

Knowing otherness:

The experience of doing educational ethnography
in a Chinese community

BY

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One day, like many other times, one of my friends in China asked me:

'What's your research about?'

'It's about knowing others. Others, as Chinese,' I replied.

'Do you know about Chinese?' he asked with surprise.

'No, but it's about how can I begin to know about them,' I said.

In order to comply with my university's ethical codes, and to protect my colleagues and informants privacy, all the sensitive data has been anonymised.

Abstract

This doctoral research is a reflexive ethnography, having as its aim, to understand and learn about 'others.' It is an educational journey to explore the methodological issues related to ethnography, and to get to know and write about, another culture. The elements that are drawn upon to address a given problem, and influence interpretations, differ from culture to culture. Drawing in Foucault and Agamben, I explored such elements in terms of what is called a 'dispositif' (or its English translation, 'device' or 'apparatus'). Such issues and problems in fieldwork are difficult to solve without knowing key dispositifs operating in peoples' lives. Methods for collecting data, including interview and observation, enable us to gain insight into the ways of seeing and acting, that members recognise, as being like an insider. This led me to exploring language as having a central role to understand those key dispositifs. Identity-in-question, pattern of thinking, and language, are involved in coming to understand the aesthetics of communication, and are steps for building trust relations, through which, one becomes visible for others as an insider. Then, analytical methods, to draw identity boundaries, such as, polythetic and monothetic, would be appropriate. I also looked at the ways in which dispositifs are operationalized through schooling and public pedagogy in order to capture behaviours, and in order to empower themselves through creative educative acts. However, when these dispositifs are hijacked by power, to shape behaviours, creating obedience, and managing consents, the issue is raised of how the legitimating practices of the multitude are to be managed. Thus, this thesis has discussed and contributed insights into the significance for ethnographic researchers, of coming, to understand the key dispositifs through which members of communities come to see their worlds and legitimate their activities.

Notes on ethics

When I first registered for this research, Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) did not have the formal ethical procedures it now has. However, from the beginning I employed British Education Research Association's (BERA's) guideline as described in section 1.5.2 of the thesis.

Preface

One day, my son, at the age of eight asked me, 'Dad, when you will finish your study and we can spend more time out together?' My response was, 'When you start your first degree in a university.' Now, after twenty years, my son studies his master at the Institute of Education at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). I guess I transferred the same passion I inherited from my father to him. It was the same passion, which perhaps, was the main dynamic for starting the biggest academic odyssey of my life. It was a long battle against time and storms, however, its length does not truly represent long days of challenges in fieldwork and never-ending nights trying to make sense of my writing. Specifically, writing this thesis, was the biggest academic challenge of my life, especially with having English as my fourth language. If it is found worthy, and contributes to knowledge, it's solely because of a team of others who made it possible.

Firstly, to my parents, who cultivated the eagerness for finding truth in me, and giving me the capacity to follow the passion.

To my wife, and my son, who supported me at all times by scarifying their expectations, and never let me think it was my project only.

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Introduction

When I was in a hotel restaurant in Guiyang city, on a balcony overhanging the lobby, I was given a seat and I ordered a beer with some light food. I suddenly realised I had to call someone as a matter of urgency. I went over to the restaurant reception desk and asked if I could use the phone. A member of the staff said something in Chinese to me. The tone used sounded a little cold, so I said, 'OK,' and that I was going down to the lobby to use the phone there, pointing towards the lobby and using sign language. The staff member became more serious and sounded a little harsh, so I thought maybe there had been a problem with my order or the payment for the food. Soon, quite a few waiters were surrounding me, speaking in Chinese with the same tone, and trying to tell me something.

I was convinced I might have done something wrong according to Chinese culture. I began to feel I was losing my temper and was puzzled as to why they could not understand a simple thing like this and why they were using this tone of conversation. Eventually, I gave my electronic translator to a member of staff to communicate with me in order to end the hassle! After reading the translated text, I felt embarrassed! It said; 'We apologise that the phone in the restaurant is one way. We are very sorry for the inconvenience.'

This doctoral research is a reflexive ethnography, having as its aim, to understand and learn about 'others.' It is a voyage to learn about how research engages with questions of identity, and to explore, to what extent, Westernised ethnography is a one-way communication. In short, it is an educational journey to explore the methodological issues related to the ethnography and to get to know and write about another culture. Therefore, the approach taken, is

reflexive in nature.

Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity then, urges us 'to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research.' (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999:228).

Being a stranger and trying to get to know others, requires a way of getting at communications that go both ways. In the restaurant of Guiyang city, there was a clash of different understandings, of concepts not shared, or only apparently shared. We all go to restaurants, we all eat, and from time to time, we all encounter unexpected situations. However, the way we know others and interpret situations is to draw upon the cultural resources we have available to us that enable us to interpret, and communicate, intentions and acts. Our ways of thinking, (models of thought), are shaped that way. I will explore how they are shaped by what Agamben, following Foucault, calls 'dispositifs,' or apparatuses. Briefly, a dispositif is formed when elements such as mobile phones, discourses, and organisations and social institutions, are brought into relationship in order to address a need, a problem, a concern, or a demand. This will be further discussed in chapter two. Since my framework of thought was shaped elsewhere than in China, I might follow my expectations of what should happen from a similar situation in England, as occurred in my frustration when faced with the problem of communication in my introductory illustration. I will discuss what I call a 'framework of thought' in more detail in chapter 4.2.2.

Learning from the above narrative and similar ones, I realise the elements that are drawn upon to address a given problem, and influenced interpretations, differ from culture to culture. If I could redo the above

experience, I would ask myself: What does; restaurant, telephone, or a guest, mean to them? Agamben, G. (2009), drawing on Foucault, explored such elements as these in terms of what he called a 'dispositif' (or its English translation, apparatus). To show the scale of what is involved in a dispositif Agamben writes:

I wish to propose to you nothing less than a general and massive partitioning of being into two large groups or classes: on the one hand, living being (or substances), and on the other, apparatuses in which living beings are increasingly captured (...) I shall call apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gesture, behaviour, opinion, or discourse of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones, and why not language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses(...). (Agamben, 2009:13–14)

In this thesis, I looked at the ways in which dispositifs are operationalized through schooling and public pedagogy, in order to capture behaviours, and in order to empower themselves through creative educative acts. Based on Agamben's definition of dispositif, I introduce an object model of dispositifs as an educational dimension and framework for knowing otherness. This object model is used to explain differences between the operations of apparently similar dispositifs in different cultures. I will argue that, we cannot talk about schooling or education without also exploring people's everyday life as a network of dispositifs, such as, food or gift. They are all connected together. Agamben, G. (2009) discussed and extended the idea

of dispositif beyond Foucault's use as a set of practices and mechanisms (linguistic and non-linguistic, juridical, technical, and military) (Agamben et al., 2009:8). Therefore, dispositifs can be seen in many forms in our life, such as the police and legal systems, market and education systems, language and discourses. Such social forms manipulate, shape, educate (or draw out), not only ways of acting, but also the ways of thinking, on those upon whom they impact.

Dispositifs are inscribed on our bodies in a way that is similar to what Mauss, M. (1973:458), a French sociologist, described as the impact of social organisations and cultural practices on the body as an educational dimension. From society to society, people know how to use their bodies but use them differently. He described these differences in terms of 'body techniques.' In one of Mauss' examples, was the technique of digging: When French spades were given to British soldiers to dig trenches in the First World War, he observed that they could not easily use them, and vice versa. Mauss pointed to the role of education, both in its formal and informal (social learning) forms in order to explain such differences (Schostak & Schostak, 2013:9). Habit or custom, do not vary just with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, properties, and fashion (Mauss, 1993:458). With regards to the walking technique in Paris, Mauss mentioned that there exists an education that produces habits of walking that are different from culture to culture. Mauss thus pointed towards the way public pedagogy engages with learning behaviours such as walking style. I like to compare this with Agamben's definition of a dispositif. For instance, at the beginning, Chinese calligraphy was not easy for me to learn. Chinese calligraphy is more than running a brush over a paper to produce a character. There are rules in holding, moving, and amount of pressure on a brush, in writing different parts of a character. There are also concepts, not possible to separate from Chinese calligraphy, such as history, and discourses of beauty. Those who are non-Chinese may not be able to produce Chinese calligraphy by only using brush, ink, and paper. All the elements must be in harmony. Understanding how a dispositif operates, or is brought into operation, is not an obvious matter – as it

is inscribed, in Mauss' terms, as 'body techniques.' These are so intimate that they are barely noticeable until they are disrupted by the otherness of a stranger. A stranger, who may not be able to comprehend those body techniques and a way of seeing easily, then there will be a potential for misunderstanding, that presumably, misunderstanding itself, becomes a motive for studying how dispositifs operate in peoples' life.

While in its origins, ethnography may have sought and documented exotic knowledge about remote societies, my purpose is to learn to see and to be see-able within a dispositif through which contemporary people engage with each other as members of some social formation or organisation. A lack of prior education in learning, to be see-able in another culture, produces the sense of there being differences between people. There are not only visible differences as in physical forms, but there are also other invisibles, such as, feeling, attitude, and values.

For example, as an invisible difference between people, how do I begin to grasp their view of beauty? What are the processes involved in learning to experience beauty and being able to see through others' eyes, for instance seeing the beauty in Chinese calligraphy? There is a sense of beauty, and what is good form, that is at the heart of creating an ordered sense of the everyday world, or in Rancière's (2004) terms, there is a politics of aesthetics. This seems central to considering ethnography as writing the people – that is, in representing people in a text, how will I be able to write them in ways which take into account their ways of seeing the world? Becoming an insider, and engaged with people's everyday activities, gave me the opportunity to learn to see differences and to record events and images in the form of narratives that describe my attempts to grasp an aesthetics of seeing and acting. Through the chapters, from time to time, I refer to various field stories to create a better image from each event by going through details as much as possible. Although many of the stories could be the focus of many different issues and themes, my sole focus is to reflect my learning from the impact of various dispositifs involved in creating us, and others, by manipulating people's ways of thinking and acting in different directions.

Agamben believes that contemporary dispositifs have a role in the application of power by elites. The question, fundamentally as educational as it is political, then, is whether the powers of individuals can engage with countervailing dispositifs to challenge elite power. Power, as organisational power, state power or elite power is developed through the aggregation of the powers of individuals. For instance, this tension between elite power and democratic powers, can be seen in the use of digital technologies, say in surveillance of mass communications, that re-enacts the essential conflict between the power of elites over the masses, and the emergence of democratic publics that have power over elites (Schostak, 2014:6). I will develop the relation between power and dispositifs in chapter eight.

