admixture of Southern Min Chinese from Fujian Province have caused Wenzhou speech to evolve into a dialect with unique and eccentric traits. As part of the background knowledge of the second generation, familiarity with the Wenzhou dialect is limited to the spoken form, and generally implies the use of passive (aural) skills more than active (oral) skills. Context learners understand the dialect, but as they grow up in the host country, they also grow more and more used to speaking the local language. As grown-ups they seldom choose to speak the dialect when not being addressed by other members of the community in dialect, and they often try either to use the local language or to avoid circumstances in which they are expected to communicate in the Chinese dialect. I have seen youngsters of Chinese origin in Prato who talk to

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[1] For example the Suzhou dialect, representative of the northern Wu has seven tones, while the Shanghai dialect, has five [DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *The Chinese language: fact and fantasy*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. 62]

each other in Italian, with a local accent; and it is common to hear Chinese young men and women address each other in Italian in the heart of the Chinese area of Milan. Moreover, I recall a number of occasions during my observation of Sunday School classes in Rome, Milan and Bologna, when I heard pupils speaking Italian amongst themselves, although they were all familiar with a Chinese dialect and teachers would urge them to use Mandarin. The "negative" attitude of the study case learners towards the use of any Chinese dialect stems from a multitude of reasons. Among these is the fact that having learned the local language of the host country they have been confronted since their childhood with the responsibility of translating for their parents and elder members of the community who are not as familiar with that language. Moreover, the need to feel part of the community groups they live with (mainly school mates and friends) pushes them to reject many of the habits which would tie them to the Chinese community. They change their food habits, dress according to the local fashion, speak the language their peers speak, and therefore not the Chinese dialect. As far as language is concerned, Chao Yuanren referred to this attitude as the result of what he calls "the *inter-group language pattern*, that is, the association of certain groups with certain languages in the eyes (ears) of other groups".[1] And he illustrates how children may sometimes be more susceptible to this phenomenon than adults, while describing the case of his granddaughter Canta. As a bilingual child in a bilingual environment she drew from experience to make three subconscious generalizations: 1) Grown-up Chinese speak Chinese; 2) Grown up Americans speak English; 3) All Children speak English (although she had been monolingual in Mandarin Chinese until she started attending nursery school). "She would never speak Chinese to her Chinese friends who in her presence would speak Chinese to their own parents and turn around and talk English to her. *Somehow, to her mind Children are English speaking beings* [my italics]".[2] Finally, there is also a more objective reason why youngsters and adults of Chinese origin choose not to use Chinese dialects to speak among themselves: there is more than one dialect in use in southern Zhejiang, and dialects in some cases differ to the extent that, as I gathered through interviews with some members of the Chinese community in Italy, speakers of the Wenzhou dialect may not be able to understand speakers of the dialect of Qingtian (a town located around 70 km from Wenzhou, from where a large number of Chinese people who have settled in Italy come). Moreover,

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[1] CHAO Yuanren (1968) *Language and symbolic systems*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 146
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 147

among the dialects that have more recently begun to be used within the community there also is the dialect of Wencheng (a mountain district in Wenzhou prefecture). In some areas of Italy, such as in Milan, this dialect, due to the dramatic rise in number of Chinese people from Wencheng over the last ten years, is now being used as the community lingua franca.[1]

Motivation refers to the reasons why learners would put themselves into the study of Chinese written language. As adults, they would not join classes only to meet their parents' expectations. This is more a case to be met in the Sunday School context, where learners are children or teenagers "strongly encouraged" by their parents. While referring to a hypothetical study case, inferences need to be drawn from similar cases as well as from the accurate study of circumstances. Among the main traits developed by the Chinese communities in Italy and elsewhere in Europe is the increasing rise in the number of entrepreneurial activities carried on through contacts with other overseas Chinese communities and with the mother country (see Chapters 1 and 2). This is the reason why I assume that pragmatic and instrumental aims, like business development and success in the management of entrepreneurial activities, play a fundamental role in building up the motivation of adult learners who would engage in the study of Chinese written language. Besides making it easier for them to keep in touch with other overseas Chinese communities and with the mother country,[2] the mastery of Chinese written language would also make younger learners more competitive in the job market. Yet, interviews with the members of the Chinese community in Italy also refer to a more general desire to bridge the gap to the mother culture heritage.

The dominant language defining the environment for this context is Italian. Attending Italian schools, making friends, adjusting to local life and habits, are all circumstances that make it easier for the overseas born generations to grow more and more familiar with the local language. As far as the degree of exposure to the target language, there are only a few circumstances in which learners of this context would actually be exposed to Modern Standard Chinese. It is spoken among members of the community who were born in different areas of China. This happens for example in the food store in via Rosmini, Milan. The owner and manager of the shop was born in

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[1] COLOGNA, D. "Dal Zhejiang a Milano: profili di una comunità in transizione" in CECCAGNO, A. (Editor) (1997) *Il caso delle comunità cinesi*, Roma, Armando Editore, p. 32

[2] Some evidence of the frequency and importance of business contacts with the other overseas Chinese communities and with the mother country can be derived from observing features of the Chinese community in Rome. The number of shops and stores bought by members of the Chinese community in the area next to the railway station has increased noticeably in the last few years. Many of these shops are turned into warehouses, where goods from China to be sent to other Chinese communities in Spain, Portugal and other European countries are stored.

Nanjing, and is not familiar with any of the dialects in use in the Wenzhou area. Therefore, when not using Italian, she addresses Chinese customers and other members of the Chinese community in *Putonghua*.[1] *Putonghua* is generally used also by all Chinese institutional staff members (for example the people who work at the Embassy) and by Chinese interpreters. Moreover, *Putonghua* is the language used in many television programs shown in the bars and association centres of the community (e.g. the Zhejiang Club, in Milan). And it is consequently the language taught to the pupils of the Sunday Schools.

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[1] Personal communication, Milan summer 1998

5.2 DEVICES IN CONTEXT

The choice of devices and strategies that are being used to teach the Chinese written language is strictly connected to the extent to which it takes into account the specific features of the teaching contexts. For each context then a set of devices exists which draws from the knowledge and skills of the learner within a certain milieu, and which serves the learner's specific purposes.

On the grounds of the main similarities and differences among the teaching contexts I decided to select from the teaching devices described in Chapter 4 those which are likely to fit in the study case context. As a first step I tackled the common features shared by the study case context and the contexts previously described (see Table VI).

As shown in the summarizing table, the Sunday School context is the one that shares the largest number of features in common with the study case context. Yet, I will not refer to the teaching method in use in the Sunday School context as to the model for literacy teaching to adults of Chinese origin. It would in fact be inaccurate to refer to any one single feature of a teaching context as a factor producing on its own relevant differences in the adopted teaching strategies, while it is more likely that all features in a context combine to determine the choice of some teaching devices instead of others.

In my analysis of the impact of context features on the teaching to adults of Chinese origin in Italy, I shall refer to the dominant traits of the relationship between the context and the learning as elicited from the study of the other teaching contexts. I shall take into account both positive and negative impact while briefly discussing the extent to which a *different combination* of features results in the adoption of different strategies.

5.2.1 IMPACT OF THE AGE FACTOR

Major differences exist between the teaching contexts having children and the ones having adults in the role of learners. It is in the teaching of primary school pupils in China that images (mainly drawings and pictures), as well as games and rhymes, are referred to as principal teaching aids. And similar devices are in use in the Sunday School courses held in Italy, where the large majority of students are in fact children.

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While carrying out my fieldwork in Zhejiang I had the chance to observe adult intermediate literacy classes in which primary school textbooks were adopted. The teachers themselves pointed out the inadequacy of such teaching material, the crux of their criticism being the presence of too many drawings and pictures in the textbooks.

The comparison among different teaching contexts has also shown that adults' advancement in the study of Chinese written language is directly connected to the degree to which teaching succeeds in providing a systematic and logical pattern to the learning process. This quest for systematization of contents according to the age and experience of the learner is referred to by most recent literature on adult learning,[1] which suggests that the choice of devices to be implemented should stem from the appraisal of the background knowledge learners have already built up and grown familiar with. Hence, on the one hand the teaching of radicals and phonetics together with the explanation of the original meaning and shape of characters help the western university student[2] to build a taxonomic system to refer to, as he or she would do in order to organize the lexicon while studying an alphabetic language. On the other hand, the choice of themes and topics relevant to the learners' everyday life provide Chinese adult learners with the possibility to test and therefore immediately use what they learn. Jia Guoyun, the designer of the Characters Principles Method refers to attention to the type of learner and the life he or she lives as a fundamental that necessarily has to be mirrored in the selection of contents: "The explanation of the characters should vary according to the learner's personal experience. For example the character for 'litre'('升'- *sheng*) is a measure pictograph. Its original meaning is associated with an ancient measuring device. However, as the device is no longer in use, the word has lost its meaning as a measurement. Its original meaning has no relevant relation to 6 - 7 year old children's everyday life, while its extended meaning, '*to rise*' is more frequently used. Children would find it hard to grasp the original meaning, and it is therefore better not to teach the character according to its formation pattern principle."[3]

5.2.2 IMPACT OF THE BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

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[1] ROGERS, A. (1986) *Teaching adults*. Milton Keynes, Philadelphia, Open University Press, pp. 67-75; and FORDHAM, P.; HOLLAND, D.; MILLICAN, J (1995) *Adult literacy*. Oxford, VSO, p. 53
[2] See Chapter 4, Section 2
[3] JIA Guojun 贾国均 (1998) *Zili shizi jiaoxue fa* 字理识字教学法 (*The characters principles teaching method*). Beijing, Zhongguo Jinggongye Chubanshe, p. 41

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Among the contexts investigated in the previous chapter it is the Sunday School one which bears most similarities to the study case on the grounds of the learners' linguistic background knowledge. The background knowledge of overseas Chinese children, like the background knowledge of adult learners of Chinese origin, consists of literacy in an alphabetic language and familiarity with a spoken Chinese dialect. Given this similar background knowledge, the teaching of adults in the study case is likely to confront difficulties that are similar to those confronted in the teaching of Sunday School pupils. Reference to the Sunday School teaching context may provide some useful suggestions for the teaching of adult learners of Chinese origin in Italy, although the age factor, as seen above, does actually imply differences especially in the selection of appropriate teaching devices and materials.

The most useful inference relates to the choice of the language to be taken as the medium of instruction. I asked Sunday School teachers what language they use as the medium for their teaching. Teachers informed me that they always provide the first explanation in Standard Chinese. Whenever the use of Standard Chinese does not succeed in making the content clear, they provide pupils with examples, which again they illustrate in Standard Chinese. Only in case such examples are not sufficient either, would they additionally provide explanations in Italian. Since the target language for Chinese language classes is Modern Standard Chinese, teachers seem to agree on the praxis of not using any other Chinese dialect to provide explanations in class.

Yet, there are circumstances and teaching contexts, in which teachers have turned to the use of a Chinese dialect as the medium for teaching the Chinese written language, for instance in the case of literacy classes for mature (over 60) students in some provinces of China. In this context, literacy instruction does not even include the teaching of *pinyin*. Characters are illustrated and taught to students without phonetic notation, and learners have to study them by heart, associating each graph with the spoken form they know in dialect. This makes learning quite slow and does not provide students with the basic elements for independent learning. This approach was used in some adult literacy classes I observed in the Wenzhou area, and was motivated by teachers and officers of the local education departments whom I interviewed with reference to the fact that the dialect used in the classroom is the same learners use in their everyday life.[1]

The use of the local dialect as a medium for teaching, though, is seldom

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[1] Relevant information was gathered in meetings following classes with the teachers and the officers of the Lucheng district, in Wenzhou.

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accepted and promoted as a pedagogically correct device, for teachers are aware of the fact that literacy instruction in Mainland China is channelled through *pinyin*. And they are aware of the fact that *pinyin* is based upon the pronunciation of the Beijing dialect. As both teachers and members of the local bureaux of the Education Commission have confirmed to me, *Putonghua* and *pinyin* remain essential parts of the teaching programme for adult learners as well.

The use of a Chinese southern dialect as the medium of instruction is not expected to provide relevant contribution to the study of modern written Chinese by adult learners of Chinese origin who live in Italy either. The Chinese dialect in fact is not even the dominant language of the environment learners live in, whereas this is the case for the limited number of circumstances in which, as seen above for the case of adult literacy classes in the Wenzhou area, the dialect is being referred to as a medium of instruction.

The dominant language of the environment for the case of overseas Chinese adults who live and study in Italy, is indeed Italian. Therefore, I believe that the part of background knowledge teaching should refer to for choosing the medium for literacy instruction is the Italian language. This should be the case in the beginning, when explanations on the structure of Chinese characters are provided. Yet, as I shall discuss below, a shift to the use of Standard Chinese is expected as soon as learners are able to understand it, or at least to grasp meanings when the teacher uses it. This would allow learners to gain familiarity with the target language and to start discerning between Mandarin and the dialect they already know.

The background knowledge of learners within the study case also includes literacy skills. Learners are literate in Italian, and they have therefore already grown familiar with the spelling rules of the Italian writing system. Due to the differences that exist between Italian and *pinyin*, knowledge of the spelling rules for Italian can be seen as a hindering factor for otherwise swift improvements in the study of *Putonghua* via *pinyin*. But similar difficulties also apply to the context of Sunday School teaching and to the case of Western university students. In the first case age plays an important role. Children retain newly acquired knowledge quite easily compared to adults.[1] And the teaching to children can profit from the implementation of strategies such as drawing and playing. Moreover, due to the flexible pace of teaching in the Sunday School

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[1] Writing in emergent literacy is discussed with relevant examples in BARTON, David (1994) *Literacy. An introduction to the ecology of written language*. Oxford UK and Cambridge USA, Blackwell, pp. 154 - 158

context - especially in Italy where there are continuous changes among teachers as well as among students - teaching programmes often fail to be properly planned. When, as it still happens in the majority of cases, the teaching material in use in Chinese primary schools is the only teaching material available, the teaching of *pinyin* too follows the primary school model, regardless of the fact that children who are being literate in Italian may be used to different spelling conventions. In the case of the teaching of Western university students, as I have had the chance to experience directly, the study of *pinyin* is fundamental to progress in the study of Chinese written language. Besides being the system through which students learn how to pronounce Chinese words, in fact, it allows them to activate their independent learning skills, mainly through reference use of teaching aids such as the dictionary. The consequent importance of *pinyin* makes it worth facing the difficulties related to the different spelling rules between Italian and *Putonghua*. Indeed the attention of students is sometimes drawn on these differences which are then taken as the starting point for the teaching of *pinyin*.

5.2.3 IMPACT OF MOTIVATION

The assessment of the importance of learner's motivation again draws evidence from the analysis and comparison among different teaching contexts. It is especially in the case of adult learners that motivation plays a fundamental role. First of all, adults are likely to put themselves into the study of Chinese written language when they have a clear goal to achieve, be it the possibility of referring to original sources for research purposes as in the case of many western university students, or the possibility of being able to use new techniques and tools in everyday life activities as in the case for literacy classes in rural areas of China.

Accessing up-to-date written information on China and other overseas communities, gaining competitive skills for job hunting, building and maintaining a network of business relationships with other Chinese communities may all be considered as possible targets in the case of overseas Chinese adults. How are these targets to feature in the way the teaching of Chinese written language is structured? I have already referred to the age of the learner as a factor in the choice of the teaching devices to be employed, and to his or her background knowledge as a factor in the choice of the language to be used as the medium of teaching. Here, accordingly, I refer to the learner's motivation and therefore to his or her objectives for engaging in the

study of Chinese written language as a factor in the choice and sequencing of contents to be included in the teaching material. But, in order to see what the themes and contents to be included in the teaching material are, we necessarily need to refer also to the last relevant feature of the teaching context: the environment in which the learner lives and in which the teaching takes place.

5.2.4 IMPACT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Adult advancement in the learning process is greatly affected by the effective and immediate usefulness of newly acquired knowledge, and this usefulness is to be estimated also on the grounds of its applicability to the learner's everyday life. The importance of content selection in the devising of a language teaching programme for adult learners has been a broadly discussed topic. It has been a fundamental issue for the devising and improvement of foreign language teaching methodologies. And it is a crucial matter also in the devising of adult literacy programmes for languages ruled by an alphabetic writing system.[1]

Critical emphasis is given to the aims and objectives of adult literacy teaching, meaning that the choice of themes depends essentially on the environment in which the learner lives, and, accordingly, on the more relevant kind of knowledge he or she needs to acquire in order to benefit from literacy instruction. Field competence and targets are therefore relevant variables for the choice of themes and topics to be included both in second language teaching and in adult literacy instruction.

In the case of the Chinese written language the importance of the selection of themes also stems from the need to refer to a minimum number of characters as a requirement for literacy. The question that needs to be answered then, as Wm. C. Hannas clearly puts it, is: "literacy in what field? [...] The question is relevant, because unlike in an alphabetic system, where the vocabulary of different areas of knowledge is spelled out with a few dozen repeating elements, counts of Chinese characters 'in use' vary widely according to the types of material surveyed. Concepts and artefacts peculiar to particular areas frequently require their own characters".[2]

Research is progressing steadily in this field, and may contribute to the devising

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[1] See: FORDHAM P., HOLLAN D., MILLICAN J. (1995) *Adult literacy*. Oxford, VSO, pp. 53 - 72; MULLER J. (1974) *International symposium on functional literacy in the context of adult education.* Berlin, German Foundation for International Development, pp. 91 - 106

[2] HANNAS Wm. C. (1997) *Asia's orthographic dilemma.* Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, p. 129

of more adequate and effective teaching material for adult literacy instruction. The topic was discussed at the Chinese Workshop on Adult Literacy and Education held in Beijing in July 1999. Despite the existence of primers published locally in many Chinese provinces, further research into the specific requirements of adult learners and their diverse living environments is envisaged as a necessary step to fill in the gaps of the existing teaching material. And a fundamental issue is the updating of the vocabulary included in the teaching material consistent with the vocabulary in use in the target learner's everyday life.[1] Different objectives will in fact be the grounds for a different selection and arrangement of characters to build the target vocabulary in the teaching programme.

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[1] HUANG Zhongren (黄忠仁) "Saomang jiaoyu yu gonggu" "扫盲教育与巩固" ("Literacy education and its follow-up") Paper presented at the Chinese workshop on Literacy and Adult Education, July 1999, Beijing

5.3 THE TEACHING PROGRAMME: DISCUSSION AND SAMPLE

5.3.1 POINTS TO BE DISCUSSED

Learners within the study case are literate. They can speak a Chinese dialect and want to learn the Chinese written language to use it for different purposes, mainly in the milieu in which they live. The features of the study case together with the analysis of the way in which the devices retrieved from the other teaching contexts may apply to these features lead to the further discussion of the following issues which necessarily bear on the devising of the teaching programme.

The first relevant question to be discussed is whether learners should proceed to the study of Chinese written language via the previous or simultaneous study of Modern Standard Chinese (*Putonghua*). All the four teaching contexts which I examined in Chapter 4 refer to the learning of *pinyin* as a fundamental requirement for the study of Chinese written language. And *pinyin* is the system of transliteration based on the pronunciation of Modern Standard Chinese. Through the centuries, though, the Chinese written language has been studied also by dialect speakers without reference to Modern Standard Chinese. The study of Modern Standard Chinese could actually be avoided if the teaching aimed at the acquisition of a dialect writing system. But I do agree with the point of view expressed by Chen Ping that "granted that dialect writing systems are effective tools of communication among speakers of the same dialect, the learners of such writing systems would have only limited access to specific parts of the Chinese community."[1] The knowledge they acquire would therefore be of little use beyond their own dialectal areas in Mainland China and in limited circuits of the overseas communities. "Rather than learn a written language that has only restricted use and is confined to a limited readership, native speakers of Southern dialects should learn what is taken as the standard language by the majority of the Chinese population, with the consequent benefits more than compensating for the extra effort demanded by its acquisition".[2] To decide whether the teaching of Modern Standard Chinese should be included among the objectives of the study case teaching programme it is therefore necessary to refer to the use the learner is expected to make of the target language. If

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[1] CHEN Ping (1999) *Modern Chinese. History and sociolinguistics.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 119
[2] *Ibid.*

among the aims of the learners is the will to communicate with other Chinese communities in and outside Mainland China, they need to be literate in Modern Standard Chinese. And the fact that the learner may need to use the spoken form together with the written one even outside the circuit of the community he or she lives in strongly holds for this choice too. Moreover, I have referred to the Italian language as the medium of instruction that better suits the study case teaching context. But the teaching of Chinese characters in a literacy course necessarily comes to a point in which teachers and learners need to pronounce the characters they are studying. To provide learners only with the Italian translation of Chinese written materials, would be far too imprecise (and useless), and to refer to a Southern dialect would necessarily imply that one dialect is chosen in spite of many others also in use in the community. With the adoption of Modern Standard Chinese, the lowest common denominator is chosen. The study of *pinyin*, then, would foster learning, increasing its speed by providing learners with a system for using tools, such as the dictionary, that enable them to progress with more ease in the study of written Chinese.

The second question is whether learners of the study case would need to be taught the grammar as well. Adult learners within this context are expected to have a limited number of hours per week at their disposal. As speakers of a dialect they understand the way the language works, and it is likely that there is little more about its structure at the spoken level that they would want to know. Words with a grammatical function will of course be included in the programme, but it is left to the teacher, who may refer to the degree of language competence of his or her students, to decide whether grammar should be included as part of the teaching or not. On the grounds of my analysis of the teaching contexts, I have decided not to refer to any specific device for the teaching of grammar: grammar is not taught in the literacy classes for adult learners in China, and I assume that the fact that it is taught to Western university adults depends on their total lack of familiarity with the spoken language, as well as on the academic purposes for which they might have decided to engage in the study of Chinese language.

The third question relates to the importance of the lexicon within the programme for the teaching of Chinese written language. "Vocabulary is the major constructional material of all languages. Unless the learner acquires a certain range of words, he cannot communicate in that language".[1] Vocabulary mirrors the society within which it is

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[1] HO Kwok-cheung (1979) *A comparative study of the vocabulary in several textbooks for westerners.* Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press, p. 3

generated, but grows and adapts to the society in which it is used. Therefore a study of the language in use in the Chinese community in Italy is needed for a selection of words to build up the vocabulary of the teaching programme. The idea of the utmost importance of vocabulary in the teaching of Chinese written language to adult learners of Chinese origin also stems from the acknowledgement that while the alphabetic writing system, through the letter to sound correspondence, is likely to provide access to meaning by activating a phonological coding based on orthographic rules, the Chinese writing system, with its graphic units that represent monosyllabic morphemes, leads access to meaning by activating a lexical mechanism.[1] The teaching programme itself could then be profitably articulated according to this aspect of the Chinese written language.

The three issues discussed above relate to one major factor featuring in the study case: the indefinite character of the learners' background knowledge. Not only is it difficult to define: individuals with many different histories are likely to make up the study case, and therefore their background experiences and knowledge are likely to vary to quite a wide extent. But also, if one standard is assumed as typically representative of the study case, it still remains difficult to relate the background knowledge to the target at which the learner aims. Given that learners are fluent speakers of a Southern Chinese dialect, does this background knowledge provide them with helpful tools in terms of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary as they engage in the study of the written language? The term "dialect", as Boodberg[2] has carefully pointed out with reference to the case of the Chinese language, has in fact a wide range of meanings. It may refer to intelligible varieties of local dialects, but it is also widely in use to refer to the mutually unintelligible regionalects (as DeFrancis calls them), or language families originally spoken in the vast territory of China, and to date also in many overseas communities. The criteria for defining and measuring intelligibility among dialects of the same regionalect vary as well. Leaving aside discussion of the degrees of mutual intelligibility among the quite different dialects which are spoken in the Wenzhou area and which belong to the family of the Wu regionalect - for it is a matter of fact that speakers of these dialects may not understand each other - my present concern is to refer

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[1] As pointed out by BERTELSON P., CHEN H. C., and DE GELDER B. "Explicit speech analysis and orthographic experience in Chinese readers" in CHEN, H. C. (Editor) (1997) *Cognitive processing of Chinese and related Asian languages.* Hong Kong, Chinese University Press: "nothing in the pattern of strokes will help [the reader] inferring the pronunciation of a phonetic compound he [or she] has not encountered before (and cannot guess from the context). Thus, obtaining phonological information from phonetic components must involve addressing some *lexical* register." (p. 34)
[2] Quoted in DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *The Chinese language: fact and fantasy.* Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. 57

to the extent to which these dialects actually differ from Modern Standard Chinese. Regionalects[1] differ in the areas of phonology and grammar as well as vocabulary. According to the most comprehensive definitions, while the greatest differences seem to relate to the area of phonology and the least to the area of grammar, differences in the vocabulary fall in between the two extremes[2]. But comprehensive definitions, while summarizing general trends, fail to take into account the substantial weight of individual cases. As DeFrancis acknowledges, in some cases differences are "almost total at the phonological level, enormous at the lexical level, and still quite extensive at the grammatical level".[3]

The outstanding characteristics of the Wu regionalect that make the basic difference between it and *Putonghua* include: a three way distinction in the initial consonants (or retention of voiced initials) which results in twenty-seven to thirty-five initial consonants in the Wu regionalect versus twenty-one in *Putonghua*; a range of six to eight tones versus the four tones in *Putonghua*; and a more complicated tone *sandhi* (the variation of the tone in one word in combination with another word in a compound). At a grammatical level there are only a few important differences between the Wu regionalects and *Putonghua*: the use of two different forms for the singular personal pronouns in some areas of the Wu regionalects, compared to the invariant forms existing for *Putonghua*; and the habit, also found in Cantonese, of putting the direct object before the indirect object in an order which is the opposite of that of Standard Chinese. Other major differences in function words also exist: particles are sometimes completely different and they may not be used in the same way as in Standard Chinese, but further research work is still to be done in documenting these as well as other aspects.[4] Studies on the main differences between the Wu regionalect and *Putonghua*, however, tend either to consider all the dialects of the Wu regionalect as a whole, or to refer to the Shanghai or the Suzhou dialects for comparison. Both procedures are of little help in the study of differences between *Putonghua* and the dialects in use in the Wenzhou area. Due to the lack of a sufficiently focused piece of

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[1] After the model provided by DeFrancis I decided to use this term to refer to unintelligible language families (e.g.: Wu and *Putonghua*)

[2] According to the estimate by Xu, differences among regionalects taken as a whole amount to 20 percent in grammar, 40 percent in vocabulary, and 80 percent in pronunciation (XU Shirong (1982) " 'Guojia tuixing quanguo tongyong Putonghua' - Xianfa xiugai cao'an' di ershi tiao" ("The state promotes *Putonghua* which is universally used throughout China" - On reading Article 20 of the "Draft of the Revised Constitution") in: *Wenzi Gaige* 2: 15 - 16. Quoted in DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *op. cit.*, p. 63

[3] DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *op. cit.*, p. 63

[4] DEFRANCIS, J. (1984.b) *op. cit.*, p. 62; and RAMSEY, R. S. (1987) *The languages of China*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, p. 88

research among the sources dealing with the topic,[1] I decided to refer to my direct experience of contacts with speakers of the Wenzhou dialects. During the fieldwork that I carried out in Wenzhou and neighbouring areas and within the Chinese community in Italy, I gathered some evidence of the relevant difference between the Wenzhou dialects and *Putonghua*.[2] And I shall consider this evidence as sufficient for my purposes, for it testifies to the little contribution made by the background knowledge of one of these dialects in the study of modern written Chinese. As Chen Ping also remarks: "as Modern Written Chinese differs remarkably from Southern dialects in its lexical and grammatical norms, there is little positive import in its establishment for speakers of the Southern dialects, unless *they have become bilingual* [my italics], speaking Northern Mandarin in addition to their native dialect".[3]

The main question to be explored then is whether the background knowledge of dialect speakers may somehow contribute to facilitating the study of the Standard spoken form (*Putonghua*) and whether the teaching of *Putonghua* should precede or be simultaneous with the teaching of the written language. As a rule, all students in China need to study *Putonghua* in order to access Chinese language literacy education, regardless of the dialect they speak. One model to refer to is the case of primary school pupils in Wenzhou and in the neighbouring areas: although they are speakers of a local dialect, they have to learn *Putonghua* as a necessary requirement to proceed in the study of the written language. As I discussed in the first section of Chapter 4, children learn the standard form in a natural way, through exposure to the target language already in pre-scholar years, in kindergartens and in some cases at home. But the situation for the study case learners is quite different: they are adult learners, they are not as much exposed to the target language, and besides their knowledge of a Chinese dialect they are active speakers of a European language with its own phonology and grammar rules.

Since the main differences between the Wenzhou dialects and *Putonghua* seem

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[1] Among these sources are: YAN Yiming 颜逸明 (1994) *Wuyu gaikuang* 吴语概况 (*A survey of the Wu language*). Shanghai, Huadong Shifan Daxue Chubanshe; Fudan Daxue - Zhongguo yuyanxue yanjiusuo (1988) *Wuyu Luncong* 吴语论丛 (*Collected essays on the Wu Language*). Shanghai, Shanghai jiaoyu chuban faxing; "Introduction" in: CREAMER T. (Editor) (1991) *A Chinese English dictionary of the Wu dialects* (Featuring the Dialect of the city of Shanghai). Kensington, Dunwoody Press

[2] For example through the answers provided by teachers in Zhejiang province to question 1.8: "Multiple nature of the differences between *Putonghua* and the dialects in use in the Wenzhou area" (see Chapter 4, Section 1). In Wenzhou, I also had the chance to see people gathering from different parts of the Wenzhou area and speaking Mandarin to each other also during informal conversations. Moreover, there is the case of youngsters of Chinese origin who live in Italy and who have learned the dialect their relatives speak: when I spoke to their parents I would address them in *Putonghua*, and these young people could not understand unless I translated the conversation in Italian or their parents translated it into dialect.

[3] CHEN Ping (1999) *op. cit.*, p. 114

to pertain to the phonological domain, the role of the teacher should be to point out the major pronunciation features of the dialect, and help the learner focus on those changes that constantly interfere in the passage from the dialect to *Putonghua*. While this part of the teaching would be more useful before the teaching of the written language begins, more specific explanation of grammar and vocabulary differences could follow and become simultaneous with the teaching of Chinese written language. Chinese characters, in fact, will be introduced and taught to adult learners of the study case through a situational arrangement of content. Situational arrangement provides a context from which the learner may guess meanings even if discourse and sentences necessarily bear syntax structures, grammar rules and vocabulary which may differ from the dialect he or she speaks.

5.3.2 THE PROGRAMME

My objective is now to illustrate the different phases of the work needed for outlining the teaching programme. I will refer to the programme objectives, to the programme content (its selection and its arrangement), and to the teaching itself (devices and principles). By providing a sample I shall illustrate and discuss a model that could then be extended and further adjusted to fit the possible different requirements of any group of adult learners of Chinese origin who live in Italy.

5.3.2.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Chinese language literacy course for adult learners of Chinese origin is to provide learners with basic literacy in Mandarin Chinese. I shall not refer to the course as a mother tongue literacy course: first of all because I agree with the point of view expressed by Rampton which argues against the false assumptions implied by the use of both the native speaker and the mother tongue concepts (that there is only one mother tongue, that it is inherited, and that one person acquires absolute proficiency in that one language); one other related reason is that learners themselves may be speakers of a Chinese dialect, usually a southern dialect, while they are not speakers of *Putonghua*. Finally, in some cases, the dialect learners speak may turn into their heritage language, while Italian becomes the language they are more proficient in.

As a matter if fact, as it has been pointed out before, learning how to read and write in Chinese would imply going through the study of *Putonghua*, as if learning a second language. Yet, to a certain extent, learning a second language like *Putonghua* may be easier for speakers of a southern Chinese dialect than for learners who never spoke any Chinese. And necessarily the teaching programme and the teaching methodologies ought to take this part of the learners background knowledge into account too.

The objective pointed out for the literacy course in terms of the number of characters to be studied is 1,500. "The *Regulation on the work for Eradicating Illiteracy*, issued in 1988 by the Chinese State Council, established that the literacy standard be the knowledge of 1,500 characters for rural dwellers, and the knowledge of 2,000 characters for urban dwellers"[1]; "The objective of teaching is that learners who live in rural areas learn 1,500 frequently used Chinese characters, and businessmen, employees of institutions and workers who live in the urban areas learn 2,000 frequently used Chinese characters";[2] "According to the standards: each person who knows at least 1,500 may be considered literate".[3] These are only three of the numerous passages quoting from official literacy definitions promulgated in China and lately referred to by Chinese researchers in the field of adult education. As a matter of fact I would not refer to the knowledge of 1,500 characters as a sufficient target in literacy for the study case context. Although much depends on which characters a person learns, it is not likely that 1,500 characters would for example allow him or her to read and understand articles from any of the newspaper circulating in the Chinese communities.

There are three main reasons why I chose to refer to 1,500 characters and not 2,000 (as the target number pointed out for adult urban dwellers) or 2,500 (the target number pointed out in the case of primary school language education) as the objective of the literacy course for the study case.

I refer to 1,500 characters as to a *first* target. The course must be tailored to meet the needs of the learner through the achievement of this first target. The kind of knowledge the learner needs to acquire is functional, meaning that it should include the instruments which would allow him or her to progress independently in further written language acquisition (i.e. the structure and formation rules of Chinese characters, the

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[1] DONG Mingzhuan 董明传 (1997) *Chengren jiaoyu juece yu guangli* 成人教育决策与管理 (*Policy making for adult education and its management*) Shanghai, Wenhui Press, p. 149

[2] Guojia jiaoyu weiyuanhui chengren jiaoyu sibian 国家教育委员会成人教育司编 (1998) *Saochu wenmang wenxian huibian 1949 - 1996* 扫除文盲文献汇编 1949 - 1996 (A collection of documents on Eradicating Illiteracy, 1949-1996). Chongqing, Xinan Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, p. 435

[3] ZHANG Gongjian 张功建 (1997) *Bozhong wenming de shiye* 播种文明的事业 (*Educating the masses*) Fuzhou, Fujian Jiaoyu Chubanshe, p. 73

study of *pinyin* and the use of the dictionary) as it also happens in the case of the teaching of western university students.[1] These instruments have to be included within the teaching of the first 1,500 characters.

The second reason has to do with the disposal of time of the learner. Adult learners are likely to be busy at work and to be able to devote only a limited number of hours weekly to studying the Chinese written language. The objectives of the study course need therefore to be clear and circumscribed. Again, content must focus on the more urgent needs of the learners.

The third reason relates to the learners' background knowledge. I believe that because of the already acquired knowledge of the spoken dialect and the insight they may derive about the way Chinese language works, the focus of the teaching programme should be on the acquisition of a basic written lexicon to be made up with a productive combination of 1,500 selected characters.

5.3.2.2 SELECTION OF CHARACTERS

As far as the content is concerned, the first problem to confront is from where to select the 1,500 characters to be included in the teaching material. My objective here is to illustrate the different phases of the work suggested for selecting the characters to be included in the syllabus while describing the types of sources that need to be taken into account.

There are lists of frequently used characters to select from. The compilers of the textbooks for primary school language teaching and of primers for adult literacy education in China usually derive characters to be taught from these lists. The most widespread as a reference source is the *List of Common Characters in Modern Chinese*, which includes 3,500 Chinese characters.[2] But even more useful lists are available. In these lists characters are not arranged in alphabetical order, nor are they grouped according to radicals. Characters are listed according to their frequency rate, therefore the more common characters are entered before the less common ones. Yet, the order of items in these lists varies. Several factors account for such variations: among these the

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[1] Primers for western university students refer to 800 to 1,200 characters as the first year target among them:
- Modern Chinese Beginner Course (1985 edition), volumes 1 and 2 introduce 1,200 new words.
- Practical Chinese Reader (volumes 1 and 2: 447+375=822 new characters. Vocabulary: 1166 words)
- Colloquial Chinese (737 new characters. Vocabulary: 1,046 new words)

[2] Refer to Chapter 4, Section 1

more relevant are the type and dimension of the sample examined, the period of time over which the sample examined extends, and the type of unit chosen for the arrangement in the lists (namely words or characters). As far as the first two factors are concerned, the wider the sample (in terms of type and dimension as well as in terms of time) the more accurate the results. When a selection is needed, the priority is given to written material that may be more relevant to the learners: therefore, more recent piece of writing is generally likely to be more valuable than old one, and - respectively - the choice would rather be for a sample derived from writing on general topics than, for example, from technical or specialized field reports. The source I chose to refer to is the *Frequency Dictionary of Modern Chinese*,[1] which is based on a quite extensive and diverse sample of material.[2] As far as the third factor is concerned, the *Frequency Dictionary* itself includes both lists of characters and lists of words. Reference to characters instead of words is the model I draw from various aspects of Chinese language teaching experience. First of all literacy in Chinese has been and continues to be measured on characters: literacy achievements in primary school language education are set out in numbers of characters that pupils learn during grades I, II, III (...); secondly in China - as I already mentioned above - one person is regarded as literate in Chinese when he or she has learned a required number characters. A more in depth discussion on the difference between words and characters in Chinese, though, is needed in order to motivate the choice I made and describe the implications that go with it. I personally based the choice to take characters as the basic unit to edit my list on a set of relevant features of the Chinese written language, first and more evident among which is the fact that, although morphemes and words are different linguistic units, only characters and not word boundaries are marked in Chinese. Characters represent lexical morphemes, and are the minimum semantically meaningful unit in the Chinese script. Such feature has been taken into account in a number of studies[3] drawing from psycholinguistic research to provide empirical evidence indicating that Chinese characters, rather than words, become important perceptual units in reading, which may

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[1] Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan yuyan jiaoxue yanjiusuo bian 北京语言学院 语言 教学研究所遍 (1986) *Xiandai hanyu pinlu cidian* 现代 汉语频率词典 (*Frequency dictionary of Modern Chinese*) Beijing, Yuyan Xueyuan chubanshe

[2] Refer to the section *Yuliao chouyang shuliang he zheliang de jueding* 语料抽样数量和质量的 确定 (*On the quality and dimension of the language material sample*) in: Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan yuyan jiaoxue yanjiusuo bian 北京语言学院 语言 教学研究所遍 (1986) *op. cit.*, Edition explanatory notes, pp. I - III

[3] Healy and Drewnowski (83); Chen (84 - 86); Chen (87) quoted by CHEN Hsuan-Chi "Reading comprehension in Chinese: implications from character reading times" in: CHEN Hsuan-Chih and TZENG Ovid J. L. (1992) *Language processing in Chinese*. Amsterdam, Elsevier Science Publishers B. V., p. 178

function as coding units similar to those of alphabetic words.[1] It is however important to note also that: a. many individual characters have several meanings and can be independently used as words in text; b. individual characters also combine with others to form multi-morphemic words with distinctively different meanings (with bi-morphemic combinations forming the majority of modern Chinese words).[2] This would stand against the choice of referring to characters as the reference unit to edit a frequency list, for it indicates the rather ambiguous or flexible semantic nature of characters. Only once words are formed are characters meanings properly accessible. But, despite the fact that the meaning of a Chinese word is generally better defined than a character, the concept of word itself in Chinese is fuzzy. The fact that even "skilled Chinese readers have vague and different ideas about how to segment words in sentences"[3] testifies that what constitutes a word in Chinese is not a straightforward issue. As suggested by Packard[4] different standard notions of word exist for different branches of study - e.g. orthographic, phonological, lexical, semantic, morphological, syntactic, sociological - and accordingly a word may be defined as an item with different characteristics in each of these fields. Sticking to morphemes for editing the frequency list then, seems to be a more viable option, as it does not imply running the risk of being inconsistent or inaccurate when drawing from other sources or when referring directly to specific written material.