Where the fieldwork took place

Most of the research is conducted in the areas of China, far different from large cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. For instance, a town like Siyang with a population of one million, is small in terms of the Chinese scale of towns. At the time of writing this thesis, living in Siyang was, to me, the same as travelling back a hundred years in time. Traditions still ruled social life, despite processes of modernisation, which could not change the traditions as fast as it was emerging. The only foreigners who ever visited and stayed in the town were British and American teachers who disappeared after 3-4 months – they left without telling anyone. The differences between Siyang and a larger city were not only size, or its lack of nightlife, or having Western-style pubs, but rather, it was about the way people think and do things. On the one hand, it was fascinating for its atmosphere of a real and culturally 'not-invaded' Chinese town; on the other hand, there were many unfamiliar features which made living difficult for a foreigner. Of Western life style restaurants, it has only a small KFC and some Chinese coffee shops – a place for drinking tea, cracking sunflower seeds, and playing cards.

During my fieldwork, I visited seven universities, five middle/high schools, and three training centres in four different provinces, Hubei, Guangdong, Hunan, Jiangsu, and Beijing (**annex C**). In those visited

establishments, most of the English language lessons were mainly taught by Americans and in some occasions, British teachers. In addition, I worked in education establishments in Siyang for over three years.

The strategy I adopted in organising chapters involves splitting them into two sections, theoretical and field work data (narratives). The traditional literature review is integrated throughout the chapters. In the first section, chapter one to chapter four, I explored all the theoretical discussions involving methodology, data collection methods and analytical approaches. Chapter five to chapter eight will focus more on narratives as a step in developing my research dispositif, and analysing various field stories. Chapter nine is a conclusion looking at what has been learned, and what is still problematic?

Organisation of the thesis

Chapter one is about ethnographic approach. If I need to get close to people, then I need to use appropriate methods for face-to-face encounters. The methodology, which can provide us with an approach to gaining key narratives as a means of situating lives, events, practices, cultural values, and form of discourse, is ethnography..

I discuss how ethnography can help us to understand and interpret another way of living or another culture as well as, be able to handle issues and crises in fieldwork. For better understanding and to be able to analyse such problems in fieldwork, I needed to explore; a) the resources available to members of social situations, such as, familiarity with a range of discourses employed in social contexts and particular circumstances, and b) how I can mobilise those resources in order to address the range of situations that occur in everyday life. These resources I explored in terms of Agamben's development of Foucault's use of the term 'dispositif.' The chapter ends with a short discussion about quality criteria and the ways I handle objectivity, validity, reliability, and ethical issues.

Although chapter two is an extension to chapter one, it is a fuller overview of the concept of, and range of, dispositifs employed in everyday life. There are key dispositifs I had to discover in order to enter into a community. I

discuss the term *dispositif* in detail and extend the meaning, applying it to various activities common to all humans, but employed differently from one social group to another. Those differences, although very small, can produce misunderstandings. Agamben argues that the contemporary *dispositifs* are not exactly the same as they were originally developed. I argue that, in each cultural group, a different version of a *dispositif* is employed which is influenced by other *dispositifs* in their network. For example, what makes a food *dispositif* in China different from the food *dispositif* somewhere else? Is it the difference in the way it is connected to other *dispositifs*, such as, 'relations' (关系, GuanXi), and 'face' (面子 *MianZi*)? The nature of these *dispositifs* are discussed in the sections of this chapter by exploring four themes of *dispositifs*, and will be returned to, in more detail, in chapter seven.

First, I discuss the four themes of *dispositifs*; hierarchical, networked, duality, and object structure. These themes are explored to reveal the potential for a *dispositif* to become a capturer of behaviours, and thus have a role in the application of power by elites. I argue that, education, and public pedagogy, can be employed to influence minds and behaviours and to transform what was unfamiliar into new senses of what comes to be experienced as familiar, by reshaping thoughts, and educating (that is, drawing out) new norms governing everyday life.

Second, I explore three *dispositifs* common to all societies in more detail in order to illustrate the four themes. There are differences as well as similarities. Differences can be explored in the framework of a *dispositif* by looking at invisible ties between each of these commonly used *dispositifs* and other *dispositifs* such as face and relations, which, in varying from one group to another, create for the newcomer, a sense of strangeness or otherness. I will also explore the language *dispositif* as Agamben recognises it, as the most important and ancient *dispositif*, as a key to exploring differences and creating the conditions for entering a community. This is because language has a central role as a *dispositif*, to provide a means by which to understand and learn the other key *dispositifs* through which a given people's lives are organised.

A discussion of the methods and analytical approaches appropriate to my research are discussed in chapter three. What are the methods I need to use to collect the data required to analyse those key dispositifs described in the earlier chapters? In particular, there is a discussion of the ethical issues I encountered in trying to enter Chinese communities, which have influenced the chosen methods. I will discuss the appropriateness of qualitative methods, such as interview, observation, and analysis documents, to provide in-depth insight into such issues like face and relations. In addition, the chapter explores the way I have come to experience, that the participant observer can adopt covert or semi-covert approaches. There are certain situations that may involve complications, danger, or sensitivity, that require continual reflection upon the ethics of the research. Then, the last part of the first section (collecting data), discusses the development of research tools which assisted my research during the fieldwork.

Thus, the guiding question in the second part of this chapter would be: What methods do I need to *analyse* collected data which enable me to gain insight into the ways of seeing and the practices that members recognise as being like an insider? The second section (data analysis) of the chapter, particularly will discuss the role of language in analysis. Indeed generating meaning in face-to-face communication is influenced by our culture, situation, power, and many other factors. If language has a central role as a dispositif, then it provides a means by which learning the key dispositifs through which a given people's lives are organised. Thus, discourse analysis becomes a crucial part of methods. I explore the analysis of discourse with reference to Lotman's approach, which provided insights into understanding the alternative 'codes' through which multiple interpretations can be made of a given source text.

In the last part of the section, I discuss the approaches to analysing data in terms of how identity – the identity of the researcher, of me, of others, is being categorised under different discourses, in particular, distinguishing between polythetic and monothetic approaches. For instance, the polythetic (family resemblance) method, enabled me to draw more nuanced identity boundaries, framing membership and belonging, than adopting a monothetic

form of categorisation that has a criterion of strict homogeneity defining members of a given category.

Chapter four follows from the discussions of identity in the previous chapter by raising the issue of the identity-in-question, that is, the identity of the researcher as being in the space in-between cultures - that is, in the space of differences. It is about me, as a researcher, trying to integrate myself into the groups and communities I met. With each identity clash, some part of their world becomes visible, and consequently, I become more visible, either as a stranger who does not understand, or as one who is behaving in recognisable and acceptable ways. Thus, it is critical to understand my own identity as a researcher in China. Carla Willing, (2001) argues that personal reflexivity involves reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life, and the ways social identities have shaped the research. Therefore, I recall my multicultural background in order to explore the construction of my identity through interpersonal and intergroup activity. A further consideration of the research, will be the examination of my understanding of my position, as it seems to be implied in Chinese society. The question of identity also involves others – that is Chinese society - that places my identity in question.

The second part of this chapter will discuss the other's framework of thought, the ways of seeing and understanding the world, and its influence on their way of doing things, and in turn, influences the formation of my own identity in seeking to become an insider. I use the term framework of thought, as a thinking pattern, and as a reflection of how we see the world around us, and how this, in turn, categorises us both culturally and geographically. What is required to come to understand the discourse of people is not only language. Discourse is a product of the cultural use of language. In fact, being fluent in a spoken language does not guarantee a successful communication and building trust relations. Although most of my research participants were fluent in the English language, ambiguity in linguistic communication was the major problem.

As the last part of this chapter, I discuss that sum of identity - ways of

seeing, language, discourse - that all together brought me to the point of seeing the aesthetics of communication. That means, in becoming aware of the harmony between language as dispositif, and all other dispositifs in its network, a world becomes visible. The fieldwork issues involved in trying to get to this stage of seeing a world are discussed in the next chapter.

Initial difficulties in establishing adequate relation with research informants, indicates the notions of being in-between and identity-in-question, were the first steps in understanding others and attempting to see their world. Then, the next, was coming to grips with language and the aesthetic of communication for building trust relations and becoming visible as a member. Therefore, in order to explore my identity-in-question, as I entered into the fieldwork, chapter five discusses the 'step-into fieldwork' and the process of establishing trust relations. I review such difficulties in setting up the fieldwork as; issues involved in getting to know others, in getting access to others, and getting permissions to enter their symbolic world, as a pre-condition for doing research. This is supported by field stories that give an insight into how I began to comprehend the methodological issues involved with creating the necessary trust relations, in context of others, detailed in the next chapter.

My experience of fieldwork begins with a set of stories, which demonstrates a range of difficulties in action that start with the story of my arrival to Hong Kong. I write about my attempt to establish connections with the help of powerful contacts and carefully selected resources. I thought it would be an advantage to know and to have powerful people in government. However, this was a construction of my own concepts of power and relations, and consequently, I failed to create such connections by trying to network from the top down. I thus had to employ a different approach. As different dispositifs influence the framework of thought and otherness, there is presumably a different aesthetic of power I needed to see, in order to have an understanding of the invisible ties in relation networks, which was not known to me at that time. Thus, the question of power, and its relation to various dispositifs, is the main discussion of this chapter.

Chapter six, in fact, is a next step, after my initial failure. I had to find an alternative way, through building trust relations and developing a different research dispositif. After failing to build my own trust network and have an insider status, I had to move down the ladder towards more real, more common people, who didn't know about me or my relation groups. This returned me to reflecting on my identity-in-question, where my first question became; 'Who is Amir?' As a direct impact on quality of data; 'Who is Amir,' becomes an important aspect of being an insider. While with previous relation groups, they did not even care who I am. They even created a version of Amir, a virtual Amir, to satisfy their own purposes for making new, stronger relations, or maintaining their face. So, the question is, how can I become a flesh-and-blood Amir, in Chinese social worlds rather than a virtual Amir?

Here, through series of narratives, I examine the key methodological issues. I explore the relation of my identity as a researcher, with issues in establishing such trust relations, and the way my identity was questioned or suspended. I close this chapter, with analysing the narratives, and the way I gain trust and succeed in becoming an insider. Insider, or its Chinese translation (熟人, shouren, or 'inner people'), is a term given to people within a relation group. Membership in such relation groups is not necessarily based on particular privileges such as race or nationality. It is a passport to enter group relations to those who share the same interests and mutual benefits. The chapter ends with a short discussion about methodological and theoretical issues involved in being seen as a member.