In my own work, however, I attempt to take into account words too: I start from words, because I refer to the vocabulary in use, therefore to words in context, in order to extrapolate a list of characters. And I end with words, because the characters I enter in my list are to be learned also because they do productively combine to form large numbers of words[5] and expressions the learner needs to master. As a count based on a corpus of about one million words has shown, the 125 most commonly used characters accounted for 50% of the words in the corpus, and the next 293 characters accounted for another 25%.[6]

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[1] CHEN Hsuan-Chi "Reading comprehension in Chinese: implications from character reading times" in: CHEN, H. C. and TZENG O. J. L. (Editors) (1992) *op. cit.*, pp. 178 - 179

[2] HOOSAIN, R. "Psychological reality of the word in Chinese" in: CHEN H. C. and TZENG, O. J. L. (Editors) (1992) *op. cit.*, pp. 111-130

[3] CHEN Hsuan-Chi "Reading comprehension in Chinese: implications from character reading times" in: CHEN, H. C. and TZENG O. J. L. (Editors) (1992) *op. cit.*, p, 179

[4] PACKARD, J. (2000) *The morphology of Chinese. A linguistic and cognitive approach.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Chapter 2.

[5] HOOSAIN, Rumjahn (1991) *Psycholinguistic implications for linguistic relativity - a case study of Chinese.* London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, p. 17

[6] CHENG, C. - M. (1982) "Analysis of present day Mandarin" in *Journal of Chinese Linguistics.* 10, 282 - 358, quoted by LIN, Angel Mei-yi and AKAMATSU Nobuhiko "The learnability and psychological

The **first source** I refer to is a list of words, the "List of the first 8,000 most widely used words in Modern Chinese" (使用度最高的前 8,000个词 词表). [1] Table VIII shows the first 300 words included in the list.

Since the list includes polysyllabic words, which are formed by more than one character, and since some characters are used in the composition of more than one word and are therefore repeated, the next step of the work consists in extracting characters and rearranging them in a second list. The arrangement of characters in the second list follows the order of the original list, yet characters' productivity in word formation is taken into account too by means of an additional frequency count: characters which are more frequently used in the composition of other words contained in the list are entered before other less productive characters (see Table IX).

As Table IX shows, because of duplications, the first 300 words of the Chinese frequency list are actually composed by 266 characters. This would indicate that to compile a list of 1,500 separate characters to be included in the syllabus some 1,700 or so entries from the Chinese frequency list of words[2] would need to be selected.

The 1,500 characters derived from the **first source** mainly refer to the written language in use in China, which - as I have suggested before - may have different features from the written language more commonly used among the overseas Chinese communities.

Since no list that refers to the case of the Chinese community in Italy exists, I carried out a survey of additional material in order to highlight the distinctive elements of the Chinese written language in use by the community members in Italy. The **second group of sources** I surveyed includes:

1.   Written material circulating among the Chinese communities in Italy

        a. Community newspapers (see Illustration V)

        欧 华 时 报 (*Ouhua Shibao* - "Il Tempo Europa Cina"): it includes the main news about Italy (politics and economy), and it focuses on news of interest to the Chinese community. Its content includes: international politics and facts; news from Italy and the world; education (information from the Chinese associations and from other organizations that work for the Chinese community); sport and shows; commercial advertisements.

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processing of reading in Chinese and reading in English" in CHEN Hsuan Chih (Ed.) (1997) *Cognitive processing of Chinese and related Asian languages*. Hong Kong, Chinese University Press, p. 382

[1] Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan yuyan jiaoxue yanjiusuo bian 北京语言学院 语言 教学研究所遍 (1986) *op. cit.* pp. 491 - 656.

[2] I would also suggest checking whether more updated lists to refer to will be available when the full list of characters needs to be compiled.

新华时报 (*Xinhua Shibao* - "La nuova Cina"): it provides several types of information, the selection of contents being similar to the *Ouhua Shibao*: international politics and facts; news about Italy; about China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan; overseas Chinese; economy; culture, music and sports.

华侨通讯 (*Huaqiao Tongxun* - "Notiziario dei Cinesi Milano"): the newspaper includes news of interest to the members of the Chinese community in Italy, but it is more specifically addressed to the Chinese community in Milan. It includes: facts about Italy (e.g.: the visit of Premier Zhu Rongji; the visit of the Investigation Committee in charge of reporting about the Rui'an overseas community economic situation); news form China (e.g.: President Jiang Zemin signs new decrees; the revision plan for the protection of the rights and interests of the returned overseas Chinese and their relatives); short news (e.g.: Chinese cooks competition in Milan; questions and answers about overseas Chinese nationals; Wenzhou people look at the North-west)

同乡报 (*Tongxiang Bao* - "L'Associazione"): its structure is similar to the *Huaqiao Tongxun*, although its particular focus is on news of interest to the Chinese members of the community who come from Wencheng. It includes sections on: facts in Italy; news from China and Wencheng; education and general culture (e.g.: about China: Mao Zedong and mahjiong; about Italy: Rome, the eternal city; about Europe: the culture of queuing up in different European countries)

中意报 (*Zhongyi Bao* - "Giornale cinese-italiano"): the weekly newspaper provides news, information, stories and reports on many issues of interest to the members of the Chinese community settled in Italy, from the area around Florence, in the region of Tuscany, to Milan in Lombardy and Rome in Lazio, where the newspaper is being distributed, too. It is bilingual (Chinese and Italian). It provides useful information and contact numbers for services addressed to the community, and it includes a cultural section, with articles on art and folklore.

人民日报（海外版） [*Renmin Ribao (Haiwai ban)* - "People's Daily (Overseas edition)"]: it does not focus on news about life and events related to the Chinese community in Italy, but includes the main news on Chinese economy and politics, a section on international news, sport and culture, and one focused on information about the overseas communities.

I gathered a representative sample of newspapers only. Personal communication

and direct observation have informed and shaped the selection: the *Ouhua Shibao* and the *Xinhua Shibao* are nationally the more widespread newspapers and they are also the more easily available source of written information on current facts and events written in Chinese. Therefore, while I limited my analysis to one single issue for the other newspapers,[1] I referred to two issues of the *Xinhua Shibao*[2] and to four issues of the *Ouhua Shibao*,[3] which has a longer history and still holds the first place for number of copies distributed among the Chinese community. The selection of articles from these sources is necessarily based on further restrictive criteria. All available articles are recent: the editing boards of some of the newspapers do not keep a record of old issues. Moreover, the Chinese newspapers provide information about international economics and politics, which are usually downloaded from the Internet. They are therefore not likely to reveal any particular characteristics of the language in use within the Chinese community in Italy. I focused my attention on a few articles which, as far as I know, have been written by the local staff, and which mainly refer to events that either took place in Italy or are directly connected with the local Chinese community (see Appendix 5). One major contribution derived from the analysis of these articles is the list of names of Italian places and of Italian politicians which are more frequently mentioned in the news, and which therefore learners who live in Italy may want to learn.

b. Advertisements and leaflets:

I examined a sample of advertisements, handbills, and printed leaflets circulating within the community. Some of these advertisements are distributed by the Overseas Chinese Associations, some others are put up in shop windows and on street walls mainly in the Chinese areas. The sample includes commercial advertisements advertizing the opening of new shops or services available for the community members (Chinese and Italian language classes, translations, cooks competition and buffet). Handbills mainly relate to flats and workshops for rent, or employment contacts. The analysis of this part of written material is intended to provide additional information on topics of concern for members of the Chinese communities. It may also reveal the use of unexpected forms that may either derive from dialectal speech or from the environment in which the Chinese written language is being used.

c. Communications from Association officers

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[1] *Huaqiao Tongxun* (19 July 2000); *Tongxiang Bao* (20 July 2000); *Zhongyi Bao* number 33 (June 2000)
[2] Number 132 (28 July 2000) and number 152 (10 October 2000)
[3] Number 155 (18 July 2000), number 157 (25 July 2000), number 161 (29 August 2000), and number 172 (6 October 2000)

These include news about new regulations and document requirements for residence permits, addresses, and other information about local offices. These communications and bulletins are distributed by the Association itself or via notices in Chinese book-shops, bars and clubs. This type of written material provides some useful insight into the Chinese names given to Italian offices, regulations and documents.

2.   Information gathered from communication with members of the Chinese community with specific competence that relates to the spreading of written information (such as member staff of Chinese associations involved in the setting up of Chinese language classes, owners of Chinese book-shops and writers of newspaper articles). Information includes suggestions on the language in use among youngsters, and about the use of atypical translations within the Chinese community in Italy.

As the **second group of sources** shows, the written language in use within the Chinese community settled in Italy differs from the language in use in Mainland China. Differences have only limited relevance in a general context. Yet, when a choice for frequently used words has to be made for the specific context that makes up the focus of my research work these differences become important: since I have referred to 1,500 characters as the first target for the literacy course addressed to adults of Chinese origin who live in Italy, and since, as ascertained before, adult learning is more successful when contents are relevant to the learner's everyday life, I necessarily need to take into account these differences while outlining the teaching programme. Therefore, in addition to the 1,500 characters derived from the Chinese frequency lists, a list that focuses on the specific vocabulary in use in the Italian context needs to be compiled. The list includes the Chinese written forms for the Italian names (mainly places and politicians) as they appear in the written material sample described above, and it takes into account the lexical variations pertaining to this context, such as names and phrases that would not be used with the same meaning in China, and newly coined names to refer to things and circumstances that are not likely to be referred to in a totally Chinese context (see Table X).

The **third group of sources** I referred to consists of the vocabulary lists included in the primers for teaching Italian as a second language to Chinese adult learners. Referring to this group of sources has a twofold function in my work. On the one hand it helps focus on more specific vocabulary which includes the Chinese names given to other Italian places and sets of words which are more frequently used in an Italian context. On the other hand, some sections of these sources represent a possible

model for the gathering and arrangement of the vocabulary according to topics. The **third group of sources** includes:

a.   *Conversational Italian today.*[1] The book content is arranged into situational sections, which allows easy selection of useful vocabulary. Among the situations and topics introduced and described are: customs, mail, restaurant and kitchen, commerce and industry, Italian industry. Moreover, the book includes short texts (reading passages) in both Chinese and Italian. The passages focus on additional topics related to the Italian context. Since the book was published in 1992, the information provided may no longer hold true, but the passages could be referred to for selecting the vocabulary according to specific interests of the learners (for example: the city in which he/she is studying, and about which he/she might want to be able to read and write in Chinese), and for editing supplementary short reading passages (Among the subjects introduced in the texts: Rome, Milan, Venice, Florence, applying for a job, trade and commerce).

b.   *Daily conversation in Italian.*[2] This book does not include a word list. It divides contents into sections, and sections into correlated situations. For each situation only a set of sentences is given. Sentences are not connected, no dialogue is made up, no particularly interesting situation is included, and therefore no useful vocabulary can be drawn from the text. Reference to this source shall be limited to topic-centred sentences, once topics to be referred to in the teaching programme have been selected. Both sentences and short reading passages may in fact be useful in the teaching of adults, and in helping them make sense of what they are studying, by providing a description of the circumstances in which they could use it.

c.   *A Crash course in Italian.*[3] This book focuses very much on the teaching of Italian grammar. Contents are not arranged according to topics or situations, nor is the vocabulary arranged in any useful way to the case I am focusing on.

d.   *I Can Speak Italian.*[4] This is a language handbook more than a primer. It is a reference manual divided into main topics. Among the first sections of the book there is "Common vocabulary and phrases" ("常用词汇和短语") which is divided into: common adjectives (常用形容词), colours (颜色), models for common sentences (常用句型) to express danger (危急用语), to address people (称呼用语), to make

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[1] SHEN Emei 沈 萼 梅, LIU Yangrong 刘 杨 荣 (1992) *Jinri yidaliyu huihua* 今日意大利语会话 (*Conversational Italian today*). Beijing, Luyou jiaoyu chubanshe

[2] CHEN Shilan 陈 师 兰 (1994) *Yidaliyu shenghuo huihua* 意大利语生活会话 (*Daily conversation in Italian*). Shanghai, Shanghai waiyu jiaoyu chubanshe

[3] ZHAO Xiuying, ZHANG Quansen 赵 秀 英, 张 全 森 (1991) *Yidaliyu sucheng* 意大利语速成 (*Crash course in Italian*). Beijing, Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan chubanshe

[4] YUAN Huaqing (1996) *Wo hui shuo Yidaliyu* 我 会 说 意 大 利 语 (*I can speak Italian*). Milano, Vallardi Editore

new acquaintances and introduce oneself (打招呼和介绍), to express agreement and enjoyment (同意和欣赏), disagreement and regret (不同意和遗憾), to congratulate (祝贺), to express condolences (吊唁), ask questions and make requests (问题及请求).

As a matter of fact none of these models actually implies the use of specific vocabulary that would be only in use in Italy. The basic common vocabulary, by which definition I refer to that part of the vocabulary of frequent use in China as well, should emerge from the selection of characters extracted by the Chinese sources (i.e. the Chinese frequency list of words). The specific vocabulary mainly consists of names of places, offices and institutions, and on the translation into Chinese of specific or frequently used Italian vocabulary (such as the names of Italian dishes and commonly used ingredients in Italian cuisine) as suggested with Table XI.

The overview of this third part of additional material also sheds some light on the situational arrangement of the vocabulary. The textbooks have been specifically written for learners with a Chinese language background, and they therefore make up a useful source for the designer of a methodology addressed to learners of Chinese origin. Despite the fact that the target language of these sources is Italian, the overview holds a prominent position in the following phase of the teaching programme outlining, when the vocabulary needs to be arranged in a form suitable to the teaching of adult learners who live in Italy (see Table XII).

The vocabulary extracted from the second and the third groups of sources generates an additional list of characters. Since the vocabulary was not originally arranged according to frequency, there is no previous useful arrangement to refer to for the derived list of characters either. I therefore decided to arrange characters according to a relative frequency rate, i.e. by referring to the number of times each character is used within the gathered sample (see Table XIII).

Through my illustrative sample I gathered an additional list of 286 characters. However, the selection of characters derived from the Italian context sources, as well as their number, is likely to vary according to the specific interests of the learners and according to the objectives each phase of the teaching points at. As will be shown in the final section of the chapter, additional and more specific vocabulary may be introduced throughout the teaching units.

I briefly referred also to two course-books for the teaching of Italian to foreign

adult learners (*Parlare Italiano*[1] and *In Italiano*[2]). The first is a course book for Italian language teaching to foreigners. It addresses the case of adult learners, but it has also been adopted for use with youngsters (7 to 15 year old) for heritage language programs in some destination areas of Italian migration. The second is part of a multimedia course. Both books focus on the acquisition of both spoken and written language and, since they have been designed for a quite wide range of learners, regardless of their different linguistic and cultural background, grammar explanations hold a dominant position. I therefore only referred to the overall structure and arrangement of contents as a further complementary source.

5.3.2.3 ORGANIZATION OF CONTENTS

It is important to determine the more suitable progression according to which the vocabulary items should be included in the teaching programme. The selection of characters to be taught is already based on the study of themes and topics that the learner is more likely to confront in the target language. The resulting consistency aims at providing the learner with the possibility to use what he or she learns, hence give him or her the chance to reinforce the mastery of the new vocabulary he or she acquires. The designer of a literacy course book for adult learners should take into consideration both the immediate needs of the learners and the need to construct building blocks that will be useful in subsequent stages of the course program.

5.3.2.3.1 PRIORITIES IN THE SEQUENCING OF THE VOCABULARY

Consistent with the outcomes of my research I believe that the ordering of the vocabulary items in a teaching programme for adult learners should follow the criteria of usefulness, frequency, and productivity.

a) **Usefulness**: research on adult literacy teaching has highlighted the importance of choosing a vocabulary which the learner can put into immediate use.[3] Accordingly,

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[1] GLAREY, O.; MARANI, C.; ZORZI, D. (1984) *Parlare italiano*. Bologna, Liviana Editrice
[2] CHIUCHIU', A.; MINCIARELLI, F.; SILVESTRINI, M. (1990) *In italiano*. Perugia, Edizioni Guerra
[3] "Significant learning takes place when subject matter is perceived by S. (student) as having relevance for his or her own purpose", ROGERS, A. (1986) *Teaching adults*. Milton Keynes, Philadelphia, Open University Press, p. 19

characters which are likely to occur more often in the learner's everyday life environment (living and working milieus) will be taught first.

b) Frequency: the frequency criterion refers to a second level analysis. The scope it refers to is wider: it no longer takes into consideration the peculiarities of one specific milieu only, but also the language in use by the large majority of Chinese language speakers. It therefore refers also to function characters which are likely to appear more often in colloquial sentences (like 的 , 了, 也 ...)

c) Productivity: productivity of a character refers to the number of ways in which its features can lead to faster and easier learning of other characters. I therefore call productive characters: a. the characters whose structure exemplifies the use of frequently used components in combined characters; b. characters which are used in combination with other characters to form large numbers of words. Ordering characters according to the productivity criteria implies that characters which are more useful for the study of new characters that either share the same component or combine with the same character to form new words are taught first.

5.3.2.3.2 ARRANGEMENT OF CONTENTS

Referring to the general knowledge adult learners may draw from is a fundamental for effectiveness in language teaching. Adults have better skills than children in making abstraction and it is therefore useful to provide them with a consequential and systematic organization of contents in the teaching material.[1] "Any method used is more successful when complete sentences, which the illiterate can immediately use, form the basis of teaching than one which begins with letters of the alphabet or phrases or syllables".[2] Roy Prosser, in his study on adult education, refers to such method as the '*global-learner centred approach*'. It is a method that takes into account the already existing knowledge of the adult learner, consisting of the knowledge of the spoken language and the knowledge that the learner has built through his own life experience. "The material of the primer should be based on the major interest of the illiterate, pictures with simple sentences broken down into phrases, phrases into

[1] BALBONI Paolo E. (1994) *Didattica dell'italiano a stranieri*. Roma, Bonacci Editore, p. 150
[2] PROSSER, Roy (1967) *Adult education for developing countries*. Nairobi, East African Publishing House, p. 97

syllables."[1]

Reference to *An Zijie*'s methodology provides a model for this pattern. It prescribes that the teaching of Chinese written language should start with the recognition of words from a sentence learners already understand; that it should then proceed with the identification and teaching of characters that make up these words; and that it should end with the deconstruction of these characters and the explanation of their components. This process allows learners to better understand and remember the meaning and shape of new characters that are derived from a familiar context.[2] Whole sentences then serve as an approach, so that when a further distinction into words and syllables - or characters, in the case of the Chinese written language - is provided, the learner may associate the written form with the spoken form and the attached meanings which he or she already knows.

It is again from the study of the different contexts for the teaching of Chinese written language that I draw the basic principles for the arrangement of contents in the teaching material.

a) Simplicity. It should be pointed out that simple characters are not necessarily the same for primary school learners (the context where the principle of simplicity holds a primal role) and adult learners. Simple, in the case of adult learners of the Chinese written language, does not mainly refer to the limited number of strokes and the resulting character' shape. These features are of more relevant impact for children. In the case of adult learners, simplicity is to be associated with the overall structure of the character. Characters are simpler if their structure is analysed and if components and parts of the character are introduced and illustrated as meaningful bits of the character itself. And the "high density" of a character, while providing the learner with a clearer insight of the image that might be represented, positively contributes to make his or her understanding and memorization process easier and quicker. I am here using the term "image" on purpose, for the density factor is particularly useful especially in the teaching of Chinese characters belonging to the pictograph class (and, as a derivation, in the teaching of compound characters which contain a pictograph). Simplicity, in fact, also relates to the class to which characters belong. Pictographs form one of the six classes into which characters are traditionally divided. They are usually included in the first part of the primary school teaching material in China because their iconic value

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Zhejiang sheng Qingtian xian jiaoyu ju 浙江省青田县教育局 (1995) *An Zijie xiangdai qianzi wen. Shizi ban jiaoshi shouce* 安子介现代千字文 - 识字班教师手册 (*The modern thousand characters book by An Zijie. Teachers' handbook for literacy classes*), p. 13

makes it easier for pupils to remember their meaning and shape, and to recall them in reading and writing.[1] This path also features in the teaching of adult learners in Western universities,[2] and it is likely to work in the case of the teaching of adult learners of Chinese origin as well.[3]

b) Systematization. All strategic arrangement of content which fosters analogical thinking based on accumulated experience and knowledge of the adult learner gives the learner the instruments to keep control on the knowledge he or she acquires, and thereby to progress into the study also independently.[4] In the case of Chinese written language, the principle of systematization is not being taken into account in the teaching of mature students in China who are being taught characters one by one without the teaching of *pinyin* and without previous introduction to the formation rules of Chinese characters.[5] The teaching of Chinese characters to adult learners in Western Universities and to illiterate Chinese adults, on the other hand, adheres to this principle: the teaching of the written language includes *pinyin*; and the teaching of characters begins with an introductory explanation of their formation rules. The analysis of the structure of characters and their arrangement into classes, which holds a key position especially in the teaching of western university students, adheres to this organizing principle too. Referring to the principle of systematization in the arrangement of contents for adult learners of the study case implies an introductory presentation of the internal structure of characters, the teaching of *pinyin*, the explanation of semantic components, and a focus on the phonetic cueing components of compound characters. Another useful way to adhere to the principle of systematization is the ordering of the vocabulary and lexicon into theme groups. The above mentioned devices of introducing and explaining the structure of characters and the cueing function of their components would therefore apply to different parts of the teaching programme, each part corresponding to the presentation of a situational setting. The situational featuring of contents, moreover, particularly suits the teaching to adults in the sense that it allows the programme designer to choose useful contents first: while building up situational contexts, the designer can select themes and topics that are likely to be more frequently used in the learner's everyday life. (E. g.: work and products, food and restaurants, documents...). Moreover, because of the special features of Chinese written language the acquisition of

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[1] Refer to Chapter 4, Section 1
[2] Refer to Chapter 4, Section 2
[3] ROGERS, A. (1986) *op. cit.*, p. 70
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Refer to Chapter 4, Section 4

the vocabulary will be greatly enhanced by the systematization of the teaching contents according to this pattern, for the number of words that share the same characters, and the number of compounds that share the same radical rises when a particular situational context is considered.

E. g.:

a) Feature: morphemic writing units.

Theme: school and education.

Vocabulary:学校，学习，学生，学费，学科，学历，学期，学院 [...].

b) Feature: semantic components.

Theme: speaking and languages.

Vocabulary: 言→讠 →说 ，讨论，语言，汉语，意大利语，话，请，信 [...]

5.3.2.4 THE TEACHING: METHOD AND PRAXIS IN A SAMPLE

In accordance with the above mentioned characteristics of the teaching context and of the objectives pointed out for the literacy course, I agree with the view expressed by Roy Prosser[1] that it is probably more correct to think of a teaching approach rather than a teaching method. This view is also supported by evidence gathered from interviews and questionnaires in the study of the other teaching contexts. The model of an approach rather than a method characterizes the teaching in each one of the four contexts examined. A method, in language teaching, is "a way of teaching a language which is based on systematic principles and procedures, i.e., which is an application of views on how a language is best taught and learned".[2] If different methods of language teaching result from different views on the nature of language, the nature of language learning, the goals and objectives in teaching, and the type of syllabus and instructional material to use, an approach, in my definition, should also take into account the variables of the context in which the teaching takes place, the variables that define the type of learner as well as the environment. The distinction I make, then, refers mainly to the higher degree of flexibility of the approach compared to the method, and it implies that the approach adapts more easily to diverse milieus and needs.

During the fieldwork I carried out investigating the teaching of Chinese written

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[1] PROSSER, Roy (1967) *Adult education for developing countries.* Nairobi, East African Publishing House, p. 96

[2] RICHARDS, J. C, PLATT, J. and PLATT, H. (1992) *Dictionary of language teaching & applied linguistics.* Essex, Longman, p. 228

language in different contexts I have noticed that a further division into two kinds of approaches is applicable: the "bottom-up" approach starts with the learning of single units (such as letters, characters or syllables) to build words or sentences afterwards. Learning then focuses on the recognition and decoding skills of the learner. The "top-down" approach starts with learning a unit of meaning which is later broken down into individual letters, characters or syllables, and has meaning as its main focus.[1] While the first kind of approach is more often used for the teaching of children, the second kind better suits the teaching of adult learners who, as discussed above, more easily rely on the possibility of grasping meanings of what they are being taught by drawing generalizations and deducing rules.

In my presentation, I shall illustrate the steps for arranging the selected items in a sequencing frame that takes into account the learner's experience and background knowledge and focuses on the purposes at which the teaching aims. I shall provide a description of a teaching approach arranged into units. The unit arrangement form is widely adopted in language teaching, and it often combines with the lesson arrangement form.[2] The language teaching material itself is often divided into units, although unit is sometimes taken as a synonym for chapter. My choice for the arrangement into units is based on the definition of unit as a system that refers to the unity of both the object of teaching (the language) and its subject (the learner).[3] On the one hand, then, each unit should take as its aim all the basic elements of language teaching: cultural models (i.e. the fundamental elements of the context in which communication takes place), functionality, language competencies (such as phonology, orthography, lexicon and morphology), and language skills (comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing). On the other hand, each unit should involve the learner totally by calling on his/her different levels of perception of the object of teaching: from global perception (through strategies such as redundancy, formulating hypothesis, skimming and scanning, and drawing analogies), to guided perception (in which the teacher acts as a director and leads the learner towards analysis), and synthesis.

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[1] The definitions of "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches are taken from FORDHAM P., HOLLAND D., MILLICAN J., (1995) *Adult literacy*. Oxford, VSO, p. 60

[2] In some cases, for example, a group of lessons is taken as a unit.

[3] The definition of unit and its description are derived from BALBONI Paolo E. (1994) *op. cit.*, pp. 64 - 66

5.3.2.4.1 GUIDELINES AND UNITS

0. Laying the bases

The most relevant elements of the study case learners' background knowledge are:
a. the spoken dialect, which is relevant in the process of familiarization with *Putonghua*;
b. a language learning experience, which is relevant to the study of *pinyin*.

a. It is necessary that the study case learners who approach the study of Chinese written language learn *Putonghua*. The teaching of *Putonghua* to adult learners who speak a Chinese dialect and are literate in a language with an alphabetic writing system is either the task of a teacher who is a speaker of both *Putonghua* and a Zhejiang dialect, able to distinguish and illustrate the regular changes in the spoken language that would lead learners to modify their knowledge of the dialect into knowledge of *Putonghua*, or of a Chinese language teacher who, with a considerable investment of time and skills, teaches the spoken form of *Putonghua* by referring to dramatizations of everyday life situations (this, though, would be a less effective approach because of the language environment in which learners live, which is not dominated by *Putonghua*). Further research that goes beyond the scope of my field of study is needed for investigating in deeper detail this part of the teaching.

b. *Pinyin* can be taught according to the method used for Western university students. In fact the language learning experience that learners of the two contexts have is similar: like many Western university students, the study case learners have become literate in a language with an alphabetic writing system while attending mainstream education in Italy; moreover, the language environment in which the teaching takes place is dominated by a western language (e.g. Italian or English) in both teaching contexts. One useful approach would therefore be to highlight the different pronunciation between Italian reading of *pinyin* and correct *pinyin* pronunciation.

By referring to the discrepancies between *Putonghua* and the dialects in use by the students, then, the teacher, while focusing on the general pronunciation features and regular changes between *Putonghua* and a dialect of the Wenzhou area, can build on the learners' background knowledge. Learning *pinyin* is a fundamental which also provides the learner with the possibility of using a dictionary.

1. Getting to know Chinese characters

As a first step I would suggest an introductory lesson on Chinese characters. The aim of this introduction is to provide the elements for building a taxonomy, a system for

helping learners to classify Chinese characters, and to face the distressing and somewhat discouraging task of learning several hundreds of characters. A generally suitable approach would be to refer to the already existing traditional classification into six classes (see Chapter 3, section 2). The teacher should provide examples and refer to the characters' original shape and meaning while explaining the characters' internal structure and formation principles and rules. Such an introduction should help to illustrate the main features of the Chinese written language, through a comparison of the representational power of alphabetic writing systems (grapheme to phoneme conversion) with the most relevant classes of Chinese characters (class of characters with pictographic origin, indicatives, and phonetic compounds).

The introductory explanation, while focusing on the structure of Chinese characters and their basic orthographic components, should also include a lesson on the rules for writing Chinese characters according to the correct stroke order.

2. Characters' structure

Although a top-down approach, in which learners are provided with larger units of meaning first, is generally preferred in the teaching of adult learners, I consider it important to articulate the introductory presentation of characters, and focus on their structure through examples.

a) Simple-structure characters: pictographs and indicators which activate the lexical mechanism (informing on the meaning of words)

E.g.: 人, 言, 手, 目, 口, 心, 大, 长, 高

[This is a sample for the selection of pictographs and indicators. The majority of them ought to be derived from the list of frequently used characters (Table IX). Characters could be chosen and introduced to learners according to their reference to one semantic field]. Due to the features of these two classes of characters, the use of images that emphasize their iconic value in order to help learners to memorize the characters' meaning could be a helpful device in this introductory phase of teaching. Yet, the study carried out on the four different contexts as summarized in Chapter 4, has shown that images suit better the teaching of children. Therefore the teacher should be able to integrate teaching by providing a number of exemplifying sentences in which these characters are used. He/she should take advantage of the background knowledge of learners and use model sentences that learners could understand. In the beginning, sentences (which could also be suggested by learners themselves) can either only be pronounced orally or written on the blackboard by the teacher. Referring to the oral

background knowledge of learners would additionally provide the possibility of reinforcing their knowledge of *Putonghua*.

b) Compound characters. Components have to be derived from the selection of characters already introduced to learners. They should be referred to as informing either on the meaning or on the pronunciation of characters.

E.g.:

→人 (man)：从

used as a component also in the derived graphic form

→亻 ("one man component")[1]：你，他 [体，休，信．．．]

→言 (speech, word)

used as a component mostly in the graphic form

→讠 ("speech component")[2]：说，话[请，记．．．]

→手 (hand)：拿

used as a component also in the abbreviated form

→扌 ("carrying hand component")[3]：打，找，提 [拍，排，扣，抓．．．]

→目 (eye)：看，眼，睛[盲，睡，眉．．．]

→心 (heart)：想，[意]

used as a radical also in the form

→忄 ("vertical heart component")[4]：情 [懂．．．]

Meanings and cueing functions of these components in the characters in which they occur as constituents should be illustrated through examples. The teacher should put emphasis on the common semantic field or on the phonetic cues respectively. I would suggest continuing to select characters from the list of frequently used characters [Table IX]. Yet, for the sake of consistent exemplification, other characters could be referred to as well (characters listed in square brackets).

3. Appreciating features of the Chinese written language.

Learners who already speak a Chinese dialect might well have already noticed that there are cases of homophony in Chinese spoken language. The teacher could at this point refer to this and other correlated features of the language. He/she should provide models for possible ways of discriminating among meanings.

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[1] 单人旁
[2] 言字旁
[3] 提字旁
[4] 竖心旁

- Tone discrimination: the importance of correct *pinyin* pronunciation

- Visual discrimination: homophone characters and their different graphic representation

- Lexical discrimination: the use of characters in polysyllabic (i.e. polymorphemic) words

4. Building and extending the vocabulary through situational setting

The corpus of the teaching programme mainly consists of vocabulary, whereas it is through the teaching that further instruction should be provided. The attempt to provide learners with a class system for arranging characters continues through the provision of topic-centred selection of vocabulary. Polysyllabic words can now be introduced in the syllabus. In the first lessons on the teaching of Chinese characters, words that consistently adhere to the description provided in the introduction (point: **2**) should be chosen. It is true that not all characters can be classified and arranged consistently with the introductory description. Yet, exceptions will soon be discovered and discussed, while it is now more pedagogically effective to refer to consistent models.

Topics (or themes) need to catch the interest of the learner by referring to his/her living environment. The pedagogical reasons for adherence to everyday life environment also include making it possible for the learner to have immediate feedback about the things he/she learns. I would suggest choosing characters for words that belong to the learners' immediately surrounding environment first, so that a labelling teaching strategy could be prompted (E.g.: 学生, 学校, 学习, 同学 - 教师, 教室 - 课本, 本字, 课程 …). The lists should encourage relevant observations on the recurring characters in these polymorphemic words. These observations are usually extremely relevant to a student who has no familiarity at all with the Chinese language. Yet, they can work as a basis in the case of false beginner students of a language that has common features with the heritage language they speak. Teachers may then refer to the prior knowledge of the spoken Chinese dialect and probe into it with questions, such as "can you recall any other word that: a. sounds alike; b. has the same meaning". These two devices (topic-centred vocabulary and reference to spoken dialect) are aimed at extending the learner's vocabulary consistently with both his/her background knowledge and his/her interests, a priority in the teaching of adults.

5. Units

Once a list of topics has been selected, the arrangement of units has to be outlined. It is not possible to decide a priori the length of each unit, nor the time it may take to teach it in terms of class hours. The standard unit model would generally require six to eight hours of work. Much shorter unit models exist, but they may fail to achieve all the objectives which have been pointed out. Whereas longer unit models, if they really refer to unity of the object and unity of the subject, undermine a fundamental aspect of learning, i.e. motivation. Working too long at one topic can be boring and therefore less productive than arranging the work to be done into two or more units.[1]

5.a. Contents and structure in a unit

Introducing the topic. The opening of each unit consists in the introduction of the topic and in the oral description of a situational setting. The teacher may use Standard Chinese and refer to the language background knowledge of the learner: he/she has a chance to probe into the lexicon of the learner, as well as into the degree of interest that the chosen topic may evince. A short text is then introduced to the learners, first through the description of its contents, then through reading, and finally through questions, answers and discussion.

New words. Each unit should include a list of words relating to the selected topic. When possible, "connected" words should be introduced together. Connection again refers to the productivity of characters: therefore characters with the same components, and words composed with the same characters should be grouped when relevant consistency in terms of meaning or pronunciation can be evinced and illustrated to the learner. This strategy (集中识字) is widely adopted both in China and overseas, in the teaching of young pupils as well as in the teaching of adults. It should not be adopted as a basic method, but only as a useful part of a more articulated approach. The first group of new words is selected from the short text introduced in the unit. Additional new words will be introduced consecutively, after each step of the unit (i.e. after model sentences and after dramatization).

Model sentences. The unit should also include a list of sentences which exemplify how to use the new words. In the very beginning (i.e. in the first units) the sentences provided in written form in the teaching material for the student should be short and simple, and *pinyin* transliteration for correct pronunciation of the sentences should be included as well. These are the sentences learners have to learn and refer to.

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[1] BALBONI Paolo E. (1994) *op. cit.*, p. 66

The teacher, though, should have a richer selection of model sentences that he/she will read to the learners. At his/her own discretion deciding whether learners are ready to read and write these additional sentences or not.

      <u>Dramatization</u>. The following step of the unit consists in a dramatization of the situational setting described in the beginning of each unit. Like games, dramatization does not always suit the teaching of adult learners. Yet, it is necessary that learners see it as a useful way to gain a consistent feedback of what they are learning. Again reference to everyday life experience of the learners may turn out to be the more efficacious strategy. The patterns of dramatization change according to the topic and according to the features of the situational setting described. Dialogues, acting, and change of roles, in which oral skills of the learners are tested, take place first. But dramatization should also serve for testing reading and writing skills: therefore learners should be asked to provide and refer to written information during the dramatization.

      <u>Exercises</u>. Learners have to make the greatest efforts while the teaching takes place. If they have the chance to test their skills during classes, then useful questions may arise immediately, and all learners can profit from discussion. Different types of exercises to work at during classes should be adopted:

a. Gathering characters. Writing exercises are fundamental, yet, it can be expected that copying characters would not be considered as a useful investment of time by the learner, especially during class hours. I would therefore suggest that the teacher call on the learner's ability to discern among characters' meaning, for example by proposing a list of characters and asking him/her to rewrite them in groups consistently with their meaning. Learners may this way ponder the structure of characters and the productive connections among them.

b. Fill in the blanks. I would suggest to use this type of exercise after model sentences have been introduced and the meaning of characters made clear to the learner. Fill in the blank exercises should be based on the model sentences, and should also work towards the reinforcement of the vocabulary that would be used in the dramatization, afterwards.

c. Extending the list of new words. As the teaching takes place, new vocabulary is introduced. A useful exercise would therefore be to add this vocabulary to the list of words of each unit, arranged consistently with its meaning.

d. Extracting characters from texts: it is essential that learners be confronted with the task of referring to texts that circulate in their living environment (such as articles from the community newspaper, forms, documents and translations). For each piece of written information selected by the teacher as relevant to the topic, learners may be

asked to retrieve the characters they have studied, refer to their meanings in the words and sentences produced, and eventually (according to already acquired skills), re-use them in new sentences.

e. Open dialogue exercises: to be proposed after dramatization. The teacher provides learners with an incomplete text to work at: it is a dialogue in which only the words of one of the speakers are written down. Learners have to fill in with sentences for the other speaker consistently with the following replies.

Homework. It is suggested that learning activities take place during the teaching sessions. It is up to the learner to take advantage of time and occasions for practising what he/she learns once the lessons are over. There are additional types of exercises that the learner may be encouraged to do on his/her own. Homework should focus on the written material which has been read and worked at during classes. The teacher needs to find a way for the learner to maintain contacts with it in order to enhance memorization (copying, summarizing, retrieving specific information)

6. Tests

Testing is applicable at three different levels. 1) It is useful throughout the teaching activity to ascertain whether the learner achieves the objectives pointed out for each unit. 2) It should inform on retention of the already acquired knowledge and skills. 3) It certificates whether the task for which the teaching programme has been designed are fulfilled. Testing at the first and second levels may take place in class through exercises. As far as the third level is concerned, although the specific objective of the course is to teach 1,500 characters, such target aims at providing the learner with the tools for making his/her way in the everyday life use of the Chinese written language. It is therefore more important to test the learner's skimming ability (i.e. referring to global comprehension) and scanning ability (referring to his or her ability to derive a piece of information) in dealing with the written texts. This final test should follow the model of the work carried out on the texts of each unit during classes, but be based on a new text.

5.3.2.4.2 <u>A SAMPLE UNIT</u>

"Medical assistance"

[This topic is proposed as a unit that could be taught to learners who have already been introduced to the specific features of Chinese written language. It could be taught once other topics have been dealt with in more simple units.]

1) <u>Introducing the topic</u>

Some questions are suggested for probing into the learners' familiarity with the subject and their interest in the topic.

Questions should be addressed to the learners in Standard Chinese. Learners may reply either in Italian or in Mandarin if they have already mastered the spoken form fluently enough.

a) Questions:

       Have you registered for the Public Healthcare Service?

       Have you ever needed to call the Emergency Healthcare Service?

       Do you often go to the doctor?

       Do you remember any of the questions you are usually asked? (Have you had any serious disease? Does any one of your family suffer from heart disease? When did you last have a blood test? Do you have the results with you?)

       Do you spend much on medicaments and treatments?

It is useful to call for suggestions from learners.

What are they more interested in? What is the correlated vocabulary they have already mastered in the spoken form?

A set of key words can be elicited from discussion.

b) A text:

In case the chosen text is long, some selective listening activities may be suggested (for example asking the learners whether they can recognize any of the key words already elicited in the spoken form during discussion)

亲爱的叔叔，
　　你好！

　　最近意大利的气候变坏了。冬天到了。外面刮大风，冷得要命！
　　有人说这样的天气最好是呆在家里。每年冬天的时候很多人感冒。上个星期就轮到淋秀。有一天她提前回家。感觉不舒服，什么也不想吃。第二天她的胃口也没有了，浑身都在痛，所以妈妈送她去看病。

　　意大利实行全民公费医疗制。在意大利定居的华侨有病可携带医疗证去自己选定的家庭医生处看病。一般疾病家庭医生都立即诊断，立即开药方。如需去医院化验检查，家庭医生将会给患者一张预约单，患者持此去医院预约。急症可直接去医院。[1]
　　在意大利中医还不太普遍。淋秀说在中国的医院，有些医生会给患者开中药。米兰的中药店也不少，不过它们不属于全民公费医疗制。一般的医生只会开西药。

　　好象今年的流行性感冒不太严重。淋秀现在好了。她昨天带着病假条回公司上班。我只怕以后就轮到我了！
　　[. . .]

c) Reading and discussing the text:

　　- First reading (from the teacher)

　　- Questions and answers on the text content

　　- Loud reading after the teacher

2) New words

a) New words from the text

　　Whole body 浑身

　　Doctor 医生

　　Hospital 医院

　　Medical treatment 医疗

　　Traditional Chinese medicine 中医

　　Health service system 医疗制

　　Medical card 医疗证

　　Consult a doctor 看病

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[1] Text partly extracted from: YUAN Huaqing (1995) *Wo hui shuo yidaliyu*, Milano Vallardi Editore p. 165

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Disease 疾病

Medical certificate 病假条

Diagnose 诊断

Medicine 药

Prescription 药方

Chinese remedy 中药

Western remedy 西药

Medical examination (test) 化验

Check up 检查

Patient 患者[病人]

Request form for analysis or specialist health check 预约单

Emergency 急症

Flu 流行性感冒

Serious 严重

b) Key characters, constituent components, and derived words

These are notes and explanations that should help learners memorize new characters. It is suggested that the learner should always be encouraged to proceed from background knowledge towards extension of the lexicon afterwards.