Seeing involves aesthetics, that is, a way of making certain things visible, and arranging them into recognisable patterns. Thus, now I explore what is meant by aesthetics of seeing the world. Three elements of aesthetics of seeing the world will be discussed in chapter seven. These are; the distribution of the sensible, community, and communication. Rancière, J. (2006) argues, that the distribution of sensible, creates the conditions for what can be seen, heard, and experienced. In particular, it reveals who can have a share in what is common to a community. This is based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed. Those actions are

represented through their language. The elements that constitute those elements of the visible are articulated and heard through discourses. In order to get into that community, I needed to understand the discourses that enable me to communicate, that is, to be seen and to be heard. Through the distribution of the sensible, places and privileges are allocated amongst members. These places and privileges are policed in order to maintain a particular distribution of the sensible. Coming to understand this policing of the distribution of the sensible is essential to becoming a member.

Here, I demonstrate the role of language in understanding 'others,' with focus on role of 'face' and 'relations' in Chinese culture as part of the police function as Rancière, J. (2004), calls it. This in turn, will lead into a discussion of issues with face and relations, as will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, which is a discussion regarding relations and the relations sphere. The first ingredient for building a strong trust relationship is recognising inherent relations. Every person's existence is defined by a bilateral relationship with another person. Then, the identity of individuals always is driven from group identity. In fact, this was the basis of my identity-in-question discussed earlier.

Through this section I explore narratives of fieldwork which raise the question of how the legitimating practices of the multitude are to be managed. If legitimacy resides with people, then there needs to be dispositifs by which to manage this. I explore this by referring to Agamben's notion of 'oikonomia,' a theological term from the early history of Christianity as 'managing the household.'

Here in this thesis, I explore such dispositifs and how they are organised, whether democratically, or non-democratically. Dispositifs which are involved in managing the household or even managing my research will be explored in chapter eight. This management involves the ways that power operates in our societies to manufacture consents and ways of seeing. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss the structure of power by outlining its history in China and comparing it to Europe.

When elites deploy dispositifs to manufacture consents, they remove those dispositifs from being open to all (that is, free to use). Agamben calls this

process sacred. Here, I use technology as an example to discuss how, by removing certain dispositifs from being open to different domains, they become sacred. The term sacred, in Roman law, is applied to the objects that belong to God, that is, are religious objects. Such objects were removed from being 'free to use' by man. They cannot be traded or sold, or used for the enjoyment of others. When objects, including the things of everyday life, buildings, or human beings, were removed from 'man's sphere' to that of God's, the process was called sacrification. Agamben remarks that the dispositif that activates and regulates separation, is sacrifice. It is done through a series of minute rituals that vary from culture to culture. Thus sacrifice always sanctions the passage of something from the profane (a Roman word for; free to use by man), to sacred. I will extend this notion of 'sacrification' to the separations that take place between the powers that individuals employ in everyday life and the application of power to manage the distribution of the sensible, and thus manage the ways of seeing of people.

Consequently, a dispositif such as technology or media, can be used to manufacture consents, create obedience, and create the conditions of what can be seen and heard, as real. Then, schooling as shaping behaviours, and managing ways of seeing, will be targeted by elites.

Chapter nine concludes the broad arguments of the thesis, and they are drawn together. In short, if I want to enter the life of a community, and learn or reflect the community's ways of doing things as a researcher, then ethnographic methods need to be employed. However, there are issues and problems in fieldwork which are difficult to solve without knowing key dispositifs operating in peoples' lives. I needed a method to handle the issues and crises, as well as, ethics of engaging in research in Chinese communities. If I need to get close to people, then I need to use appropriate methods for face-to-face encounters. This led me to explore language as having a central role to understand those key dispositifs. Methods for collecting data, including interview and observation, enabled me to gain insight into the ways of seeing and acting, that members recognise as being like an insider. Then, the process of becoming an insider, involves more than interviewing and observing. It

involves being there, and acting as an insider. Then, analytical methods, to draw identity boundaries such as polythetic and monothetic, would be appropriate.

If you want to enter into the life of others, be seen like an insider, become visible as an ordinary member of the community, there are steps to take as I discuss in previous chapters. However, entering into the world of others is not free from issues and crises. As a researcher, we go there with a baggage of identity, language, and dispositifs that enable us to see the world in our way, with understandings of how power is organised and operates, and the key elements that constitute the aesthetic of seeing our world. The task for the researcher, is then to recognise how dispositifs are formed in an 'other' community, how power is organised differently, and how to see the key elements that constitute the aesthetic world of others. One of the common issues in this process for a researcher is the question of identity. My identity-in-question, expresses me as a researcher trying to integrate myself into groups and communities I met. With each identity clash, some part of their world becomes more visible. My fieldwork experiences show how difficult it is to engage with the identity-in-question and create an identity that is visible to others as an insider. As a researcher your identity is always in question.

Identity-in-question, patterns of thinking and language, are involved in coming to understand the aesthetics of communication, and are steps for building trust relations through which one becomes visible for others as an insider. At first, I took a wrong step. I faced problems when I attempted to create my relations network from powerful and influential people. Then I turned to questions of how power is organised in the world of others.

The question of power became important when I realised there were unknown 'invisible ties' in 'relation networks'. Drawing out (or educating) relations in Chinese community involves exploring 仁 (ren) as an aesthetic of relations which can explain those invisible ties. That is, the dispositifs such as face, gift, power, and communication, come together to form an aesthetic of relations. However, when these dispositifs are high-jacked by power, to shape behaviours, creating obedience, and managing consents, the issue is raised of

how the legitimating practices of the multitude are to be managed. Thus, this thesis has discussed and contributed insights into the significance for ethnographic researchers of coming, to understand the key dispositifs through which members of communities come to see their worlds and legitimate their activities.

1 Ethnographic approach

Microsoft fumbled for years after entering China in 1992, and its business was a disaster there for a decade. It was finally figured out that almost none of the basic precepts that led to the success in the United States (U.S.) and Europe made sense in China. There, Microsoft had to become un-Microsoft. *'It nearly took the company fifteen years of challenge and losing billions of dollars revenue to learn how to do business in China,'* said Sigurd Leung, who follows the company at their research firm, Analyses International, in Beijing. *'We were a naive American Company,'* said Bill Gates, in an interview in his car after meeting with officials in Beijing (Kirkpatrick, 2007).

The goal in this chapter, is to discuss ethnography as the appropriate methodology I need to explore in the production of key narratives, that I use as a means of situating lives, events, practices, cultural values, and forms of discourse. The question, for me, is: Can we learn about others by reading a book about another culture? Or, perhaps we should go there, and live with people. This suggests engaging in ethnography, through which a participant may get to know the world of others. Trying to understand a particular group involves being with them in all the key locations and activities of their lives (Schostak 2010:2). Through this chapter I discuss the ways that ethnography can help us to understand another way of living, particularly with ethnography in the 21st century. Then, I look at the issues with interpretation and translation as between cultures. That needs a method to deal with ethics involved in handling encounters and crises of not understanding, not knowing what to do, and of getting it wrong. The question is; to what extent are these crises identifiable and correctable?

1.1 Ethnography

Ethnography comes from the Greek words, 'ethnos' (people), and 'graphein' (writing) (Geertz, 1973:3–30). It is a genre of writing that uses fieldwork to provide a detailed descriptive study of human societies in relation to their cultural domain. Broadly, ethnography is a work of describing another way of living, which people from other cultures have chosen together with their beliefs and values. An ethnographer goes to where people live and participates in their activities, sharing their understanding of the world, eating the food they enjoy and sharing their problems. An ethnographer asks questions, not only to record the answers, but also to understand and acquire knowledge of their viewpoints (Spradley, 1980).

An anthropological description of ethnography is given by Stephen L. Schensul, J. (1999) as a scientific approach to discover and investigate social and cultural patterns and meaning in communities, institutions, and other social settings. Usually, an ethnographer is involved in long term fieldwork rather than short-term data collection visits to a remote society. Ethnography employs various tools and methods, such as, participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and problem-oriented research, discovery of local beliefs and perceptions, and case studies. Spradley, J. (1980), argues that when an ethnographer is dealing with culture, in fact, they are dealing with three fundamental aspects of human experiences; what people do, what people know, and what people make and make use of.

1.2 Is ethnography a Western vision?

If ethnography is a Western vision, can it truly see through the eyes of others – non-Western others? Does ethnography as a Western originated methodology, to explore other cultures, have all the required tools to study the dispositifs of others?

Early ethnography started as colonial ethnography from the 17th Century. Probably during this period, its main purpose was to know others for protecting

state interests and controlling the colonies. Through the 20th century, its concept continued through what may be called post-colonial, and later, neo-colonial. Studying through lens of colonialism, originally, ethnography and fieldwork were the key tools of anthropologists to study non-Western societies.

However, the difference between older forms of ethnography and today's methodological debates involve such issues as power and national identity. The difficulties of earlier views lay in recognising subjects of reports (the indigenous 'other') as having a right to be regarded as equally human to the European observer (Seale, 2004:100). Today, cultural groups may ask the purpose of an ethnographer for exploring their way of living. Will such reports (ethnographical research) help them with their immediate problems? Would it be exploration, for distribution of knowledge, equally for humanistic purposes, or for the sake of profit and construction of a new form of control? Therefore there will be difficulties, issues, and expectations raised from the purpose of ethnography, which required exploration.

1.3 Ethnography for what?

There was a time when ethnographers used to go to remote societies to record other ways of living. From its beginnings in the 17th century, their purposes included the exploration of an exotic culture which needed to be discovered and recorded, as part of their anthropological study. Increasingly in the 20th century, questions were raised such as: Research for what? Why are you interested in our culture?

In many places we can no longer collect cultural information from people merely to fill the bank of scientific knowledge. Informants are asking, even demanding,

Ethnography for what? Do you want to study our culture to build your theories of poverty? Can't you see that our children go hungry? Do you want to study folk beliefs about water witching? What about the new nuclear power plant that

contaminates our drinking water with radioactive wastes? Do you want to study kinship terms to build ever more esoteric theories? What about our elderly kinsmen who live in poverty and loneliness? Do you want to study our schools to propose new theories of learning? Our most pressing need is for schools that serve our children's needs in the language they understand. (Spradley, 1980:17)

Alternatively, ethnographic research may not always be designed to answer the needs of the society by trying to understand them, instead, it may be designed to create a statistical data base for businesses who want to enter new markets. From this point of view, ethnographic research is used for market expansion and global financial control, rather than understanding others. For instance, Roberta Astroff believes the relationship between the ethnographer and informant, the exchange of goods, money, and status, are all exchanged for information. She refers to ethnography, conducted for sale to marketers and advertisers, as Para-ethnography, in order to distinguish it in context, style, and product, from market research that present itself as science (Burton and Astroff, 1997:256). She explains the similarities between anthropology and marketing.