医 → 医疗, 医院, 中医, 西医, 医生 [医师 doctor]

病 → 疒 ("illness component")[1]

    → 疗 cure, therapy [→ 理疗 physiotherapy, 化疗 chemotherapy]

    → 疾 disease [→ 疾病 illness, 疾苦 suffering]

    → 症 disease → 急症 serious disease, emergency [病症 disease]

药 → 中药, 药方 [药片 tablets, 药丸 pills]

3) Model sentences

Model sentences should first of all exemplify how to use the new words. Meanwhile additional new words related to the chosen topic shall be introduced as well (words in square brackets)

For topics introduced in the first units, pinyin *shall be provided as well*

---

[1] 病字旁

我想看医生[医师]. I would like to see a doctor

我看最好还是给你做些化验, 我马上给你填一张预约单. I think we had better give you a few tests, I will fill the request form rightaway

你的医疗证号码是什么？ What is your medical card number?

我该去进行[体格]检查. I have to undergo a physical check-up

我得要一张病假条. I need a medical certificate

我给你开一张药方. I will write a prescription for you

家庭医生给我开了这种药. My family doctor prescribed this medicament for me

你哪里[痛]?[你哪儿不舒服？] Where does it hurt?

你这儿[疼]吗？ Does it hurt here?

我浑身痛. I feel pain all over the body

今天早上我[昏倒]过. This morning I fainted

[护士]给我打了一针. The nurse gave me an injection

我先给您[量][体温]. I will check your temperature first

让我量一下你的[血压]. Let me take your blood pressure

我们给您[验血]. We will do the blood test for you

我对[抗生素][过敏]. I am allergic to antibiotics

[手术]以后我得住在医院多长时间？ How long will I need to be in the hospital after the operation?

她的病症并不严重. His case is not very serious

[病情][恶化]了. The patient's condition has worsened

您把这药吃了，过一会儿就不疼了. Take this medicine, in a little while you will no longer feel the pain

服用法. Direction for use

这药一天服三次，每次三片，饭后服用. This medicine has to be taken three times a day after meals, each time three pills

这药[空腹]吃. This medicine has to be taken on an empty stomach

没有药方可以买这药吗？ Could I buy this medicine without a prescription?

Additional sentences can be provided by the teacher. Additional sentences should follow the structure of the model sentences, hence enhance the redundancy effect which shall help learners in memorizing new words and their meanings.

a) New words from model sentences

Physical examination 体格检查

Pain 疼痛

Faint 昏倒

Nurse 护士

Injection 针

Temperature 体温

Blood pressure 血压

Blood test 验血

Allergic 过敏

Antibiotics 抗生素

Operation 手术

Patient conditions 病情

Worsen 恶化

Empty stomach 空腹

Exercise a.: Gathering characters

Refer to the vocabulary you have studied in this unit and write down the names that refer to:

- the staff in a hospital

- illnesses and diseases

- parts of the body

Exercise b.: Fill in the blank exercise based on the model sentences (a sample)

Select from the following the words to fill in the sentences:

[痛 / 血压 / 病症 / 体温 / 量]

- 我先要给你量 ＿＿＿

- 让我量一下你的＿＿＿

- 我让人给你＿＿＿一下体温

- 你哪里不舒服? 哪里＿＿＿?

- 你的＿＿＿并不严重

4) Dramatization

Dramatization takes place in two different phases. The teacher provides a description of the setting, and gives oral instructions to the learners. In the first phase instructions are simple and the acting may be short. Then new words are added to the list according to

the need of dramatization. The second phase, in which more students participate and additional written material and instruction is provided, takes place only afterwards.

E.g.:

Phase 1:

    Roles: general practitioner (family doctor), patient

    Place: GP studio

    Content: the patient describes his symptoms and asks for the doctor's advice. The doctor provides his/her diagnosis and writes a prescription.

    (The patient reads it and asks for further information about the remedy)

Exercise c: Extending the list of new words

Words should be suggested by learners themselves according to the lexicon required for dramatization

Additional new words:

    Fever 发烧

    Cough 咳嗽

    Sore throat 嗓子痛

    Headache 头痛

    Stomach ache 胃痛

    First aid 急救

    Vaccination 预防接种

    Contagious 传染

    Fracture 骨折

    Cut, wound 伤口

    Sedative 镇痛片 [...]

Phase 2:

    Roles: pharmacist, patient (customer)

    Place: pharmacy

    Written material: prescription, medicine direction for use

Exercise d: Extracting characters from texts

Adding words to the list of new words and gathering characters from written texts,

E.g.:

>   Direction for use from a medicine box leaflet
>
>   Medical certificate of a student

Exercise e.: Open dialogue exercises

Sentences for the dialogue proposed in this exercise are to be derived from dramatization

E.g.:

>   A. 你有什么不舒服？
>   B.
>   A. 什么时候开始痛的？
>   B.
>   A. 有没有咳嗽？你嗓子痛吗？
>   B.
>   A. 我要量一下你的体温
>   B.
>   A. 我看这并不严重，你感冒了。我给你开一种药
>   B.
>   A. 两天。每天三次，吃饭以后
>   B.
>   A. 不会。最好是你在家休息两天
>   B.
>   A. 没问题。你要的病假条我马上就会写好了
>   B.

5.3.3 FOLLOW UP MATERIAL

Adults who have acquired basic literacy skills must practise these skills in order to retain them. The editing of suitable follow up material is even more important in the case of Chinese written language, where practice is fundamental for the retention of reading and writing skills. Substantial difference though exists between the skills a learner need to refer to in order to read and those he/she needs in order to write. In

reading practice, learners may recognize characters; they may sometimes also get to recall the meaning and the pronunciation of words by referring to the sentence context[1] and to their background knowledge. Adults need a supply of printed material which they are motivated to read, yet reading alone would not be enough to retain the knowledge they have acquired. Reading material should always be followed by exercises where writing practice is required too. The editing of such exercises should also follow the criteria that take into account the learner's profile, meaning his/her age and his/her background knowledge, and the environment in which learning continues. Post literacy work has two aims: encouraging the retention and reinforcement of literacy skills, and fostering advancements in the acquisition of new vocabulary and better skills.

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[1] EVERSON, Michael E. (1998) "Word recognition among learners of Chinese as a foreign language: investigating the relationship between naming and knowing" in: *The Modern Language Journal*, vol.82, n. 2, p. 201

CONCLUSIONS

In my research I referred to the case of the teaching of Chinese written language to adult learners of Chinese origin in Italy, and I aimed at providing some advice to make it viable on the basis of the specific context features. The underlying hypothesis of my work is that some features of a teaching context relevantly affect the teaching and its effectiveness by prompting the choice of certain devices instead of others. This hypothesis engendered two research questions: a. what are the features of the teaching context I refer to as my study case? b. in what ways do the features of a teaching context affect the teaching of Chinese written language? In order to answer these two questions I articulated my work into two main sections.

In the first section I gathered the elements required for the description of the study case. I started my research with a presentation of the overseas Chinese community. Part of this presentation was based on the study of the existing literature about the history of migration movements over the past century, with a focus on the major trends of Chinese migration movements in the last decades of the twentieth century. I referred with particular interest to the history and features of the Chinese communities in Europe, and dwelled on relevant data for the description of the present Chinese community in Italy, which initially resulted from further comparison with the Chinese community in the UK. I took into account the similarities and differences of origin, both in terms of history and in terms of geographic provenance, and I referred to the similarities and differences of adjustment to the overseas destinations as determined by the different local response from the laws and the institutions, as well as from the people.

My presentation also included a study of the languages in use within the community intended to address the issue of the role of Chinese language, both in its spoken and written forms, in the wide net of relations connecting people of Chinese descent among them and to the rest of the world.

I then turned to literacy. It was first of all necessary to define the scope of my investigation in a field that has currently come to include research into a broad range of disciplines. I specifically addressed operational literacy as the competence in reading and writing, and literacy standards as the measure for such competence. I referred to the case of the Chinese script and to the description of its main features, which resulted from the comparison with alphabetic writing systems. As the final part of the first section, this description was aimed at providing the basis for a discussion of the way Chinese literacy acquisition and maintenance can be affected by the specific features of the Chinese writing system.

The second section of the research took the definition of teaching context as its framework. I discussed the impact of some of its features - namely learners and environment - on the teaching approach chosen, and I supported my discussion with evidence drawn from the analysis of four different teaching contexts. I chose four teaching contexts bearing some similarity with the study case, respectively the learners' background knowledge of the spoken language, the learners' age and some part of their literacy background, the environment in which the teaching takes place, and the functional purposes at which the teaching aims. Thereafter I provided a more articulated description of the study case itself, by describing it as a hypothetical teaching context.

The research hypothesis could then be reformulated in more specific terms: if the features of different teaching contexts do affect the teaching implemented in each context, then the features of the teaching context which constitutes my research study case, i.e. the teaching of adults of Chinese origin in Italy, should also bear on the choice of the teaching devices to be adopted for more efficacious results.

I discussed the research hypothesis by confronting the contexts, the features, and their impact on the teaching devices in use. I referred to the features of the study case teaching context drawn from my hypothetical description, and compared them with the features of the four teaching contexts previously investigated. I analyzed the way these features and their alternate combination in the four teaching contexts bear on the selection of teaching tools and devices, on the choice of the language used as the medium of instruction, on the selection of the teaching content, and on the progression according to which content is taught. And finally I drew inferences relevant to the study case teaching context. In the final part of the work I discussed these inferences in order to provide useful guidelines for the teaching of adult learners of Chinese origin in Italy.

In my work I confronted pragmatic as well as methodological difficulties, some of which I would now like to mention while suggesting directions for future research. A

first difficulty lay in the fact that I had little possibility of testing the newly formulated research hypothesis. The study case teaching context being hypothetical itself, it was only through discussion and comparison with the model of other existing teaching contexts that the hypothesis could be "tested". Only future development of the research topic is likely to meet the requirements for appropriate testing. Among these requirements is the actual formation of a study case teaching context to refer to. As I specified in the introduction and discussed in further detail throughout my work, the large majority of Italian-born Chinese have not reached their adulthood yet, which is the reason why I referred to the case of *adult* learners of Chinese origin in Italy only as a hypothetical study case for the time being.

Secondly, in my work I repeatedly referred to the background knowledge of the study case learners as a major reference for the outlining of a Chinese literacy teaching programme. Yet, the impact of a relevant part of this background knowledge on teaching is difficult to describe in detail, even when other contexts are referred to as comparison. I have assumed in fact that learning to speak Modern Standard Chinese is easier for speakers of a Chinese Southern dialect of the Wenzhou area than it might be for Western students who have never approached the study of any Chinese dialect before. This assumption has solid grounds, and some evidence can be derived, for example, from the teaching experiences of Chinese language teachers who have worked with both native speakers of European languages and native speakers of Cantonese. But further research in the field of linguistics is needed for focusing on the similarities and differences between at least one of the dialects of the Wenzhou area and Modern Standard Chinese, in order to specify to what extent and in what ways the shift from one dialect to the other could be made straightforward.

The third difficulty relates to the Chinese vocabulary in use by learners of the second generation. Vocabulary mirrors society and changes with it. As one of the basic sources to draw from for devising an appropriate teaching programme it needs further investigation and continual updating. A useful reference framework for this could be provided by research in the field of sociolinguistics, with the study of variations in the use of spoken and written Chinese languages along with the changes of the contexts in which these languages are being used. Again future research, i.e. research in a time where the relevant circumstances and patterns to be investigated have taken shape and can therefore be studied more accurately, could largely contribute by deriving more factual evidence to fill in the gaps left by hypothesis and related assumptions.

Besides these difficulties and the research limits they entailed, one point needs to be made clear: my work did not get as far as outlining a teaching method, nor aimed at this endeavour. Through my study I have in fact gathered evidence of the fact that such an achievement would imply imposing a restricted cliché, which is not advisable as long as the study case cannot be referred to in factual terms. This thesis then presents itself as a probe into a new field of application, and therefore it needs to provide models as flexible as possible for the sake of further experimentation and gathering of additional data.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1:

Questionnaire for primary school language teachers in China

Notes about the collected sample:

Total number of questionnaires collected: 54

Specifications:

1. Origin

Experimental Primary School of Beijing Normal University: 2 (grades: 1st; 2nd)

Puxie shi Primary school of Wenzhou: 2 (grades: 1st)

Mochi Primary school of Wenzhou: 12 (grades: 3 x 1st; 2nd; 3 x 3rd; 2 x 4th; 2 x 5th; 6th)

Experimental Primary school of Yueqing: 8 (grades: 3x 1st; 2 x 2nd; 2 x 3rd; 4th)

Seventh Primary School of Yueqing: 2 (grades: 1st; 2nd)

Primary school attached to the Normal School of Yueqing (Yueqing shifan fushu xiaoxue): 4 (grades: 2 x 1st; 2 x 2nd)

First Primary school of Baixiang: 7 (grades: 4 x 1st; 3 x 2nd)

Xueyuan Rd. Primary school of Wenzhou: 12 (grades: 1st to 6th - 2 x each grade -)

Guanchang Rd. Primary school of Wenzhou: 5 (grades: 1st to 5th - 1 x each grade -)

2. Grades

First grade: 19 (35.1%)

Second grade: 13 (24 %)

Third grade: 8 (14.8 %)

Fourth grade: 6 (11.1 %)

Fifth grade: 5 (9.2 %)

Sixth grade: 3 (5.5 %)

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温州，1999年4月18日

本人在伦敦大学亚非学院从事博士研究。我正在从事有关英国意大利华裔成人和儿童汉语学习的研究。
以下列出和汉字教学有关的一些问题。请您按照你的经历回答。

一。教学环境和学生

关于课程：
1.1学校名字和地址
1.2课程的水平

关于学生：
1.3一共几个学生？
1.4学生平均的年龄？

关于识字：
1.5几个学生开始上课程以前已经会用（读、写）汉字？
       a. 他们认识（会读、写）几个汉字？
       b. 这些汉字的意义和用法也清楚吗？
1.6几个学生会用拉丁字母？

关于语言：
1.7学生什么时候开始学习普通话？
1.8普通话和学生使用的方言差别大不大？
       a. 哪种的差别？
       1)发音不一样
       2)词义不一样
       3)词汇不一样
       4)别的...
1.9他们按照什么方法学习普通话？
1.10对老师来说，为了学习普通话，最有用的工具和教材是什么？

二。语文教学大纲于目的

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2.1课程需要几个学期？

2.2每个学期几个月？（几个小时？）

2.3课程最重要的要求是什么？

2.4按照课程的要求学生应该学习（会读、写、用和认识它们的意义）几个汉字？

2.5每个课时老师教几个生字？

2.6老师按照什么大纲（还是什么常用字表）挑选生字？

2.7老师教学生简体字还是教他们繁体字？为什么？

三。汉字教法

3.1对老师来说为了帮助学生记忆汉字的样子和意义，拼音有什么用？

3.2老师先教哪一些汉字？为什么？

例如：

    a. 因为是最常用的

    b. 因为是最简单的

    c. 先教独体字以后教合体字

    别的...（老师觉得还有别的重要判断的标准请别省略）

3.3以后，老师（或者教材）按照什么标准安排每次课的词汇？

例如：

    a. 按照题目（例如：在学校⇒词汇：学生、老师、书、笔、黑板、墨水、等。）

    b. 按照汉字的结构

    c. 按照六书的排列

    别的...

3.4按照老师的看法学习偏旁部首对识字的进步有什么用？

3.5掌握偏旁部首的音、形、义，对于理解汉字有什么用？

3.6对您来说为了帮助学生记忆新学的汉字应该用什么方法？

例如：

    a. 让学生看图画

    b. 使用卡片

    c. 培养抄写

    d. 朗读

    e. 练习听写

    别的...

3.7对您来说让学生学习相象的汉字有好处吗？为什么？

3.8您觉得让学生学习同音的汉字有没有好处？为什么？

四。语文教材

4.1您正在用什么课本？「题目-编者-出版（地方\年）」

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4.2您对这本课本满意不满意？为什么？

五。老师 的经验于自己的影响

5.1除了这种课程以外，您已经当过语文老师吗？
        a. 在什么地方？
        b. 多长时间？
        c. 教什么样的学生?什么水平？
        d. 和现在的情况有什么大的差别？
5.2对老师来说，学 汉字最有用的方法是什么？
5.3老师认为教小学生识字和教成人识字应该用哪一些不一样的方法？
        a. 两个不一样的情况还需要哪一些不同的工具？

六。老师

6.1老师姓名
6.2老师联系电话号码

七。意见

7.1老师还有其他更好的建议的话，请你随便写

谢谢您的合作！

APPENDIX 2:

Questionnaire for teachers of the Chinese language to western adults

Notes about the collected sample

Total number of questionnaires collected: 13

Specifications:

1. Origin

a.   Great Britain   .

London:

> SOAS: 2
>
> SOAS Language Centre: 2
>
> Guildhall University: 1

b.   Italy

Venice and Treviso:

> Università Ca' Foscari: 4

Rome:

> Università La Sapienza: 2

Bologna:

> Facoltà di Lettere e filosofia:1
>
> Facoltà di Lingue: 1

Sabina Zocchi

East Asia Department

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INTRODUCTORY DETAILS:

I am a postgraduate student at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) and I am working at research on Chinese language teaching methodologies.

Within the scope of my research is a survey on the different methods and devices adopted in the teaching of Chinese characters to different learners in different teaching contexts. I am therefore getting in touch with teachers in order to collect information about their own teaching experiences.

Questionnaires focus on the following topics:

1. Teaching context and learners

2. Syllabus (programme) and aims of the teaching course

3. Methodologies and teaching materials

4. Teacher: training and experience

5. Comments: success and difficulties

GUIDELINES:

I would be grateful if you could write your answers on a separate sheet of paper indicating the question reference numbers as listed in the questionnaire (1.1, 1.2, ... 5.4)

Please consider the whole questionnaire as referring to a single course. In case you teach more than one beginner class, it would be most helpful if you could answer the full set of questions for each course experience.

Please feel free to give any additional information which you consider relevant in order to answer the questions.

You can answer in English or in Chinese.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. Teaching context and learners

1.1 Could you please provide the following information:

      1.1.a Your name

      1.1.b Name and address of the school in which you are teaching

1.1 c Name of the course (referring to the level)

1.2 How many students attend the course?

1.3 What is the average age of pupils in the class?

1.4 How many of them speak Mandarin?

1.5 How many of them speak a Chinese dialect?

1.6 How many of them know Latin letters?

1.7 How many of them are already familiar with Chinese characters?

1.8 What language do you use as the medium of instruction during classes?

2. Syllabus (programme) and aims of the teaching course

2.1 How long does the course last?

2.2 How many hours per week?

2.3 What are the general objectives of the course?

2.4 How many characters do beginner students have to learn during the whole course? (Does it mean that they have to be able to read them, know their meaning and write all of them?)

2.5 How many new characters are introduced during each lesson? (It would be most useful if you could give some information about the pace at which students have to learn new characters)

2.6 Is there a list of frequently used characters on which the language course is based? (If possible give reference details and information about where this list could be found)

2.7 Do you mainly refer to the textbook for the choice of characters you teach to students? (Which textbook?)

2.8 Do you teach simplified characters or full-form characters? Why? (In case your teaching includes both of them, please specify in which order, and at what stage does the shift from one style to the other take place)

2.9 How much time is devoted to reading in class?

2.10 How much time is devoted to writing in class?

3. Methodologies and teaching materials for literacy classes

3.1 Do you teach *pinyin* first? Why?

3.2 Are characters introduced and taught from the very beginning?

3.3 According to which criteria do you select characters to be taught first? (The selection may once again be based on the textbook. If this were the case, refer to the criteria adopted in the textbook.)