Both anthropology and marketing research can be seen as systems through which cultures are made knowable – that is, identified, defined and codified. Marketing, like anthropology, provides paradigms, theories, definitions, values and needs that are used to identify and produce cultures and markets. These processes in both anthropology and marketing make cultures into marketable goods according to their own disciplinary and economic structures. (Burton and Astroff, 1997:123)

An example of the use of ethnography in this manner is the recent market interest in China. Then corporations, such as food businesses, cannot

succeed without a deep understanding of the local cultural values. This is not about exploring for oil or diamonds within a colonized country. It is about expanding the market in contemporary developing societies. To this end, ethnographers do not need to carry out research for the sake of knowledge, but for the purposes of profit, by organisations that initiate and pay for the research.

Another distinction between classical ethnography and the use of ethnography in the 20th century, is the naturalistic view as the proper nature of social research. Naturalism proposes that, as far as possible, the social world should be studied in its 'natural' state, undisturbed by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). However, today KFC and McDonalds have already disturbed the natural state with their ethnographies in order to create consumers or even changes in consumer's behaviour. Such disturbance eventually creates problems in the field.

The choice of ethnography for my research, however, is for understanding others, rather than using others, for ulterior purposes. It is driven by curiosity and friendship, rather than profit. Hence, for my purpose, building trust is essential. One of the first stones of constructing the kind of ethnographic research I want to engage in involves building trust relationships and networking with people when on fieldwork. There is where the question of identity is raised; the identity of the informants, as well as of the researcher. The ethnographer has to be prepared to reply to such questions as his identity, and the one in relation to what the research is about, for what purpose, and for whom. In fact, to enter into the field means to have an answer or response to such questions as; Why are you here? Who are you? What will you do with the research? However, one is not only a participant in the lives of others, but a participant who observes. Therefore, I had to be prepared to respond to similar questions in relation to my research in order to build trust. I will explore such issues and difficulties in more details in chapter six.

As Cohen, J H. (2000) argues, participant observation is one of the cornerstones of ethnographic research. An essential issue for participant observation, is the question of identity, or in other words, the ambiguous

identity of the researchers. In general, field problems are mainly about the relationship between others, as locals, and us, as researchers. Cohen, J. H. (2000) mentioned, that it's not only the question of the researcher's identity, but also his/her identity in the field. Traditional ethnography has supported the isolation and neutrality of researchers. For example, Cohen, J H. (2000) found the most critical problem in his research was with the neutrality of the researchers, and its effect on his and his wife's relationship to the people of his study, the Santaneros (the people from Santa Ana, in Mexico).

In the middle of several years of fieldwork, in February of 1993, in Santa Ana Valle, Oaxaca, a rural, Zapotec speaking community of 3000, were faced with a challenge to the neutral state of observer. Because they (Cohen and his wife), publicly did not choose a side in a local political dispute, he found the decision jeopardised the trust he had worked hard to build in the field. He might never have understood what had gone wrong if one of his key informants had not given him a clue. In other words, he had to make a choice, like everyone else who had made their choice in order to be recognised as a trusted member of the community.

Then, by doing ethnography, it was possible to become a trusted member of a community for understanding their way of life. By observation, being there, sharing people's daily activities, and participating in what they expect as a member to be involved, was the only way for recognition.

1.4 Participant Observer

'Tell me, and I will forget,
Show me, and I may remember,
Involve me, and I will understand.'

(Confucius & Soothill, 1995)

The way to know the world of others and understand a group of people, is by joining them, being with them in their everyday activities, and where those activities take place. Participant observation becomes more than just a

method or technique for data collection because it involves learning how and what people do, joining in with them and being a witness to what happens and acting alongside others (Schostak, 2006).

The questions arose because I wanted to get beyond the limited experiences shaped by particular context and a particular purpose. For instance, by doing fieldwork only in a school in a large city, such as Shenzhen or Shanghai, I would not be able to know about the education system in a rural area, where they cannot afford to employ a foreign teacher. Neither could I understand what food means for Chinese if I did not share such experience around the table with them. Likewise, the Chinese way of living cannot be interpreted by spending my time in Western pubs, Starbucks, or KFC.

There are similar experiences concerning education partners (as recently it is very common in China), where researchers and academics are invited formally. They are usually welcomed at the airport, perhaps by a black luxurious official car, and driven from one place to another. During their stay, each minute is organised, from breakfast in the lobby of the hotel, to the dinner with various heads, professors, and directors, who may not speak English very well, but, they know very well how to enjoy a Bordeaux French red wine. There will be daily visits to the related business or department to demonstrate great achievements. In addition, visits might end with a photo shoot and a gift to remember it by. To them, their business or academic visit was successful and promising. They stayed in China for a short time and were proud of who they are. They feel special and happy. Every aspect of the visit becomes about them and there have much to talk about their trip to China. Nevertheless, what have they really learned about Chinese culture, or the education system, except some carefully selected presentations? In fact, generating knowledge and meaning about others is simply composed behind the closed doors of a Western-style hotel room.

In short, something will be missed here, and something will be misunderstood, misinterpreted, and there will be failure. The true participation, is by joining people we want to know in their ways of living, under what they consider to be their normal conditions, through their everyday relations.

Joining with others means getting to know the members of scenes of action – the dramatis personae – getting to know their values, their reasons for action, their ways of acting. (Schostak, 2010)

By doing ethnography, there were many issues to deal with. Some were known prior to the fieldwork, and many were unexpected. The following section is an overview of those difficulties which are discussed in more detail through chapter's five to eight.

1.5 Issues with ethnography

1.5.1 Difficulties in the field

Standard and general methodologies do not always equip us with all the necessary tools to overcome fieldwork problems. Issues experienced by researchers are usually unique to a particular field of research. The experienced issues may give us some identification of where we should search for water, but certainly is not a map for it. In addition to the earlier discussed issues, entering the field, gaining trust, and being ethical, will be treated in more detail in chapters five and six. Learning about the values, behaviours, and ways of thinking are essential to being accepted as part of a community.

For example, in one of my visits to a family in Guiyang (贵阳), after finishing dinner in a local restaurant, I was speaking to their two little daughters and encouraging their English. After a while, in front of her children, their mother asked me something in Chinese, which was translated by my colleague: 'Which one is cleverer?' I knew her question was related to her children's English language, but I could not hide my surprise in reaction to the question. I started to say 'em (...) em (...), they're both clever (...), one has a better vocabulary bank, the other a good (...).' Even more surprisingly, after my

words were translated, an unpleasant silence filled the air, with disappointed smiles on both parents and the children! It was not hard to see that both children and parents were disappointed with my answer. However, for the Chinese, putting their children into direct competition with each other, is rooted in Confucian education and centuries of his system of testing in education, an approach that has lasted until recently. The mother of the children thought she had someone to evaluate their daughter's hard work and progress, but someone who was not willing to give his opinion. For the children, no matter how harsh, this was an accepted way of recognising their achievements and their need for improvements.

It is not always easy to map relations, such as, trust relations between individuals in a group, knowing the intentions of a person, questions, the reasons for their disappointments and the impacts on behaviour. The 'intentional network' model, developed by Schostak, J. (2008), helps to explore such relations. Within a group, each individual acts in some way toward another. In phenomenology, this directedness toward another is called an intentional relation. In chapter seven, those issues shaping the relations are developed further.

There are a number of other difficulties such as neutrality and covert participation in fieldwork. Some difficulties are general and similar, and some unique to a particular research such as Cohen's (2000) experience of the neutrality of the participant observer, and the discussion as to what extent a participant can be neutral to local events. Another example is the degree of information that must be given to informants and locals. In some research, the participant observer has to be covert. To some researchers, this might be seen as unethical, however, in others, it could protect researchers or other people's lives.

In China, one of my main problems during the fieldwork, was the general knowledge and attitude to social science research. In many occasions, people were suspicious of my real purpose for research and it was difficult to gain their trust. Some individuals and groups have little knowledge about social research; and partly as a result, field researchers are frequently suspected of

their real identity and intention (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I will discuss those difficulties in the fieldwork in more details in chapter five and six.

1.5.2 Quality criteria

Although the issues in quality criteria, such as, objectivity, validity, and generalisation, may be different, but are common issues with qualitative research. Patton (2001) states that validity and reliability are two factors that researchers should be concerned about. Validity is not a singular test to apply to the process of the research. In different stages, different ways of measurements may be considered. For instance, to test my understanding of beauty in Chinese calligraphy, I would rely on confirmation from members of the community. In chapter three, I discuss the ways that I deal with those issues in detail.

Regarding ethical issues guideline, I have complied with the British Education Research Association (BERA) guidelines for ethical issues, as this research started before Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) had developed its ethics committee structure and procedures.

What has been discussed here, was ethnography as an appropriate methodology in understanding other ways of living, as well as, the issues and crises involved in ethnography. This leads to a discussion regarding the required resources that need to be addressed and how I can mobilise those resources in order to address the range of situations that occur in everyday life.

2 Dispositif and Public Pedagogy

By exploring the resources available to social situations, such as, familiarity with a range of discourses employed in social contexts, there is a ground for better understanding and analysing problems in fieldwork. I explore such resources in terms of Agamben's development of Foucault's use of the term 'dispositif.' There are key dispositifs I had to discover in order to enter into a community. I argue that various activities, common to all humans, however employed differently from one social group to another, can produce misunderstandings. I also discuss roles of the key dispositifs in generating such misunderstandings, by exploring the dispositif term in detail, and its four different themes, to reveal the potential for a dispositif to become a capturer of behaviours, and thus have a role in the application of power by elites. I argue, that education, and public pedagogy, can be employed to influence minds and behaviours, and to transform what was unfamiliar into new senses of what comes to be experienced as familiar, by reshaping thoughts, and educating (that is, drawing out), new norms governing everyday life.

Agamben (2009) claims a dispositif is a heterogeneous set that is partitioned into two large groups or classes, living beings and everything else, which are originated at some point in human history, with the specific purpose of defining or shaping our behaviour. Examples of such 'dispositifs' include 'communication,' 'technological devices,' 'law,' and 'education.'

The purpose of this chapter is introducing the dispositif term and its role in public learning. I also discuss dispositifs object model as a way to explore this role through differences. It contributes to this thesis in two different parts, the first part is more theoretical and analytical exploration of 'dispositif,' and its educational dimension, which is also a preparation for the second part (sections 2.2.2 – 2.2.3), a discussion about three dispositifs, common to all societies, which is mainly based on my own research for further analysis.

2.1 Educational dimension of dispositif

There is an educational dimension of a dispositif, both in employing, and in the way our behaviour is shaped by using it. Perhaps the education role of dispositifs in our lives started with the first dispositif that changed our destiny as a human. Since then we learned to create, and use more dispositifs to separate us further from our animalistic past. We were captured and being subjected by each dispositif and our learning has shaped accordingly (Agamben et al., 2009). We have educated in every aspect of our lives, but not always the same. Dispositifs involve bringing into a particular relationship of various elements in order to respond to urgent needs. For instance, to explore relations between various mechanisms of organisations through which power is brought to bear to address an issue. The word 'dispositif' in French, has a wide range of meanings; from 'operation' or 'system' in a police force, to a particular device, and to an apparatus as a 'mechanism' or 'facility' in a military context or 'operation'. Then, dispositif can answer the questions concerning who has control over the conditions for the production of knowledge, values, and skills, and it illuminates how knowledge, identities, and authority are constructed within particular sets of social relations (Barroso, 2013).

The role of dispositifs, in reshaping knowledge and values, rise from its four characteristic structures as; hierarchy, networked, duality, and object model. Because of these characteristic structures, dispositifs become capturer of our behaviour and a perfect tool for manipulating public pedagogy by powers.

2.1.1 Hierarchical structure

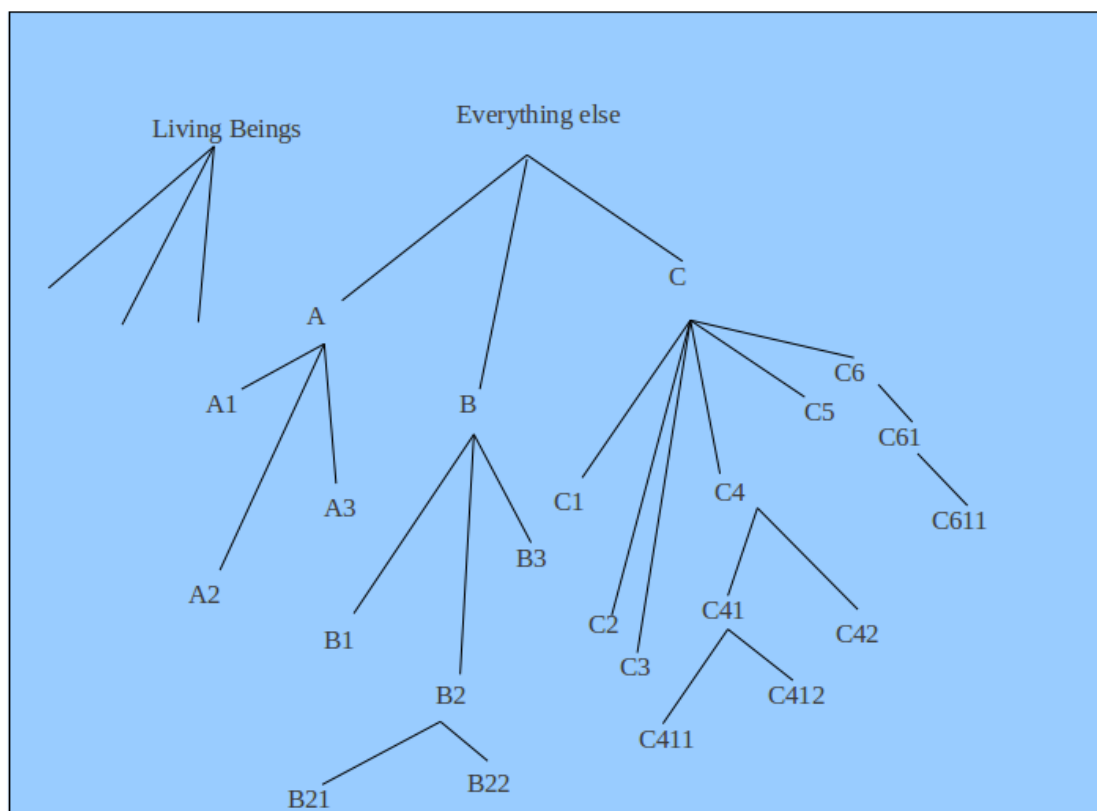
Reading the book, "*Journey of Man*," I was fascinated by the account that we (humans), were the same until being separated, and after we left our motherland Africa about 60,000 years ago, differences developed. We moved out, towards different regions that had various geographical advantages or

disadvantages (Wells and Read, 2002). We noticed the need for advanced tools; accordingly, we developed various dispositifs to help us, to make us happy, to satisfy our various desires (Agamben et al., 2009).

Since then, continuous development of different dispositifs, crowd our everyday life exponentially. It is not possible to talk about schooling or education without exploring people’s everyday life. As dispositifs, for instance, education, communication, gift, and food, are all connected together. To understand others’ world of similar dispositifs, relations between them must be studied alongside.

Perhaps an object model of a dispositif network can describe the relationship between its elements and if such network is the same everywhere else. Is the education or schooling under influence of similar dispositifs in other societies? Using ‘object’ definition, I develop the diagram below, to illustrate dispositifs as two separate hierarchical classes, one living being, and another, everything else, as Agamben has argued.

Figure 1: Dispositif class diagram.

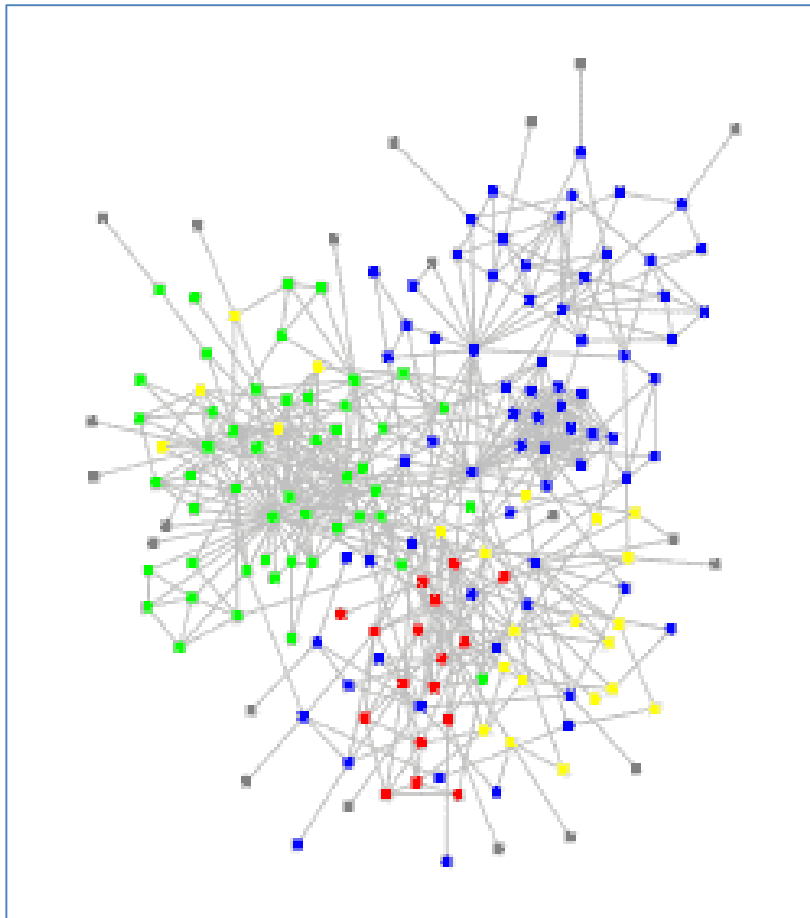


The dispositif hierarchical class diagram not only demonstrates Agamben's definition of dispositif, but also displays the educational dimension of dispositifs. This educational dimension can be described in terms of the development of powers of thought, imagination and action that were necessary to create tools. In that sense, by 'drawing out' (in one of its earlier senses) or 'educating,' the power of people to create tools and organise, to engage in projects such as tools, law, and schools. Then, the above diagram, also can contribute to understanding of social shaping of behaviours, values, norms, and the way of thinking, through socialisation as a form of 'schooling.' By its hierarchical structure, each dispositif follows a development or an idea from a higher branch in hierarchy.

2.1.2 Network Structure:

Another aspect of dispositifs, based on Agamben's definition, is the process of forming networks. Relations between dispositifs are not linear. In other words, dispositifs are in a kind of network relation. For instance, public pedagogy is not only influenced by knowledge, but also dominated by powers; media, etc., directly or indirectly. Perhaps the diagram below can visualise dispositifs as a network:

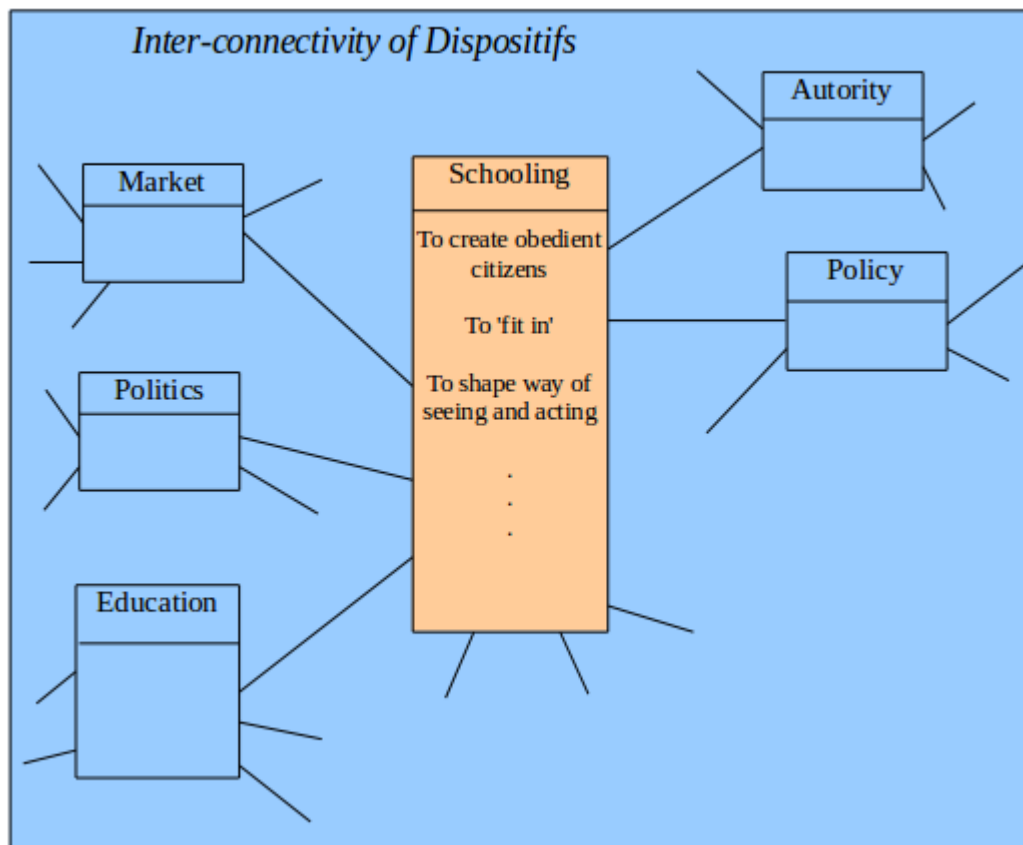
Figure 2: Dispositif network.