> 3.3.a Do you introduce simple-structure characters (with a small number of strokes) first? Why?
>
> 3.3.b Do you introduce characters selected from everyday-life vocabulary first? Why?
>
> 3.3.c Do you introduce characters with a pictographic origin first? Why?
>
> 3.3.d Others...

3.4 In which order would you teach the following ten characters (you may also group them into pairs or in any size subgroups)? According to which criteria?

是　　人　　他　　个　　里　　子　　说　　出　　好　　家

3.5 How is the progression of characters to be taught afterwards organized? (In case the programme is based on the textbook, please refer to the textbook contents.)

3.5.a Do you teach characters pertaining to the same context (subject/theme) together? (ex. "school theme"→ student, teacher, book, pen, blackboard, ink...)

3.5.b Do you teach characters with similar components together?

3.5.c Do you introduce and explain characters according to the six principles' classification (象形字-指事字-会意字-形声字...)?

3.5.d Others...

3.6 Do you teach radicals?

If yes:

3.6.a. At what stage do you teach radicals?

3.6.b. What is the main reason for teaching radicals?

3.6.b(1) Are radicals taught in order to convey some additional information on characters meaning?

3.6.b(2) Are radicals taught in order to instruct pupils on the way to use dictionaries?

3.7 What kind of devices are used to help students to memorize characters?

3.7.a Mnemonics (associations between character shape and character meaning)

3.7.b Proverbs

3.7.c Copying and rewriting

3.7.d Reading aloud

3.7.e Dictation

3.7.f Flash-cards

3.7.g Games

3.7.h References to the original shape and meaning of characters

3.7.i Others...

3.8 Do you often draw pupils' attention to characters having a similar shape, but different meanings and different pronunciations? Why?

4. Teacher: training and experience

4.1 Did you teach Chinese before?

If yes could you please inform about the teaching context according to the following directions:

4.1.a In which country?

4.1.b Who were the learners? (native speakers, overseas Chinese, or foreigners?) (adults or children?)

4.1.c What level?

4.1.d What were the main differences with the present teaching experience?

        4.1.d (1) Different textbook (any information about the textbook would be helpful)

        4.1.d (2) Different language as the medium of instruction

        4.1.d (3) Different aims of the course programme

        4.1.d (4) Different teaching devices (could you give some examples?)

        4.1.d (5) Different disposal of time (more / less hours per week)

        4.1.d.(6) Others...

5. Comments: success and difficulties

5.1 What are the main difficulties that students usually encounter while learning Chinese characters? (could you draw some examples from their most frequent mistakes?)

5.2 How do you promote independent learning? At what stage?

5.3 According to your teaching experience, what are the most effective devices and strategies adopted to teach Chinese writing in the context of Chinese as a second language?

5.4 In case you teach or you have taught to Chinese language speakers, do you think that their prior knowledge of the spoken language is a major advantage to their literacy education? Why?

Thank you so much for your precious help and your time.

APPENDIX 3:

Questionnaire for Chinese language teachers appointed by the Chinese community centres and associations (Great Britain)

Notes about the collected sample:

Total number of questionnaires collected: 2

Specifications:

1. Origin

       LONDON:

       Qinghua Chinese Language School

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INTRODUCTORY DETAILS:

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1. Teaching context and learners

2. Syllabus (programme) and aims of the teaching course

3. Methodologies and teaching materials

4. Teacher: training and experience

5. Comments: success and difficulties

GUIDELINES:

I would be grateful if you could write your answers on a separate sheet of paper indicating the question reference numbers as listed in the questionnaire (1.1, 1.2, ... 5.3)

Please consider the whole questionnaire as referring to a single course. In case you teach more than one class it would be most helpful if you could answer the full set of questions for each course experience.

Please feel free to give any additional information which you consider relevant in order to answer the questions.

You can answer in English or in Chinese.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. Teaching context and learners

1.1 Could you please provide the following information:

       1.1.a Name and address of the school in which you are teaching

       1.1.b Name of the course (with indication of the level)

1.2 How many students attend the course?

1.3 What is the average age of pupils in the class?

1.4 How many of them speak Mandarin?

1.5 How many of them speak a Chinese dialect?

1.6 How many of them know Latin letters?

1.7 How many of them already have begun to study written characters?

1.8 What language is used as the medium of instruction during classes?

2. Syllabus (programme) and aims of the teaching course

2.1 How long does the course last?

2.2 How many hours per week?

2.3 What are the general objectives of the course?

2.4 How many characters do students have to learn during the whole course? (Does it mean that they have to be able to read, know the meaning and write all of them?)

2.5 How many new characters are introduced during each lesson? (It would be most useful if you could give some information about how frequently new characters are learned by pupils)

2.6 Is there a list of frequently used characters on which literacy classes are based? (If possible, give reference details and information about where this list could be found)

2.7 Do you mainly refer to the textbook for the choice of characters you teach to pupils? (Would you please inform about the title, authors or editors, and publishing house of the textbook)

2.8 Do you teach simplified characters or full-form characters? Why? (In case your teaching includes both of them, please specify in which order, and at what stage does the shift from one style to the other take place)

2.9 How much time is devoted to reading in class?

2.10 How much time is devoted to writing in class?

3. Methodologies and teaching materials for literacy classes

3.1 Do you teach *pinyin* first? Why?

3.2 Are characters introduced and taught from the very beginning?

3.3 According to which criteria do you select characters to be taught first? (The selection may once again be based on the textbook. If this were the case, refer to the criteria adopted in the textbook.)

    3.3.a Do you introduce simple-structure characters (with a small number of strokes) first? Why?

    3.3.b Do you introduce characters selected from everyday-life vocabulary first? Why?

    3.3.c Do you introduce characters with a pictographic origin (象形字) first? Why?

    3.3.d Others...

3.4 In which order would you teach the following ten characters (you may also group them into pairs or in any size subgroups)? According to which criteria?

是　　人　　他　　个　　里　　子　　说　　出　　好　　家

3.5 How is the progression of characters to be taught afterwards organized? (In case the programme is based on the textbook, please refer to the textbook contents.)

    3.5.a Do you teach characters pertaining to the same context (subject/theme) together? (ex. "school theme"→ student, teacher, book, pen, blackboard, ink...)

    3.5.b Do you teach characters with similar components together?

    3.5.c Do you teach characters with similar structure (独体字 - 合体字；左右结构 - 上下结构；...) together?

    3.5.d Do you introduce and explain characters according to the six principles' classification (象形字 - 指事字 - 会意字 - 形声字...)?

    3.5.e Others...

3.6 Do you teach radicals (偏旁部首)?

If yes:

    3.6.a At what stage do you teach radicals to your pupils?

    3.6.b What is the main reason for teaching radicals?

        3.6.b(1) Are radicals taught in order to convey some additional information on characters meaning?

        3.6.b(2) Are radicals taught in order to instruct pupils in the way to use dictionaries?

3.7 What kind of devices are used to help pupils to memorize characters?

    3.7 a Mnemonics (associations between character shape and character meaning)

    3.7.b Proverbs

    3.7.c Drawings and images

    3.7.d Copying and rewriting

    3.7.e Reading aloud

    3.7.f Dictation

    3.7.g Flash-cards

    3.7.h Games

    3.7.i Others...

3.8 Do you often draw pupils' attention to characters having a similar shape, but different meanings and different pronunciations? Why?

4. Teacher: training and experience

4.1 Did you teach Chinese before?

If yes could you please inform about the teaching context according to the following directions:

    4.1.a In which country?

4.1.b Who were the learners? (native speakers, overseas Chinese, or foreigners?) (adults or children?)

4.1.c What level?

4.1.d What were the main differences with the present teaching experience?

      4.1.d (1) Different textbook (any information about the textbook would be helpful)

      4.1.d (2) Different language as the medium of instruction

      4.1.d (3) Different aims of the course programme

      4.1.d (4) Different teaching devices (could you give some examples?)

      4.1.d (5) Different disposal of time (more / less hours per week)

5. Comments: success and difficulties

5.1 In case you teach or you have taught to Chinese language speakers, do you think that their prior knowledge of the spoken language is a major advantage to their literacy education? Why?

5.2 Do you believe that there is any special device for teaching Chinese writing which takes into account pupils' prior knowledge of the spoken language? What sort of devices?

5.3 According to your own experience, what are the main difficulties that pupils usually encounter during literacy classes? (could you draw some examples from their most frequent mistakes?)

      5.3.a Mixing up radicals

      5.3.b 形近而误

      5.3.c 音近而误

      5.3.d 同音而误

      5.3.e Other types …

Thank you so much for your precious help and your time.

If you feel like writing your name, address (or telephone number / e-mail) next to the answers you gave, it would help me to get in touch with you in case I needed further comments or insights into teaching Chinese characters experience. Such private information, however, would remain confidential.

APPENDIX 3.a:

Questionnaire for Chinese language teachers appointed by the Chinese community centres and associations (Italy)

Notes about the collected sample

Total number of questionnaires collected: 7

Specifications:

1. Origin

       MILAN (米兰华人中文班): 4

       ROME (中文学校): 2

       PRATO Summer course:1

       BOLOGNA: 2

Sabina Zocchi (阳豆)
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本人在伦敦大学亚非学院从事博士研究。她正在从事有关对英国和意大利华裔汉字教学的研究。
以下放着和汉字教学有关的一些问题。请你按照你的经历回答。

一．教学环境和学生
关于课程：
1.1 学校名字和地址
1.2 课程的水平

关于学生：
1.3 一共几个学生？
1.4 学生平均的年龄是什么？
1.5 他们会不会说普通话？（几个学生会？）
1.6 他们会不会说另外的一个方言？（几个学生？）

关于识字：
1.7 几个学生会用拉丁字母？
1.8 几个学生开始上课程以前已经会用（读、写）汉字？

关于语言：
1.9 你讲学生的时候用什么语言？

二．语言教学大纲于目的

2.1 课程需要几个学期？
2.2 每个星期几个小时？
2.3 课程最重要的要求是什么？
2.4 按照课程的要求学生要学（会读、写、用和认识它们的意义）几个汉字？
2.5 每个课时老师讲几个生字？
2.6 老师按照什么大纲（还是什么常用字表）挑选生字？
2.7 老师按照课本的指示先讲那些汉字吗？
2.8 你教学生简化汉字吗？ 为什么？

三。汉字学教法

3.1 你教不教拼音？为什么？

3.2 学生应该从开始学习汉字吗？

3.3 你先教哪一些汉字？为什么？（最常用的；最简单的；先独体字以后合体字...)

3.4 对你来说按照什么次序可以教学生下边的十个汉字？为什么？

   是　人　他　个　里　子　说　出　好　家

3.5 以后，你怎么安排每次课的词汇？

例如：

   3.5.a 按照题目（例如：在学校⇒词汇：学生、老师、墨水、黑板、等）

   3.5.b 按照汉字的结构

   3.5.c 按照六书的排列(象形字、指事字、会意字、形声字......)

3.6 你觉得学习偏旁部首对识字的进步有用吗？为什么？

   3.6.a 掌握偏旁部首的音、形、义，对于理解汉字有什么用？

3.7 按照你的看法怎么会帮助学生记忆新学的汉字？

例如：

   3.7.a 用成语

   3.7.b 用图画

   3.7.c 用卡片

   3.7.d 通过抄写

   3.7.e 通过朗读

   3.7.f 通过听写

   3.7.g 别的......

3.8 你觉得让学生学习相象的汉字有好处吗？为什么？

3.9 你觉得让学生学习同音的汉字有没有好处？为什么？

四。老师的经验和影响

4.1 除了这次课程以外，你一经当过语文老师吗？（哪儿?多长时间？教什么样的学生?什么水平？）（和现在的情况有什么大的差别？）

4.2 对你来说，学汉字最有用的方法是什么？

4.3 学习汉字的时候会说汉语的学生有什么好处？

谢谢你的合作！

APPENDIX 4:

Questionnaire for Feng ze

Feng ze (Luca) is an adult student of Chinese origin who was born and currently lives in Italy.

Although he cannot be taken as fully representative for the study case, the answers he gave in the questionnaire may provide a better insight into the type of needs and requirements to be taken into account when referring to the study case

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. About the Chinese dialect as part of your background knowledge:

      a. Which dialect do you speak?

I speak the Wenzhou dialect.

      b. Do you speak it fluently? Do you feel there is any major gap to be filled?

I speak it fluently. The major gap relates to the vocabulary. I would find it difficult to speak about philosophy, although I can deal quite well with international politics. The same kind of gap also characterizes my knowledge of Mandarin.

      c. How did you learn the dialect?

I have to admit that it is mainly thanks to my parents that I can speak the dialect. They decided to speak only the dialect at home. It was a matter of principle to them, a principle that cost them many sacrifices. I am sure that if only they did allow Italian to be spoken at home, their Italian would be much better. But I also believe that because of that it was much easier to learn Mandarin for me.

(I was sent to China when I was 4 months and I was brought back after more than one year. In China I lived with my grandmother (the mother of my dad and with some baomu *(nannies). I must have said my very first words in dialect. [from now on when I refer to dialect with no further definitions I refer to the Wenzhou dialect]*

      d. Would you say that learning and using the Italian language interfered with maintaining the background knowledge of the dialect?

For me it is like referring to two separate worlds. I would speak Italian in the kindergarten as during my first two years of primary school attendance. Once at home I would switch back to the dialect. As a consequence I believe that learning Italian had no great influence on my knowledge of the dialect. Then, I changed school, and since

my third year of primary school education I attended an International school where the teaching took place according to the British system.

      e. Do you speak or understand any other dialect spoken in the Wenzhou area?

My grand parents are from Qingtian. Qingtian is about 50 km from Wenzhou. Although it is not very far, I often have problems to understand what my grand father says. The dialect of Wenzhenmi (which is also quite close to Wenzhou) seems much easier to understand.

One of the main features of Wenzhou is that it used to be a somehow isolated area with its neighbouring villages. The railway was only built during the nineties. The airport was already there, but it was built only a few years before. Therefore Wenzhou people did not have a strong habit to move away (sic!)

2. On understanding Putonghua

      a. When did you go to China and how long were you there for?

These are the dates of my visits to China:

1992: Two weeks. The first time I went to china I was in Hong Kong, Beijing and Hangzhou. The main reason I went there for was to see a Chinese doctor for a sinusitis I had.

1994: one month. Vacation with my sister with stops in Beijing, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Wenzhou. Then I met my parents in Hong Kong.

1996: two months. At Renmin Daxue *in Beijing, where I attended two language courses. For the first course I was studying with a group of Hong Kong students. They could write already, therefore lessons were mainly focused on the spoken language. The few characters I learned were the ones I studied on my own.*

During the second month I was in a class with students with different language levels. The majority of them were from New Zeland or Korea. I was terribly bored. As a matter of fact I have to say that I never succeeded in finding a class that suited my case! If the approach were with my written language level, then lessons would need to start with ni hao! *If alternatively I entered a class suiting my spoken language level, I would not be able to catch up and fill the gap with the written language.*

      b. do you understand Mandarin? (Did you understand it before going to Beijing?)

Yes, I already spoke Mandarin before going to Beijing. I started learning it when I was 8 or 9 year old. The teachers who were working at the University of Milan used to live

with us. On suggestion of my parents, they only spoke Mandarin to us, even if in the beginning my sister and I did not understand. Everything worked quite well though, since in three months we ended up speaking some Mandarin. The Wangs stayed with us 2 years. One year after they left, Prof. Shen arrived and stayed over one year. Then another teacher came to stay with us with her husband and her son. They also stayed for one year. And the last teacher was Prof. Xu, from Ren Da, who was with us for 3 years.

3. About your knowledge of Chinese written language

a. Have you ever had any chances to study Chinese written language? Where and when?

(e.g.: did you attend Sunday school language and culture classes in Milan?)

* If you wish to add details and further information about the way you approached the study of the Chinese language please feel free to do so.

Besides the course I attended in Beijing in 1996, when I reached the unsatisfactory amount of 5-600 characters which I almost totally forgot, I have always learned characters at random with different teachers.

I never really studied the written language. It has always been a spontaneous system of learning (by which I mean that I used to ask whenever I did not know)

*As far as the methods, the one that I would trust more is the full immersion.

4. About your motivation and the reason why you now want to learn Mandarin

a. When did you decide you wanted to learn Mandarin?

b. Are you more interested in learning the written or the spoken language? Why?

c. According to you the fact that you already know a Chinese dialect is of any help for you in the study of Mandarin? (again if you want to ponder on the similarities and differences between dialect and Mandarin, please feel free to do so)

d. How do you think you will use Mandarin after you learn to write it?

Knowing Mandarin would help me to understand Chinese culture better through the reading of primary sources. I have always been of the opinion that languages are the key for entering a culture.

Moreover, it would help me in the case I decided to work in China.

I would also be able to read the newspapers, and I would no longer feel not at ease when checking a menu in a Chinese restaurant.

Moreover, I do believe that my spoken Chinese really needs to be supported by at least a basic knowledge of the Chinese written language.

e. Do you think you would use more the written or the spoken language?

No doubts I would use the spoken language more than the written one. I could actually survive with no knowledge of the written language, and, since I am not an intellectual, I do not feel the urge to be proficient in the written language. However, as I mentioned already, I would like to learn to read and write Chinese.

5. Main difficulties

a. According to you, what are the major problems you would have to face in studying the written language? (E. g.: time disposal)

To learn Chinese characters is for sure the main difficulty. Seeing a character gives you no clue about how to pronounce it. It is very demanding in terms of time, but I think you already know this. Unfortunately it is very easy to forget recently learned characters, and it is necessary to go back and review them as often as possible. This is also the reason why the Chinese Proficiency test needs to be sit every few years.

b. What would you consider to be the best fitting medium of instruction? (Italian, Mandarin, or the dialect... or English maybe?)

As I told you, I believe the full-immersion method to be the best way to learn a language. I also think that it is important that the teacher is a fluent speaker of the student mother tongue, so that he or she can help the learner understand how the target language works. This is mainly the case for the explanation of grammar concepts such as the Chinese measure words (classifiers).

In case I had to write down a list of the languages to which I would refer for learning Chinese, the list would be:

1.Mandarin

2.Wenzhou dialect

3.English

4.Italian

c. On the basis of your personal experience, would you consider it important in learning to focus on a specific context vocabulary?

Yes, I think that referring to a specific context is very useful, and I think this device is used in quite a number of textbooks. I think it helps focusing on the aims why you are actually learning the language, keeping your motivation alive and strong. [...] Among the texts I have had the chance to read, I remember a text on Chinese traditions related to the celebration of the new year. Our teacher gave it to us just before Chinese new year: it made sense then to read it then!

APPENDIX 5

List of articles from Chinese newspapers in Italy

From: *Ouhua Shibao*, number 155 (18 July 2000)

    p. 17: "意大利人眼中的中国人"

From: *Ouhua Shibao*, number 157 (25 July 2000)

    p. 1: "移民指标中右派全否决政府无奈就反拍板叫停"

    p. 2: "意大利前总理贝鲁斯科尼向外界透露他曾罹患癌症"

From: *Ouhua Shibao*, number 161 (29 August 2000)

    p. 8: "意威尼斯地区华侨总会换届大会成功闭幕"

    p. 9: "旅意花侨教育事业的希望"

From: *Ouhua Shibao*, number 172 (6 October 2000)

    p. 9: "米兰文成同乡会举办大型庆祝活动"

From: *Xinhua Shibao*, number 132 (28 July 2000)

    p. 2: "维勒特洛尼：贝鲁斯科尼不能做总理"

From: *Xinhua Shibao*, number 152 (10 October 2000)

    p. 1: "罗马华侨华人举行盛大庆祝活动"

From: *Huaqiao Tongxun* (19 July 2000)

    p. 9: "侨务知识问答"

From: *Tongxiang Bao* (20 July 2000)

    p. 2: "热烈祝贺米兰华人商贸联合总会的成立"

From: *Zhongyi Bao* number 33 (June 2000)

    p. 1: "意大利政府有关部门将加强对工厂的检查"

    p. 15: " San Donnino青年中心的意大利语课程"

TABLES

Table I Chinese presence in Italy (31-12-1997)[1]

	M+W	%	MEN	WOMEN	%MEN	%WOMEN
AOSTA	64	0.2	38	26	0.2	0.2
VALLE D'AOSTA	64	0.2	38	26	0.2	0.2
ALESSANDRIA	141	0.4	71	70	0.3	0.4
ASTI	59	0.2	34	25	0.2	0.2
BIELLA	112	0.3	70	42	0.3	0.3
CUNEO	147	0.4	87	60	0.4	0.4
NOVARA	160	0.4	83	77	0.4	0.5
TURIN	1,803	4.8	1,043	760	4.9	4.6
VERBANIA	71	0.2	41	30	0.2	0.2
VERCELLI	104	0.3	55	49	0.3	0.3
PIEDMONT	2,597	6.9	1,484	1,113	6.9	6.8
BERGAMO	255	0.7	143	112	0.7	0.7
BRESCIA	888	2.3	497	391	2.3	2.4
COMO	228	0.6	129	99	0.6	0.6
CREMONA	123	0.3	66	57	0.3	0.3
LECCO	22	0.1	14	8	0.1	0.0
LODI	55	0.1	30	25	0.1	0.2
MANTOVA	283	0.7	155	128	0.7	0.8
MILAN	7,182	19.0	4,113	3,069	19.2	18.7
PAVIA	153	0.4	96	57	0.4	0.3
SONDRIO	29	0.1	16	13	0.1	0.1
VARESE	595	1.6	353	242	1.6	1.5
LOMBARDY	9,813	25.9	5,612	4,201	26.2	25.6
GENOVA	535	1.4	339	196	1.6	1.2
IMPERIA	104	0.3	56	48	0.3	0.3
LA SPEZIA	179	0.5	84	95	0.4	0.6
SAVONA	92	0.2	55	37	0.3	0.2
LIGURIA	910	2.4	534	376	2.5	2.3
BOLZANO	150	0.4	82	68	0.4	0.4
TRENTO	111	0.3	63	48	0.3	0.3
TRENTINO A. A.	261	0.7	145	116	0.7	0.7
BELLUNO	67	0.2	39	28	0.2	0.2
PADOVA	640	1.7	346	294	1.6	1.8
ROVIGO	138	0.4	74	64	0.3	0.4
TREVISO	315	0.8	173	142	0.8	0.9
VENICE	382	1.0	201	181	0.9	1.1
VERONA	493	1.3	290	203	1.4	1.2
VICENZA	531	1.4	343	188	1.6	1.1
VENETO	2,566	6.8	1,466	1,100	6.8	6.7
GORIZIA	59	0.2	32	27	0.1	0.2
PORDENONE	132	0.3	73	59	0.3	0.4
TRIESTE	267	0.7	174	93	0.8	0.6

[1] Source: *Data on Residence Permits*, Ministry of the Interior. Provided by the Documentation Center of Caritas

UDINE	157	0.4	88	69	0.4	0.4
FRIULI V. G.	615	1.6	367	248	1.7	1.5
BOLOGNA	1,087	2.9	583	504	2.7	3.1
FERRARA	175	0.5	104	71	0.5	0.4
FORLI'	297	0.8	179	118	0.8	0.7
MODENA	459	1.2	249	210	1.2	1.3
PARMA	299	0.8	167	132	0.8	0.8
PIACENZA	49	0.1	28	21	0.1	0.1
RAVENNA	122	0.3	65	57	0.3	0.3
REGGIO EMILIA	699	1.8	382	317	1.8	1.9
RIMINI	204	0.5	104	100	0.5	0.6
EMILIA ROMAGNA	3,391	9.0	1,861	1,530	8.7	9.3
NORTH	20,217	53.4	11,507	8,710	53.7	53.0
AREZZO	107	0.3	53	54	0.2	0.3
FLORENCE	5,511	14.6	3,208	2,303	15.0	14.0
GROSSETO	78	0.2	41	37	0.2	0.2
LIVORNO	96	0.3	47	49	0.2	0.3
LUCCA	109	0.3	62	47	0.3	0.3
MASSA CARRARA	63	0.2	39	24	0.2	0.1
PISA	146	0.4	84	62	0.4	0.4
PISTOIA	172	0.5	81	91	0.4	0.6
PRATO	2,417	6.4	1,302	1,115	6.1	6.8
SIENA	61	0.2	33	28	0.2	0.2
TUSCANY	8,760	23.2	4,950	3,810	23.1	23.2
PERUGIA	411	1.1	219	192	1.0	1.2
TERNI	78	0.2	42	36	0.2	0.2
UMBRIA	489	1.3	261	228	1.2	1.4
ANCONA	162	0.4	84	78	0.4	0.5
ASCOLI PICENO	120	0.3	57	63	0.3	0.4
MACERATA	81	0.2	46	35	0.2	0.2
PESARO	91	0.2	57	34	0.3	0.2
MARCHE	454	1.2	244	210	1.1	1.3
FROSINONE	37	0.1	20	17	0.1	0.1
LATINA	62	0.2	30	32	0.1	0.2
RIETI	8	0.0	2	6	0.0	0.0
ROME	4,635	12.2	2,540	2,095	11.9	12.8
VITERBO	32	0.1	18	14	0.1	0.1
LAZIO	4,774	12.6	2,610	2,164	12.2	13.2
CHIETI	28	0.1	14	14	0.1	0.1
L'AQUILA	56	0.1	32	24	0.1	0.1
PESCARA	177	0.5	99	78	0.5	0.5
TERAMO	207	0.5	112	95	0.5	0.6
ABRUZZI	468	1.2	257	211	1.2	1.3
CENTER	14,945	39.5	8,322	6,623	38.9	40.3
AVELLINO	27	0.1	17	10	0.1	0.1
BENEVENTO	8	0.0	6	2	0.0	0.0
CASERTA	34	0.1	19	15	0.1	0.1

NAPLES	1,160	3.1	707	453	3.3	2.8
SALERNO	115	0.3	69	46	0.3	0.3
CAMPANIA	1,344	3.6	818	526	3.8	3.2
CAMPOBASSO	9	0.0	3	6	0.0	0.0
ISERNIA	0	0.0	-80	-	-	-
MOLISE	9	0.0	3	6	0.0	0.0
MATERA	9	0.0	4	5	0.0	0.0
POTENZA	2	0.0	1	1	0.0	0.0
BASILICATA	11	0.0	5	6	0.0	0.0
BARI	217	0.6	129	88	0.6	0.6
BRINDISI	15	0.0	9	6	0.0	0.0
FOGGIA	31	0.1	16	15	0.1	0.1
LECCE	36	0.1	20	16	0.1	0.1
TARANTO	67	0.2	39	28	0.2	0.2
PUGLIA	366	1.0	213	153	1.0	0.9
CATANZARO	65	0.2	36	29	0.2	0.2
COSENZA	52	0.1	29	23	0.1	0.1
CROTONE	10	0.0	6	4	0.0	0.0
REGGIO CALABRIA	22	0.1	14	8	0.1	0.0
VIBO VALENTIA	7	0.0	2	5	0.0	0.0
CALABRIA	156	0.4	87	69	0.4	0.4
SOUTH	1,886	5.0	1,126	760	5.3	4.6
AGRIGENTO	7	0.0	3	4	0.0	0.0
CALTANISETTA	20	0.1	14	6	0.1	0.0
CATANIA	95	0.3	56	39	0.3	0.2
ENNA	2	0.0	1	1	0.0	0.0
MESSINA	36	0.1	21	15	0.1	0.1
PALERMO	228	0.6	146	82	0.7	0.5
RAGUSA	39	0.1	18	21	0.1	0.1
SIRACUSA	49	0.1	23	26	0.1	0.2
TRAPANI	34	0.1	19	15	0.1	0.1
SICILY	510	1.3	301	209	1.4	1.3
CAGLIARI	149	0.4	80	69	0.4	0.4
NUORO	8	0.0	3	5	0.0	0.0
ORISTANO	17	0.0	8	9	0.0	0.1
SASSARI	106	0.3	62	44	0.3	0.3
SARDEGNA	280	0.7	153	127	0.7	0.8
ISLANDS	790	2.1	454	336	2.1	2.0
TOTAL	37,838	100.0	21,409	16,429	100.0	100.0

Table II List of the first 100 characters selected in three primary school language textbooks

	Language (People's Education Press)	Language (Beijing Press)	Language and ideology (Zhejiang Education Press)
1)	一	一	一
2)	三	二	五
3)	五	三	土
4)	七	四	玉
5)	九	五	米
6)	二	六	木
7)	四	七	禾
8)	六	八	竹
9)	八	九	子
10)	十	十	瓜
11)	日	上	大
12)	月	中	果
13)	水	下	多
14)	火	大	十
15)	山	小	月
16)	石	日	日
17)	田	月	头
18)	土	水	口
19)	方	火	目
20)	人	山	手
21)	耳	石	足
22)	目	田	走
23)	手	土	左
24)	足	井	右
25)	上	刀	二
26)	中	弓	三
27)	下	车	四
28)	大	舟	六
29)	小	气	七
30)	了	云	八
31)	刀	雨	九
32)	尺	电	草
33)	子	马	地
34)	文	牛	马
35)	生	羊	牛
36)	白	毛	人
37)	云	人	父
38)	电	头	女
39)	风	耳	坐
40)	雨	目	立
41)	天	口	天
42)	鸟	牙	上
43)	飞	木	水
44)	鸟	禾	中
45)	鱼	米	下
46)	来	豆	爸
47)	去	瓜	妈
48)	只	鸟	好

49)	入	飞	我
50)	口	爪	爱
51)	出	虫	国
52)	门	出	你
53)	关	入	是
54)	走	来	他
55)	东	去	们
56)	西	虾	北
57)	南	钟	京
58)	北	笔	安
59)	左	苗	门
60)	右	叶	前
61)	马	秋	升
62)	牛	爸	白
63)	羊	男	云
64)	儿	妈	的
65)	在	女	鱼
66)	青	学	儿
67)	我	校	青
68)	是	老	山
69)	爱	师	课
70)	国	同	了
71)	星	北	小
72)	们	京	不
73)	心	天	要
74)	好	安	里
75)	学	门	皮
76)	系	星	拍
77)	向	红	冬
78)	早	旗	有
79)	妈	太	个
80)	爸	阳	叫
81)	灯	地	家
82)	看	球	起
83)	送	多	早
84)	农	我	和
85)	工	是	丁
86)	厂	国	来
87)	民	爱	学
88)	自	祖	校
89)	己	解	同
90)	也	放	鸟
91)	木	军	花
92)	禾	护	开
93)	苗	士	可
94)	竹	生	捉
95)	江	工	摘
96)	两	做	叶
97)	米	农	秋
98)	公	民	到
99)	鸡	种	树
100)	鸭	保	只

Table III Answers to question 1.8: "Multiple nature of the differences between *Putonghua* and the dialects in use in the Wenzhou area" [Total number of respondents: 52][1]

Pronunciation	Semantic	Vocabulary	Other*
52	20	27	19

* Only 11 teachers specified the type of differences in addition to the given selection: 9 of them considered the word order in the sentence as a main difference to be included, while 2 of them referred to the sentence pattern in use (therefore to the use of different sentence structures).

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[1] Some of the teachers referred to more than one aspect of the difference between the dialect and *Putonghua*, therefore their answers are counted more than once

Table IV Answers to question 1.7: "When do pupils usually begin to study *Putonghua*?"

4-6 year old (at home or in kindergarten)	Either before or after accessing primary school education	6 year old and after (at school)
47	3	2

Table V Answers to question 1.9: "How do pupils learn *Putonghua*?" [Total number of respondents: 52][1]

In everyday-life language environment*	Through mimicry	Through *pinyin* and language education
39	7	18

*Teachers described different learning circumstances such as listening to tapes with songs or tales for children, watching TV programmes, and being addressed in *Putonghua* by parents and teachers.

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[1] Some of the teachers referred to more than one possible circumstance and method through which children learn pinyin, therefore their answers are counted more than once

Table VI Answers to question 1.10: "What is the most effective instrument to help students to learn *Putonghua*?" [Total number of respondents: 50 teachers]

Pinyin only	*Pinyin* in combination with other instruments	Other*
17	13	20

* Among the other instruments and devices mentioned by the teachers are: learning to use the dictionary; reading characters with phonetic notations; listening and telling stories.

Table VII Relevant features of the teaching contexts

FEATURES / CONTEXTS		Chinese primary school	Western adults	Sunday Schools	Adult literacy in China
L E A R N E R	- age	7 to 9	**adults over 18**	5 to 18 (large number under 10)	adults: 20 to 75
	- background knowledge (a. literacy) (b. spoken language)	a. (---) b. Mandarin and local dialect	a. English and/or Italian b. English and/or Italian	a. **English or Italian** b. **English or Italian (+dialect)**	a. (---) b. **Local dialect**
	- motivation (aims and uses)	Literacy for everyday life use	Basic skills for study and research purposes	Basic literacy for maintenance of cultural heritage	**Functional literacy for daily management**
E N V I R O N M E N T	- dominant language	Chinese (Mandarin + dialect)	Italian or English	**Italian + Chinese dialect**	Dialect and Mandarin
	- exposure to the target language	Yes	No	**Limited**	Yes

Table VIII Chinese frequency list: 300 words (**first source**)

1) 的	54) 主义	107) 起
2) 了	55) 用	108) 被
3) 是	56) 中	109) 老
4) 一	57) 到	110) 现在
5) 不	58) 国	111) 高
6) 在	59) 起来	112) 革命
7) 有	60) 对	113) 为
8) 我	61) 会	114) 后
9) 个	62) 多	115) 成
10) 他	63) 种	116) 前
11) 就	64) 它	117) 听
12) 这	65) 这样	118) 新
13) 着	66) 时候	119) 事
14) 上	67) 呢	120) 百
15) 说	68) 一	121) 九
16) 人	69) 向	122) 社会
17) 和	70) 而	123) 可是
18) 地	71) 只	124) 想
19) 也	72) 家	125) 更
20) 你	73) 四	126) 心
21) 我们	74) 做	127) 问题
22) 到	75) 五	128) 回
23) 大	76) 没有	129) 下
24) 里	77) 叫	130) 声
25) 来	78) 才	131) 开
26) 都	79) 工作	132) 这些
27) 还	80) 人民	133) 过
28) 把	81) 想	134) 问
29) 去	82) 第	135) 全
30) 又	83) 次	136) 一定
31) 看	84) 象	137) 各
32) 要	85) 给	138) 见
33) 很	86) 同志	139) 山
34) 能	87) 们	140) 因为
35) 十	88) 话	141) 条
36) 小	89) 水	142) 住
37) 那	90) 最	143) 些
38) 得	91) 手	144) 怎么
39) 她	92) 头	145) 却
40) 好	93) 可以	146) 写
41) 年	94) 打	147) 地
42) 他们	95) 吧	148) 但
43) 两	96) 下	149) 您
44) 三	97) 时	150) 六
45) 什么	98) 使	151) 八
46) 从	99) 知道	152) 但是
47) 没	100) 出来	153) 每
48) 二	101) 上	154) 身
49) 出	102) 已经	155) 以后
50) 自己	103) 再	156) 放
51) 天	104) 在	157) 党
52) 几	105) 这个	158) 吗
53) 走	106) 吃	159) 过

160) 开	214) 比	268) 红
161) 边	215) 由	269) 爱
162) 等	216) 阶级	270) 能够
163) 你们	217) 千	271) 性
164) 月	218) 死	272) 斗争
165) 让	219) 真	273) 群众
166) 东西	220) 道	274) 应该
167) 过	221) 多	275) 学习
168) 敌人	222) 半	276) 为什么
169) 万	223) 所以	277) 员
170) 七	224) 地方	278) 等
171) 点	225) 于	279) 送
172) 出	226) 长	280) 满
173) 拿	227) 河	281) 太
174) 外	228) 一些	282) 还是
175) 正	229) 会	283) 之
176) 许多	230) 便	284) 船
177) 坐	231) 呀	285) 要
178) 笑	232) 主席	286) 句
179) 与	233) 上	287) 书
180) 生产	234) 今天	288) 低
181) 带	235) 脸	289) 情况
182) 作	236) 内	290) 日
183) 路	237) 远	291) 穿
184) 谁	238) 如果	292) 完
185) 人们	239) 只	293) 同
186) 给	240) 啦	294) 拉
187) 找	241) 下来	295) 妈妈
188) 下	242) 早	296) 风
189) 孩子	243) 这里	297) 眼
190) 看见	244) 无	298) 钱
191) 一样	245) 国家	299) 这么
192) 所	246) 科学	300) 树
193) 为	247) 眼睛	
194) 跑	248) 经济	
195) 啊	249) 而且	
196) 讲	250) 大	
197) 快	251) 并	
198) 以	252) 已	
199) 研究	253) 进行	
200) 世界	254) 发	
201) 大家	255) 位	
202) 在	256) 车	
203) 生活	257) 进	
204) 发展	258) 先	
205) 门	259) 可	
206) 思想	260) 一点	
207) 站	261) 学	
208) 提	262) 者	
209) 跟	263) 时间	
210) 为了	264) 可	
211) 受	265) 劳动	
212) 工人	266) 块	
213) 起	267) 少	

Table IX Chinese frequency list: extracted characters (**first source**)

1)	一	6	48)	作	2	95)	用	1
2)	这	6	49)	给	2	96)	中	1
3)	人	5	50)	同	2	97)	对	1
4)	们	5	51)	道	2	98)	种	1
5)	为	5	52)	已	2	99)	它	1
6)	是	4	53)	经	2	100)	候	1
7)	在	4	54)	后	2	101)	呢	1
8)	来	4	55)	问	2	102)	向	1
9)	么	4	56)	开	2	103)	四	1
10)	可	4	57)	见	2	104)	做	1
11)	以	4	58)	但	2	105)	五	1
12)	下	4	59)	等	2	106)	叫	1
13)	上	3	60)	点	2	107)	才	1
14)	地	3	61)	生	2	108)	民	1
15)	大	3	62)	所	2	109)	第	1
16)	出	3	63)	发	2	110)	次	1
17)	起	3	64)	眼	2	111)	象	1
18)	会	3	65)	进	2	112)	志	1
19)	多	3	66)	妈	2	113)	话	1
20)	时	3	67)	的	1	114)	水	1
21)	家	3	68)	不	1	115)	最	1
22)	想	3	69)	就	1	116)	手	1
23)	些	3	70)	着	1	117)	头	1
24)	过	3	71)	说	1	118)	打	1
25)	学	3	72)	和	1	119)	吧	1
26)	了	2	73)	也	1	120)	使	1
27)	有	2	74)	都	1	121)	知	1
28)	我	2	75)	把	1	122)	再	1
29)	个	2	76)	去	1	123)	吃	1
30)	他	2	77)	又	1	124)	被	1
31)	你	2	78)	很	1	125)	老	1
32)	我	2	79)	十	1	126)	现	1
33)	到	2	80)	小	1	127)	高	1
34)	里	2	81)	那	1	128)	革	1
35)	还	2	82)	得	1	129)	命	1
36)	看	2	83)	她	1	130)	成	1
37)	要	2	84)	好	1	131)	前	1
38)	能	2	85)	年	1	132)	听	1
39)	什	2	86)	两	1	133)	新	1
40)	没	2	87)	三	1	134)	事	1
41)	天	2	88)	从	1	135)	百	1
42)	主	2	89)	二	1	136)	九	1
43)	国	2	90)	自	1	137)	社	1
44)	样	2	91)	己	1	138)	更	1
45)	而	2	92)	几	1	139)	心	1
46)	只	2	93)	走	1	140)	题	1
47)	工	2	94)	义	1	141)	回	1