However, the above diagrams cannot describe the influences that a dispositif may have from other branches. For instance, 'education' itself, as a dispositif, can be described according to Schostak, J. (2008), as a sum of interest, potential, and creativity of a person as he/she reflects upon and engages with the world about. In this manner, the individual, by reflecting upon experiences, is able to draw out possibilities for a course of action with others. As a dispositif, education in its relation of critical reflection on and with other dispositifs, is very different from schooling, which inherits its historical elements from other branches, such as authority, control, power, and even the market. Schooling is a way that other dispositifs (e.g., economic, governmental, media) can influence and manipulate to authorise what is going to be counted as correct and worthy, to shape children (students) behaviour and thinking to 'fit in' for a particular demand of certain social groups (Schostak, 2008).

2.1.3 Duality structure (dispositif function):

Figure 3: Inter-connectivity of dispositifs.



Dispositifs, following figure 1 do not only inherit interests from their immediate branch in a given hierarchy of classes or categories, but they are also influenced by the interests of other dispositifs from which they are distinct but to which they are horizontally connected. Regarding the schooling dispositif, it is influenced – horizontally rather than hierarchically - by religion, language, politics, and more. Hierarchically, schooling may be included in a vertical series that involves for example, indoctrination, instruction, behavioural modification. Second, Foucault has argued that a 'dispositif' is anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure, the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Then for instance, there are differences between schooling dispositifs, as shaping and controlling behaviours, and way of thinking, and education which, it may be

argued, involves a different kind of dispositif that involves the drawing out of powers to create, and thus disrupt schooling, in order to innovate.

To provide a framework for understanding the duality of the nature of the dispositifs function, Agamben refers to a theological discourse during the first centuries of church history, using a Greek term, 'oikonomia' between the second and sixth centuries. In Greek, 'oikonomia' means the administration of the 'oikos' (the home), or simply, the management of the home. During the second centuries, when the fathers of the church began to argue about the threefold nature of the divine, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there was a powerful resistance from the reasonable-minded people in the church. To convince those stubborn adversaries (later they were called 'monarchians'), who promoted the government of a single God, theologians, used 'oikonomia' in their argument, that is God, insofar as His being and substance is concerned, is one, but as to his 'oikonomia,' or the way in which he administers his home, his life, and the world that he created, he is triple. This is the same as in the traditional patriarchal view of the family when a father may give the responsibility of the management and execution of certain duties to his entrusted son without losing his power (Agamben et al., 2009).

Similarly, the management of home, in the field of schooling, or even public pedagogy, is undertaken by elites and nobles to manage the consents. In this sense, schooling is becoming separated from the education (as a process through which creative powers are 'drawn out'), as God is being separated from His action.

In short, oikonomia is a separation of God as Being from His action. Agamben sees a similar effect in the 'living being' when it separates from itself from its immediate relationship with its environment. Such separation creates in the living being, both, the capacity to suspend this relationship with disinhibitors - and the Open, which is, the possibility of knowing being as such, by constructing a world. Through these dispositifs which crowded the Open, man attempts to nullify the animalistic behaviours that are now separated from him and to enjoy the Open, as such, to enjoy being insofar as it is being.

At the root of each dispositif lies an all-too-human desire for happiness. The capture and subjectification of this desire in a separate sphere constitutes the specific power of the dispositif. (Agamben, 2009:16).

To explore the separation process and subjectification, an example of a mobile phone would be appropriate. While mobile phones can satisfy the desire for communication, to be informed, to feel secure, and mainly to learn, it subjects us in a totally different way. In fact, such dispositifs are no longer satisfying our learning desire and by giving each person an identity number, an x-y location, and a long contract, controls and manipulates our communication desire.

The individual is increasingly inscribed in terms of 'address', not so much the fixed address of home and land line, but the mobile number, that move with the individual whether phone, computer, credit card, social security number and passport. These numbers that begin to define the identity; the more they cross-correlate, the more the individual is a prisoner and hostage of the apparatuses that inscribe him or her. (J. Schostak and Schostak, 2013:37)

I have recorded several situations where people are schooled to use a mobile phone in China.

- *Can be answered regardless of the situation, especially where the hierarchy is involved. It means when the caller is the superior, phone must be answered, regardless.*
- *To be used for translation of English language.*
- *Used for shopping channels.*
- *It is not forbidden to use mobile phones at work.*
- *Bond closely with QQ (Chinese social networking).*
- *Maintaining face by choosing a higher brand of mobile phones.*
- *Same as exchanging name cards, giving out Mobile numbers is*

usual, even to a stranger.

- *It's a directory of relations. Same as name cards.*

Perhaps a key motivation for the use of the mobile phone in China, like many other places, is to satisfy the desires for happiness by facilitating individuals with all aspects of communications. Although in China, lack of intensive push to take contracts from the private sector did not exist much, but a mobile phone was playing a major role in motivating conformity. In terms of dispositif networks and public pedagogy, in China, it helps people with maintaining face, or immediate access to their relations network. In terms of social networking and smart phones, lack of dominated private mobile network industries caused having a different role in social shaping and educational space.

2.1.4 Object model structure

To recapitulate, we have then, two great classes; living being (or subclasses), and apparatuses. And, between these two, as a third class, subjects. I call a subject that which results from the relation, and so to speak, from the relentless fight between living beings and apparatuses. Naturally, the substances and the subject, as in ancient metaphysics, seem to overlap, but not completely. In this sense, for example, the same individual, the same substance, can be the place of multiple processes of subjectification (Agamben, 2009:14)

From Agamben's argument, dispositifs involve a subjectification process. However, a contemporary version of a dispositif, such as today's mobile phones, create different subjects than the early phone version. In other words, possibly, at different times and in different cultures, different versions of the same dispositif were in use. Different versions of a same dispositif can have a different network configuration with other dispositifs.

In this sense, the same mobile dispositif can produce different forms of subjectification in an individual, as a result of the way that a dispositif is networked with other dispositifs, or in other words, as a result of a different way of using a dispositif. Such differences can be because of time – as differences between ancient dispositifs and contemporary ones – or between different cultures. In China, the role of a mobile phone in an educating (drawing out) of a way seeing, is rooted in easy and quick access to their relation network. On the one hand, people learn how to use this device with the demand of building and maintaining their relations. On the other hand, such ease of access increases their obligations toward their immediate relations network. With the importance of relations networks in Chinese societies, a mobile phone becomes linked to relations networks. They are expected to be accessible all the time by their superior, even after working hours. In terms of manufacturing of consents, it becomes a norm to have a mobile phone number and to be accessible, to be traceable, to receive tens of advertisements every day. These are in addition to all sorts of forces that remove and separate this dispositif from peoples' sphere.

2.1.5 Manipulation of consents

Agamben separates the way that we were captured by certain dispositifs during the past and in the modern world. Capitalism and the other modern forms of power seem to generalise and push to the extreme the process of such separation. In the current phase of capitalism, dispositifs no longer act as much through the production of a subject, as through the process of becoming a number, no longer subject as such. This process involves what he calls 'desubjectification'.

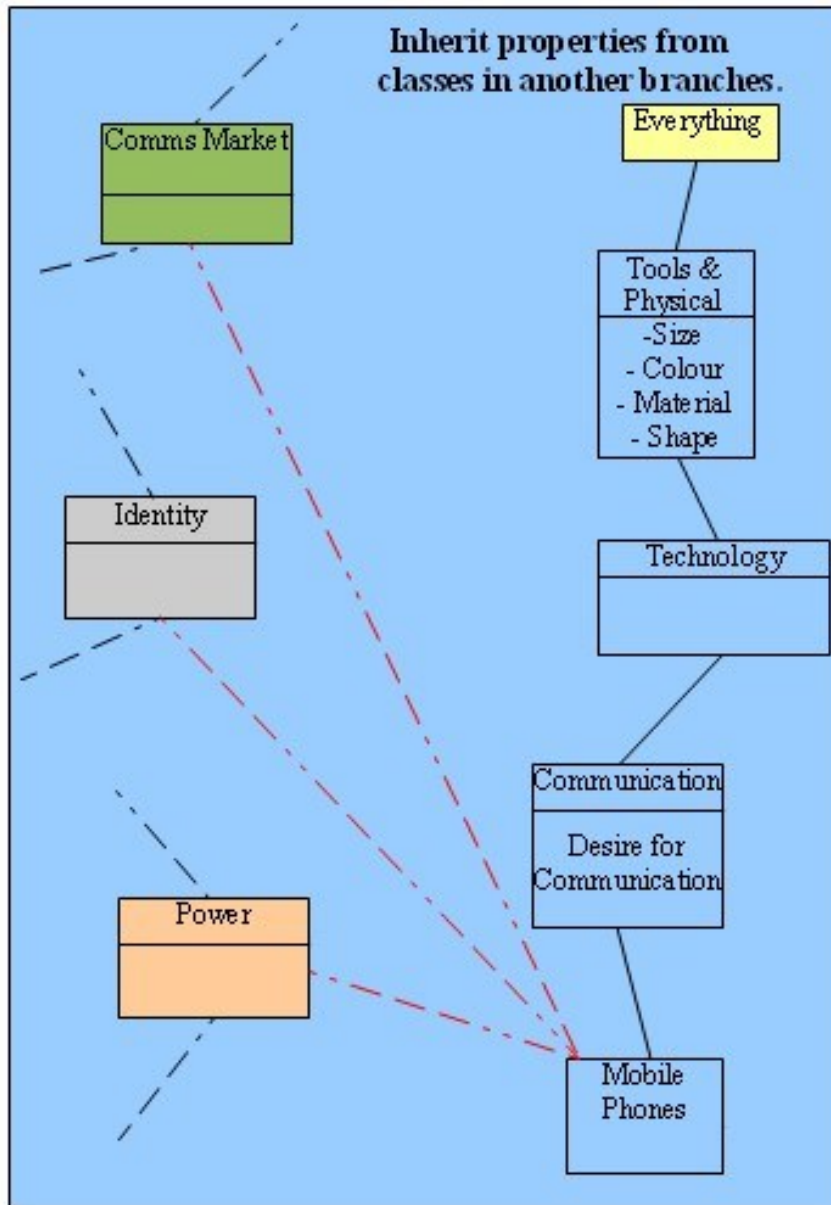
He who lets himself be captured by the mobile phone dispositif – whatever the intensity of the desire that has driven him – cannot acquire a new subjectivity, but only a number through which he can, eventually, be controlled. (Agamben, 2009:21)

The above comment refers to exercising power on mobile phone users in recent years. Phones, computers, and similar technologies, are embedded in schools in order to manage the process of learning, as well as, to control, create records that represent the individuals by a digital numbers, and separate them from living beings.