142)	声	1	191)	活	1	240)	够	1
143)	全	1	192)	展	1	241)	性	1
144)	定	1	193)	门	1	242)	斗	1
145)	各	1	194)	思	1	243)	争	1
146)	山	1	195)	站	1	244)	群	1
147)	因	1	196)	提	1	245)	众	1
148)	条	1	197)	跟	1	246)	应	1
149)	住	1	198)	受	1	247)	该	1
150)	怎	1	199)	比	1	248)	习	1
151)	却	1	200)	由	1	249)	员	1
152)	写	1	201)	阶	1	250)	送	1
153)	您	1	202)	级	1	251)	满	1
154)	六	1	203)	千	1	252)	太	1
155)	八	1	204)	死	1	253)	之	1
156)	每	1	205)	真	1	254)	船	1
157)	身	1	206)	半	1	255)	句	1
158)	放	1	207)	方	1	256)	书	1
159)	党	1	208)	于	1	257)	低	1
160)	吗	1	209)	长	1	258)	情	1
161)	边	1	210)	河	1	259)	况	1
162)	月	1	211)	便	1	260)	日	1
163)	让	1	212)	呀	1	261)	穿	1
164)	东	1	213)	席	1	262)	完	1
165)	西	1	214)	今	1	263)	拉	1
166)	敌	1	215)	脸	1	264)	风	1
167)	万	1	216)	内	1	265)	钱	1
168)	七	1	217)	远	1	266)	树	1
169)	拿	1	218)	如	1			
170)	外	1	219)	果	1			
171)	正	1	220)	啦	1			
172)	许	1	221)	早	1			
173)	坐	1	222)	无	1			
174)	笑	1	223)	科	1			
175)	与	1	224)	睛	1			
176)	产	1	225)	济	1			
177)	带	1	226)	且	1			
178)	路	1	227)	并	1			
179)	谁	1	228)	行	1			
180)	找	1	229)	位	1			
181)	孩	1	230)	车	1			
182)	子	1	231)	先	1			
183)	跑	1	232)	者	1			
184)	啊	1	233)	间	1			
185)	讲	1	234)	劳	1			
186)	快	1	235)	动	1			
187)	研	1	236)	块	1			
188)	究	1	237)	少	1			
189)	世	1	238)	红	1			
190)	界	1	239)	爱	1			

Table X Vocabulary derived from Chinese written material and Chinese language in use in Italy (**second group of sources**)

1. Written Material		
a. Community Newspapers		
P L A C E S	Italy 意大利	
	Lombardia 伦巴底	
	Lazio 拉齐奥	
	Toscana 托斯卡那	
	Piemonte 皮埃蒙特	
	Puglia 布里亚	
	Campania 坎帕尼亚	
	Calabria 卡拉布里亚	
	Milano 米兰	
	Roma 罗马	
	Firenze 佛罗伦萨	
	Prato 普拉托	
	Torino 都灵	
	Bologna 波罗尼亚	
	Napoli 那波里	
	Venezia 威尼斯	
	Perugia 贝鲁加	
	Reggio Calabria 雷焦卡拉布里亚	
	Sicilia 西西里	
	Sardegna 撒丁岛	
P E O P L E	Amato 阿马托	
	Berlusconi 贝鲁斯科尼	
	Bianco 比安考	
	Rutelli 鲁戴力	
	Ciampi 钱皮	
	Andreotti 安德雷奥蒂	
	Scalfaro 斯卡尔法罗	
	D'Alema 达莱马	
	Dini 迪尼	
	Giovanni Paolo II 乔万尼·保罗二世	
	Di Pietro 迪·比得	
b. Advertisements and leaflets		
	搭铺 used with the meaning of "sharing a room or a flat"	

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c. Communications from Association officers	
	Amnesty 大赦
	Regularization 合法化
	Foreign office 外侨处
	Resident permit 居留证
	Identity card 身份证
	Passport 护照
	Work authorisation 工作许可证
	Income declaration form 报税单
	Visa 签证
	Medical card 医疗证
	Medical service local unit 地方社会医疗卫生局
	To register 注册
2. Information gathered from communication with members of the Chinese community	
	十千 instead of the correct Chinese form 一万, to mean ten thousands
	米利翁 instead of the correct form 一百万, for million

Table XI Sample of vocabulary derived from textbooks for teaching Italian as a second language to Chinese adult learners (**third group of sources**)

From a.: *Conversational Italian today*	
P L A C E S	Alps 阿尔卑斯山
	Appennini 业平宁山
	Vesuvio 维苏威火山
	Etna 埃特纳火山
	Po River 波河
	Pianura Padana 波河平原
	Tevere River 台伯河
	Arno River 阿尔诺河
	Lake Maggiore 马焦雷湖
From d.: *I can speak Italian*	
F O O D	Tomato sauce noodles 番茄面
	Pesto sauce noodles 核桃罗勒蒜油面
	Meat sauce noodles 肉末面
	Sea food noodles 海蛤蜊面
	Garlic and oil noodles 蒜油面
	Lasagne 面片
	Naples style pizza 那波里式比萨饼
	Roman style gnocchi 罗马式奶油面团
	Tortelli 大馄饨
	Milan style risotto 番红花粉烩饭
	Goat cheese 山羊奶酪
	Emmental cheese 瑞士奶酪
	Parmesan cheese 帕马干酪

Table XII Situational vocabulary: a sample derived from textbooks for teaching Italian as a second language to Chinese adult learners (**third group of sources**)

E A T I N G A N D D R I N K I N G	bartender酒吧招待员
	basil罗勒
	bitter 苦
	butter黄油
	chilly辣
	cook厨师
	fork叉
	knife刀
	napkin餐巾
	olive oil橄榄油
	owner老板
	savoury咸
	sour酸
O F F I C E S	air mail航空
	all precious objects have to be declared 一切诊贵的东西都锝报关
	certificate证明
	custom fees海关税
	customs 海关
	declare声明
	detain 扣押
	employee职员
	Employer Declaration雇主声明
	employment office劳动局
	examine 检查
	expired到期了
	express letter 快信
	fill in 填写
	forbidden item禁运品
	form 表格
	go through formalities办手续
	item物品
	mail邮政
	manager 经理
	personal belonging 个人生活用品
	Police station警察局
	receipt收据
	registered letter挂号信
	registration in the unemployment lists失业登记
	send a telegram 发一份电报
	smuggled goods走私物品
	stamp邮票

	vaccination 预防接种
	valid 有效的
	write in block capital letters 用印刷体写
T R A D E A N D C O M M E R C E	deposit 定金
	export 出口
	freight bill 发货单
	import 进口
	Industry and Commerce Department 工商局
	invoice 发表
	market 市场
	order 订货
	product 产品
	production 生产
	profit 利润
	sample 样品
	shipment 发货
	storehouse 仓库
	supplier 供应者
	tax code 税号 (C.F. *codice fiscale*)
W O R D S O N S I G N S	attention 注意，小心
	border 边界
	city centre 市中心
	entrance 入口
	fire brigade 消防警
	first aid 急救
	information office 问询处
	luggage storage 行李寄存处
	petrol 汽油
	police 警察
	private property 私人地界
	sales 大减价
	tourist office 旅游局

Table XIII List of additional characters derived from the **third group of sources**

No.	Char	Count	No.	Char	Count	No.	Char	Count
1)	罗	8	48)	表	2	95)	吧	1
2)	里	7	49)	餐	2	96)	百	1
3)	面	7	50)	察	2	97)	伯	1
4)	马	6	51)	产	2	98)	板	1
5)	尼	6	52)	单	2	99)	办	1
6)	品	6	53)	得	2	100)	保	1
7)	亚	6	54)	的	2	101)	卑	1
8)	油	6	55)	迪	2	102)	边	1
9)	证	6	56)	地	2	103)	饼	1
10)	波	5	57)	都	2	104)	仓	1
11)	山	5	58)	法	2	105)	册	1
12)	斯	5	59)	防	2	106)	叉	1
13)	大	4	60)	工	2	107)	查	1
14)	发	4	61)	号	2	108)	场	1
15)	河	4	62)	火	2	109)	出	1
16)	局	4	63)	焦	2	110)	厨	1
17)	卡	4	64)	界	2	111)	醋	1
18)	拉	4	65)	酒	2	112)	存	1
19)	阿	3	66)	居	2	113)	达	1
20)	报	3	67)	勒	2	114)	戴	1
21)	比	3	68)	疗	2	115)	待	1
22)	布	3	69)	伦	2	116)	刀	1
23)	处	3	70)	米	2	117)	岛	1
24)	尔	3	71)	帕	2	118)	到	1
25)	份	3	72)	皮	2	119)	德	1
26)	关	3	73)	平	2	120)	登	1
27)	海	3	74)	人	2	121)	底	1
28)	货	3	75)	萨	2	122)	蒂	1
29)	警	3	76)	声	2	123)	申	1
30)	口	3	77)	式	2	124)	丁	1
31)	酪	3	78)	市	2	125)	订	1
32)	雷	3	79)	私	2	126)	定	1
33)	利	3	80)	蒜	2	127)	东	1
34)	鲁	3	81)	特	2	128)	动	1
35)	明	3	82)	威	2	129)	二	1
36)	那	3	83)	物	2	130)	番	1
37)	奶	3	84)	香	2	131)	饭	1
38)	牛	3	85)	写	2	132)	方	1
39)	税	3	86)	心	2	133)	粉	1
40)	托	3	87)	信	2	134)	佛	1
41)	西	3	88)	医	2	135)	服	1
42)	一	3	89)	意	2	136)	干	1
43)	员	3	90)	用	2	137)	橄	1
44)	埃	2	91)	邮	2	138)	格	1
45)	安	2	92)	职	2	139)	蛤	1
46)	奥	2	93)	汪	2	140)	个	1
47)	贝	2	94)	巴	1	141)	供	1

No.	字	数	No.	字	数	No.	字	数
142)	雇	1	191)	李	1	240)	酸	1
143)	挂	1	192)	理	1	241)	搭	1
144)	馆	1	193)	力	1	242)	台	1
145)	贵	1	194)	灵	1	243)	萄	1
146)	航	1	195)	留	1	244)	桃	1
147)	核	1	196)	旅	1	245)	体	1
148)	合	1	197)	美	1	246)	甜	1
149)	红	1	198)	蒙	1	247)	填	1
150)	湖	1	199)	末	1	248)	团	1
151)	护	1	200)	纳	1	249)	饰	1
152)	花	1	201)	宁	1	250)	外	1
153)	化	1	202)	诺	1	251)	万	1
154)	黄	1	203)	片	1	252)	维	1
155)	会	1	204)	票	1	253)	卫	1
156)	烩	1	205)	葡	1	254)	问	1
157)	馄	1	206)	普	1	255)	翁	1
158)	活	1	207)	铺	1	256)	务	1
159)	魚	1	208)	期	1	257)	咸	1
160)	寄	1	209)	齐	1	258)	鲜	1
161)	记	1	210)	汽	1	259)	消	1
162)	加	1	211)	千	1	260)	小	1
163)	价	1	212)	签	1	261)	效	1
164)	检	1	213)	钱	1	262)	行	1
165)	减	1	214)	侨	1	263)	许	1
166)	接	1	215)	乔	1	264)	续	1
167)	金	1	216)	切	1	265)	询	1
168)	巾	1	217)	茄	1	266)	押	1
169)	禁	1	218)	请	1	267)	羊	1
170)	进	1	219)	求	1	268)	样	1
171)	经	1	220)	肉	1	269)	业	1
172)	救	1	221)	入	1	270)	印	1
173)	据	1	222)	瑞	1	271)	应	1
174)	坎	1	223)	润	1	272)	游	1
175)	考	1	224)	撒	1	273)	有	1
176)	科	1	225)	商	1	274)	预	1
177)	可	1	226)	勺	1	275)	原	1
178)	空	1	227)	赦	1	276)	运	1
179)	扣	1	228)	社	1	277)	招	1
180)	苦	1	229)	申	1	278)	照	1
181)	库	1	230)	身	1	279)	者	1
182)	快	1	231)	师	1	280)	诊	1
183)	辣	1	232)	失	1	281)	政	1
184)	菜	1	233)	十	1	282)	中	1
185)	兰	1	234)	士	1	283)	种	1
186)	榄	1	235)	世	1	284)	主	1
187)	劳	1	236)	收	1	285)	走	1
188)	老	1	237)	手	1	286)	作	1
189)	了	1	238)	刷	1			
190)	蜊	1	239)	苏	1			

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration I The Wenzhou area in Zhejiang Province (China)

Yueqing

Baixiang

Wenzhou

Illustration II Teaching characters with flash-cards
(Photo taken at Puxieshi Primary School in April 1999)

"请问"开头教养好,"您好"一声有礼貌;
骑车相撞"对不起",办错事情"请原谅";
认错以后"没关系","谢谢"使用文明语。

您 好 对 起 没 关 系 谢 请 原 谅
问 礼 貌 文 明

第五单元　教你旅游

14、交通

客车路上走,飞机天上跑,
火车又轮船,交通要买票,
凭票对座号,行李要放好,
不带违禁品,安全要记牢。

通 客 车 飞 机 火 车 轮 船 买 票
座 号 行 李 带 违 不 安 全

15、住宿

出门要住宿,旅馆招待所,

10

白露秋分天渐冷,
秋菜杂粮要种早。

51、节气歌(三)

寒露霜降气温低,
三秋作物首开镰。
立冬小雪风稍降,
三麦油菜播田间。
大雪冬至天寒冷,
修渠积肥不断线。
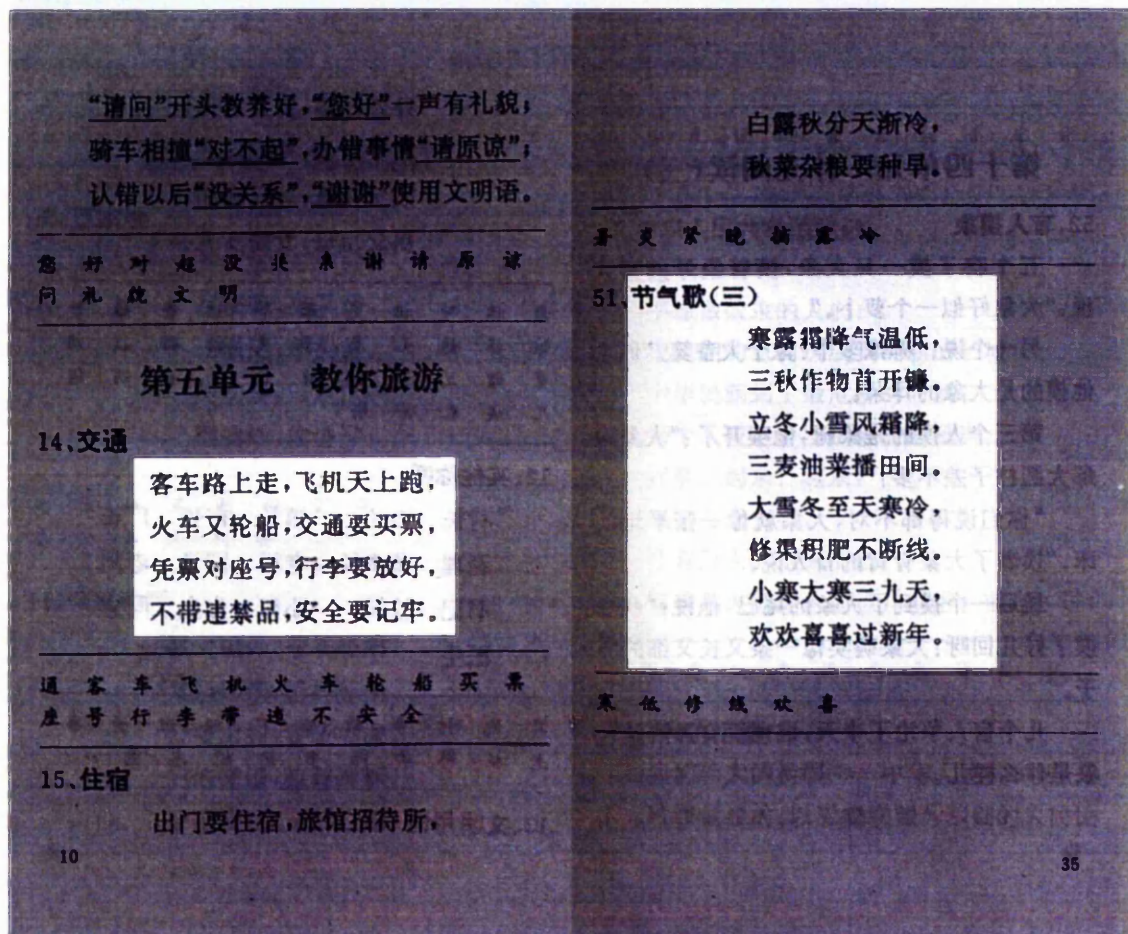小寒大寒三九天,
欢欢喜喜过新年。

寒 低 修 渠 欢 喜

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Illustration IV Reviewing and connecting characters on the base of their structure: sample from reference books for teachers of adult literacy classes
[Source: Zhejiang sheng jiaoyu weiyuanhui chengjiao ban (1995) *op. cit.* p. 12]

句段教学抓五个环节：

①复习检查，新旧联系。。

教新课前，有重点地安排复习前面句段的生字，尤其是前三天教过的生字，把复习相同部件的熟字作为学习本句段生字的铺垫。如教 64 句段的生字"挑、党、选、组"，先复习"桃、堂、先、且"等熟字。

②提纲挈领，析文明义。

安先生说："要学生感到那段含有要学习的'生字'的文字（故事）生动有趣。"（见《解开汉字之谜》ⅩⅠ）。我们的具体方法有：

揭示主题词式：如教 88 句段，"翠玉、紫晶、蓝宝石，鲜明夺目，皆很宝贝珍贵"，主题词是"宝贝珍贵"。教前教师向学员提示：本句段向我们介绍了哪些宝贝，它为什么珍贵。学了句段中 10 个生字我们就知道了。

描述串讲式：如教 16 句段，"先赢后输，得意忘形，垂头丧气，俯仰由人"。教前，教师给学员先讲一个故事：旧社会里，一个赌棍，赢了钱得意忘形，高兴得不得了，后来赌输了，卖光全部家产，垂头丧气，俯仰由人了。

还有问题设疑式，联词缀文式等等。

③劈文切字，以形释文。

安先生说："用观念化哲学化的方式去教学每一个汉字。"（见《解开汉字之谜》ⅩⅠ）

Illustration V Community newspapers

欯华时报

IL TEMPO EUROPA CINA

新华时报

LA NUOVA CINA

华侨通讯

NOTIZIARIO DEI CINESI MILANO

钱伟长题

同鄉報

中意报

Zhong Yi Bao

2000 年 6 月

L'ASSOCIAZIONE 地址:VIA MORAZZONE 6　Giornale cinese - italiano n°33

人民日报 海外版

QUOTIDIEN DU PEUPLE édité par S.A.R.L. GUANG HUA　17/07/2000　PRIX 3 F 50
PEOPLE'S DAILY OVERSEAS EDITION

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ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

INTERVIEWS AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

催峦 - 人民教育出版社 - 课程教材研究所 - 中国教育学会小学语文教学研究会常务副理事长 - Mr. Cui: Senior Editor of the People's Education Press and vice-chief of the Chinese Language Department of the Research Institute People's Education Press, Beijing, May 31st 1999

方斐卿 - 浙江省特级教师 - Mr. Fang: Yueqing Normal Institute, Zhejiang, May 3rd 1999

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赖立副研究员 - 中央教育科学研究所成人教育研究中心副主任 - Ms. Lai: Researcher on adult education. Beijing. Interviewed in June and July 1999

刘义兵 - 博士 - 西南师范大学扫盲教育研究与培训中心 Mr. Liu: Researcher on Adult Education. Interviewed in Beijing during the National Workshop on Adult Literacy and Education in China, July 1999

欧文 - Mr. Ou: Staff member of the Association of the Overseas Chinese in Milan (米兰华侨华人共商会), interviewed in June 1998

孙汉银 - 北京师大实验小学校长 - Mr. Sun: Head of the Experimental Primary School of Beijing Normal University. Beijing, March 1999

Wang Dai: Central Education Commission - Adult Literacy Department. Beijing, June 1999

张生林 - Dr. Zhang: Chinese language assistant at the University of Milan and teacher of Saturday classes for Chinese children. Interviewed in February 2000

Ms. Zhang Xing: Chinese Language Teacher for the Emilia Romagna Chinese Association, Bologna. Interviewed in February 2000

周邻老师 - 欧华时报 - 中文学校 - Ms. Zhou: Chinese language teacher in the Chinese Language School for Overseas Chinese Children, Rome. Informant during the fieldwork February 1999 and summer 1999

Ms. Zhu: Manager of a Chinese food store in Milan, and co-organizer of Sunday school classes for children of Chinese origin. Interviewed in June 1998