In many countries, use of mobile phones has already gained a potential for surveillance and control over its users. As mobile phones were developed to capture the urgent desires of humans for communication, or in Agamben's terms, 'happiness,' it is hijacked from the human sphere or the state of being 'OPEN.' Not only does it not capture 'happiness' any more, but is also used against individuals' freedom, either physically, to track them anywhere in the world, or mentally by manufacturing needs. That is, a mobile phone dispositif exits from being 'OPEN' and thus common to be used by people, and is sacrificed, or even sometimes operates against being 'OPEN.' People unconsciously learn to obey the imposed power through using mobile dispositifs.

The diagram below demonstrates mobile phone dispositifs as a branch of communication within a hierarchy of 'Technology.' However, other dispositifs, such as 'power,' 'control,' and 'Comms Market,' impose power on 'mobile phones,' and exit it from its branch by enforcing their hierarchical properties. Now a mobile phone, in addition to influences inherited from 'communication,' the dispositif inherits properties from 'Comms Market,' 'Power,' and 'Control' dispositifs too. By using 'mobile phone' dispositifs in schools, in fact, we move those other dispositifs into our schools and education too, but much easier. There are more powerful tools and technology in education and schools to shape and reshape consents than in the past. Consequently, education and schooling are no longer creating subjects of education only, but subjecting people to other capturers too.

Figure 4: Inheriting properties from classes from another classificatory system.

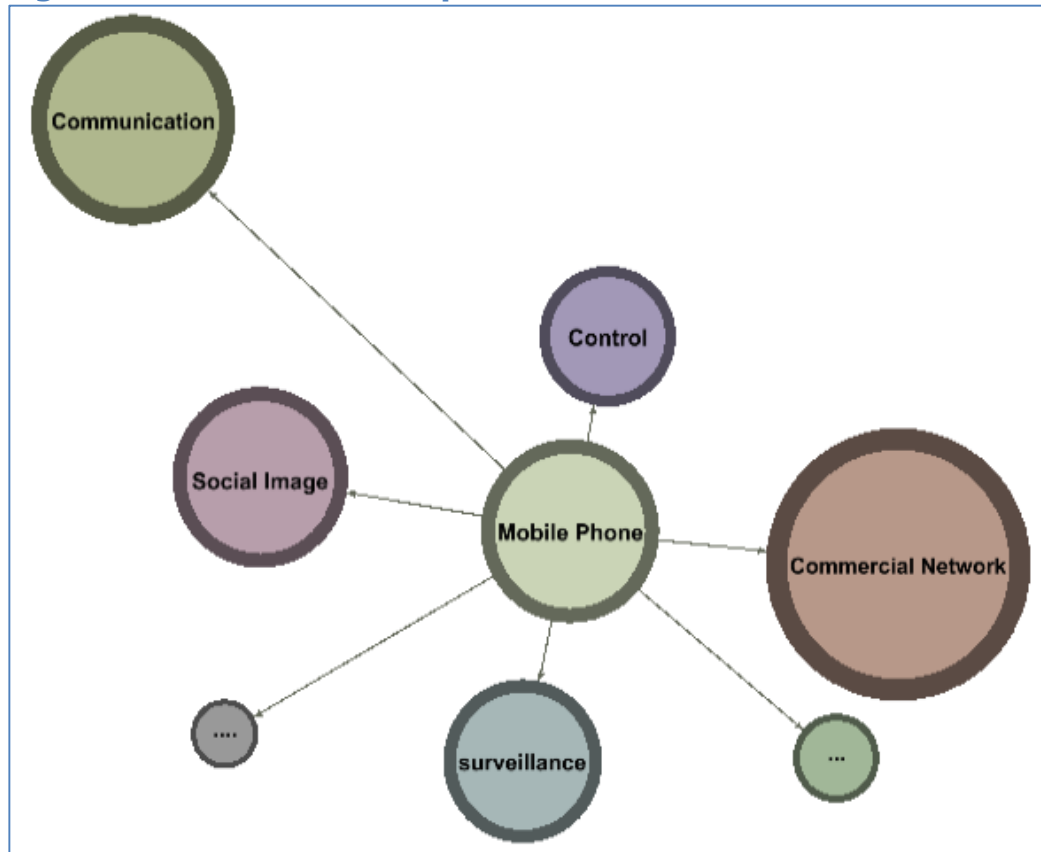


Thus, using modern dispositifs (dispositifs in the capitalist era), there is a potential to create or manipulate dispositifs that are not hierarchically organised, but are effective in coordinating the actions of millions of people (Schostak and Schostak, 2013:13). In order to study how a dispositif is hijacked from the human sphere and becomes a device to produce a different version of true, in public pedagogy, I return to the mobile phone dispositif. The following

figure summarises the above discussion.

Today, a mobile phone, by integrating ever-increasing functions, has a potential to control people's behaviour. Then, a mobile phone is just an abstract of a phone dispositif, with elements inherited from other dispositifs, which can play an important role in educating the public.

Figure 5: Mobile Phone dispositif.



Here, in our discussion, with mobile phone dispositifs – when they are linked to power, control, and communication network markets - have the capacity to be removed from the human or free sphere and so create their subject as a product of control or manipulation as I discussed earlier.

The mobile phone dispositif diagram helps to understand the relations between knowledge and power. The above figure shows only the mobile phone branch of its hierarchy. An important aspect of the diagram is the relation of knowledge and power within this model. Where a dispositif has a major role in developing and organising knowledge, it is captured by power, and will play an

essential role in social shaping both in public pedagogy and schooling.

A mobile phone in this way, not only implies a process of subjectification, without which, mobile phones cannot function as a *dispositif*, but also, by extending its links to various forms of power, also involves a process of desubjectification. For Agamben, this dual process seems to become reciprocally indifferent, and so, they do not give rise to the re-composition of a new subject (Agamben, 2009:21).

In Figure 5, the mobile phone *dispositif* extends its connection to other *dispositifs* and consequently will involve schooling users in some way. Such forms of schooling could be different in another society with influences from different *dispositifs*. Then, the same *dispositifs* may have the same or a similar state, but have different behaviours and educational elements when they are used by a different group of people. Change in educational element shapes our learning and way of thinking. In the case of mobile phones, that is, the changes in educational element, can lead either to social control or to emancipation.

As implications for education as a creative process, in the mobile phone example, its role in producing knowledge through communication creating the conditions for discourse, dialogue and sharing experience is significant. In Foucault's (1982) view, discourse is knowledge and through discourse, what is 'true or false' will be determined, If we are a total of our experiences, or, in other words, a sum of 'knowledge' we have acquired, then those who are involved in our daily experiences, have great power.

For Foucault, power exists everywhere and comes from everywhere. He is not looking at 'power' as a negative point in our societies, but its effect on the entire network, the world around us, and our behaviour. Thus, the mobile phone *dispositif*, creates the condition for a free subject to do something that he or she might not do otherwise. It can become a tool, to impose power on its users, to imprison souls by manipulating public norms. By stressing such values, schooling will marginalise those who do not hold those values.

Mauss, M. (1993) studied such influences or habits in relation to our action and the way we use our body in various activities. From the way we

sleep, to the way we wake up, from swimming to running. To him there is an 'education' in various body techniques. We learn how to use our body in different ways. The individual borrows the series of movements from the action executed in front of him/her, or with him/her, by others. They learn from a series of successful actions, the actions performed by people in whom s/he has confidence and authority. A child learns how to hold a pen and how to use it, and how to dance (Mauss, 1973).

For example, there were new body techniques involved when I learned how to move from writing printed forms of characters (English) to write logographic (Chinese) characters, and even when I learned to use brush and ink for Chinese calligraphy.

Every person, through his life, learns to use various dispositifs from others who have a higher authority, in social contact, or in formal education, conscious or unconscious. This is how the bodies of power shape the public learning. In the current stage of capitalism, and its control over technological resources, more dispositifs results in more control. Recent developments of technologies such as surveillance systems, biometric identifications, and various forms of Identification (ID) systems, all are the extensions of a machine to police the new production of public knowledge. From manipulating our desires, enjoyments, way of thinking and acting, to knowing otherness, which 'media' dispositifs has a leading role of. The target for degeneration of knowledge is not only public pedagogy, but also schools and education systems are not separate from this invasion.

Through the rest of this research, I refer to 'dispositif instance,' to describe a same dispositif but with a different 'network' configuration' for its potential to produce misunderstanding and knowing others. The potential, is in producing opportunities for elite-driven pedagogy, which makes today's dispositifs far different from traditional ones.

2.2 Misunderstanding as a key in the processes of public pedagogy

In the previous section, I discussed the way that a dispositif can be hijacked from the human sphere by elite powers, and is used for social shaping in our schools, or in public space. Powers may organise differently in different cultures, but still, it is power and involved with reshaping the way of seeing and acting. In chapter eight, I discuss the differences between 'power' and 'powers' in relation to dispositif networks.

In this chapter, I discuss the ways that subjectification can cause misunderstandings, or not understanding others who are subjected to what appear to be the same dispositifs, but configured in different ways. Although the global market's intention may be to ensure that everyone around the world are subjected to various dispositifs in the same ways for global control, my experiences from the fieldwork shows, that cultural differences or in dispositif terms, using different instances of apparently the same dispositifs creates a temporary resistance against global processes.

Here I discuss some examples of my learning of understanding others in the space of education and public pedagogy. I argue, that the process of understanding, is very much based on our knowledge of specific instances of dispositifs and the related processes of subjectification involved. In other words, the way each dispositif is networked with other dispositifs, will change the educational dimension of that dispositif – the way it will be used. Misunderstandings are the issue when we disturb the harmony of a dispositif network in a community with our own dispositifs, which can be different. In this chapter, I study three different dispositifs, communication, food, and gift, as an example of such differences.

Perhaps the most important dispositif, as Agamben (2009) mentioned, is language. We all use an instance of this dispositif, but due to our different social positions, circumstances and uses of it, networked with other dispositifs, we are not subjectified by it in a same way. I started my learning journey in subjectification with communication to understand how my and perhaps many

other researchers experiences of understanding and misunderstanding shape in the first place. Although 'communication dispositif' is required a detailed discussion involves in separating the material part of it from the cultural side, and the verbal from the non-verbal, but here, my purpose is to understand how and where they take place and what the implications are in education and public pedagogy.

2.2.1 Communication dispositif

As Agamben concludes, from the analysis of the 'dispositif' concept, we are dependent on using various dispositifs and the relational networks among them. Maybe the very first dispositif was:

(...) Language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of dispositifs— one in which thousands and thousands years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured, probably without realising the consequences that he was about to face. (Agamben et al., 2009:14)

If language has a central role as a dispositif, then it provides a means by which to understand and learn the key dispositifs through which a given people's lives are organised. In order to know others, or have knowledge of others in a given social context, it is important to become familiar with the discourses through which dispositifs operate. In addition, the significance of a discourse is in its connection to a 'power' dispositif. However, the production of meaning can have as an objective, certain results in the realm of power (Foucault, 1982:786). Then, learning about such relations, will help with a more sophisticated understanding of how we are educated – or our learning manipulated - to see the world around us - in formal education or public pedagogy.

Foucault believed that discourse has a dominating role in our learning and understanding norms in our society. It shapes or educates our views of

what is 'true' and what is not.

Foucault has been hugely influential in pointing to the ways that norms can be so embedded as to be beyond our perception – causing us to discipline ourselves without any wilful coercion from others.

According to Foucault, truth, morality, and meaning are created through discourse. Every age has a dominant group of discursive elements that people live in unconsciously. In the past, the idea of individualism was prominent in American discourse. To not be individualistic, i.e., to be communist, was to be evil. So that discourse in a college class, more specifically, will ultimately privilege ideas of what is normal ('good' and 'normative' morals); by stressing these values, education will implicitly marginalize those who don't hold those values (Rabinow, 1991).

In a similar way, if use of different dispositifs, like communication, produces a learning process, then such learning shapes not only our understanding, but also misunderstanding, of world of others. Although misunderstanding, because of inter-cultural communication, is no longer a new field in social science, but as a part of dispositif network, a deeper study in its cultural aspect is required to understand the role of communication and language as a dispositif.

Most of the meaning part of a discourse is invisible and based on background knowledge of a given society or community. One of the invisible influences in a discourse is power. To produce a meaningful analysis, I needed to see the invisible, which is already known by others, but not me. To make sense, or be engaged in a discourse, generating an appropriate interface to deal with the invisible part of discourse is essential. When a discourse is reflected in a form of recorded and reconstructed product, the mental model (or the invisible) part of it is usually missing. This is where significant dispositifs such as 'power,' 'face,' 'food,' or 'gift,' bring people together in everyday life and becomes critical to understand, in order to make sense of a discourse. Thus, I explore this process of getting to know others through reflections on my own attempts at learning about other cultures.

2.2.2 Food dispositif

Exploring common and ordinary dispositifs to all humans is a way to explore the educational/schooling dimensions of a dispositif. Therefore, presumably food habits are one of the first instances in meeting others, which construct our knowledge about others. There is an education about food habits and it is a way to explore the educational dimension of a dispositif in my own research. On the one hand, there is the historical elements of food habits and social gathering as a network of dispositifs. On the other, there is the process of educating food habits in our societies by food industries and media, trying to reshape our understanding of what is food and what is not, or how to enjoy our food. However, in this section, my aim is to investigate how a dispositif such as 'food' can produce its subject in China today. What are the other influences by other dispositifs, which can make this common to all dispositifs different from mine?

Eleven years ago, when I taught Chinese students in Manchester, I started to learn about another culture in the capacity of a teacher. Observing them closely and comparing their behaviour and their approaches to learning in class with other students, suggested that there were distinct differences between Chinese learners, and for example, Middle Eastern, or European students.

One day, after the lesson, two students came to me and invited me to their flat to cook for me. For a second I was very surprised and had problems in finding the right answer. Finally, I said; 'Oh, thank you very much for your offer, but I am very busy these days.'

After eleven years, and learning about food culture in China, today, I have a better sense of the students' invitation in the same way that it might be understood by a Chinese. Through this section, I reflect on what was learned in relation to the above story and similar ones in China that has led me to this different sense of understanding. How does the role of food and dinner invitations, in schooling people in China, in terms of their relations network, and their sense of place in a hierarchy? Answering this question will require

development of a theoretical approach that explores food as dispositif.

It was long time ago when I had my first Chinese food in Chinatown in Manchester. I thought it authentic and exotic. In other words, 'exotic' meant differences in taste, style of eating, use of chopsticks, and colours. I decided to learn to use chopsticks like the Chinese and enjoyed my food like the Chinese. Nevertheless, I did not know that still I was enjoying Chinese food, in the same way I was enjoying other foods such as Turkish, Iranian or Italian. With each experience, I learned more about the variety of dishes and even how to cook some of the Chinese dishes. However, when I went to China for the first time, I discovered that Chinese food is not only about food. It was about the public pedagogy involved in eating food, such as sharing, building relations, health and 'face,' and more.

Although consuming food is a vital part of the chemical process of our life, sometimes I failed to realise that for people, food is more than just a biological need. Why is it not possible to go to a Chinese restaurant in Manchester or any other city in England, and by eating Chinese food, understand the role of 'food' in Chinese culture? Why do we need to study it rather than just eat it? The same question can be asked of other authentic and globally popular foods, like Italian, and Indian, that are available to us. Regardless of why and how these kinds of foods became global choices, they may convey different meanings and can be seen differently within their own cultures. Moreover, it is unlikely that we can learn about a food culture of a people just by trying the food they eat. What we may find by eating foods from different cultures, is what 'others' like to eat but not how they enjoy their food, nor what is 'food' for them, nor the socio-political factors that may be involved in their choice of food.

I understand that food can be related to both the socio-cultural sphere, and biological need. However, here I discuss *my learning* from the socio-cultural role of food as a dispositif in China.

My learning and experiences of 'food' dispositifs in China, was shaped through my fieldwork and follow-up trips, bit-by-bit and day-by-day. Sometimes, it seemed possible to compare those experiences with my existing knowledge

of other cultures' food habits, at other times, they were very new to me.

Mr Chen, a government employee in Siyang describes food habits and specially 'dinner' occasions as:

Twenty years ago, when I was young, we barely could feed ourselves. Our foods were very basic stuff, like those fried noodle shaped dough. We didn't have much food varieties, and not many restaurants. We used to eat at home. During recent years with improvements of transportation, there are varieties of foods from different provinces. Now we have foods like Beijing and Sichuan foods.

I asked him, 'were you inviting your guests to restaurants before?' He said that, 'not until recently, and if we had to do it occasionally, there were not so many varieties of dishes on the table.'

Dinner occasions have gone through dramatic changes in recent years. Perhaps the main factor to shape dinner habits in recent years is the growth of relations after China's open door policy in 1979. In one of my conversations with a professor in politics at Beijing University, he explained to me the ways that the 'relations network' operates in China. He mentioned that before the open door policy, the relations network was more in its traditional forms. Everyone had to be networked with some higher influential people. For an ordinary person, it could be knowing someone in the system of daily milk distribution to have an extra pack of milk, for others a connection in government office for a better, more secure job. However, with increased privatisations, the relations network grew exponentially out of its traditional form into a new form. In chapter eight, I discuss the relations network in detail. For the purpose of this chapter, and studying how 'food,' as a dispositif, may involve subjectification in different ways, and reshape the educational element of it, I concentrate only on the 'Dinner' occasion.

One of the most favourite Chinese occupations is mutual dining. Dining together means more than eating and being together. The Chinese prefer exquisite and exotic food on a round table as a form of communication and to establish and harmonise relations. Every new relationship is initiated with a dinner invitation and must be nurtured with continuous banquet invitations. (Zinzius 2004:204).

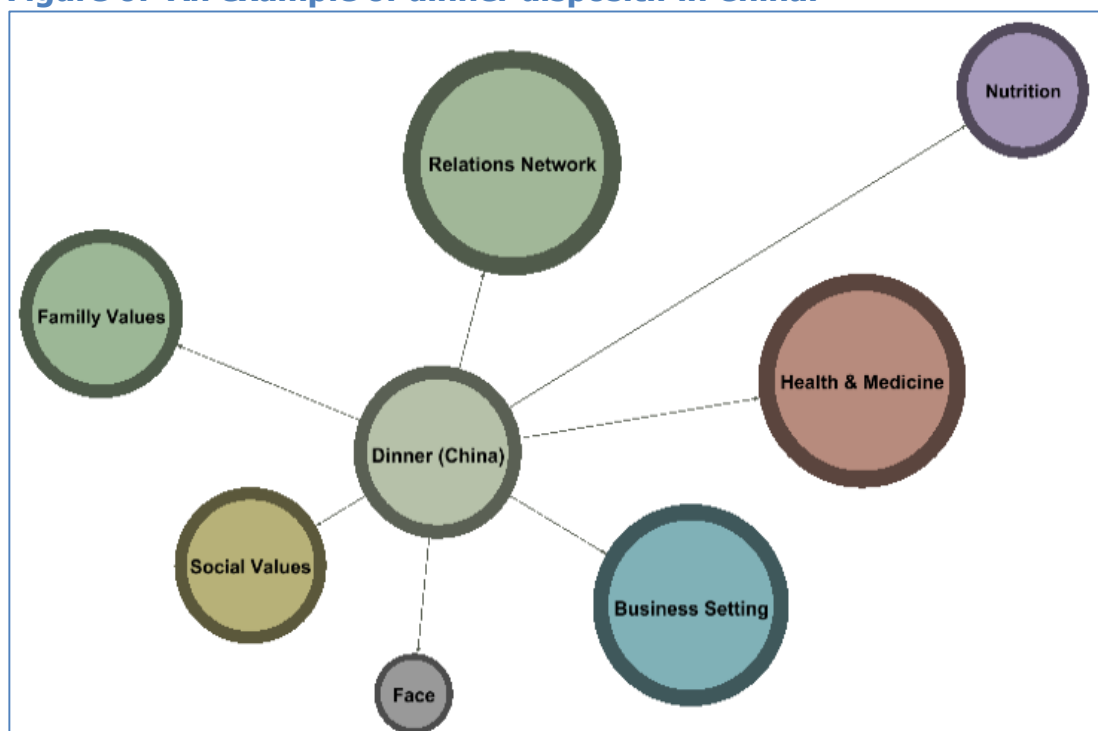
With formal dinners in China, not all of the invitees to a dinner may know each other. Formal dinners are preferably arranged in private rooms, in order to satisfy both social status and quietness of place, to enjoy food and conversation. The dinner cannot be started until everyone has arrived. In this sense, time keeping is very important. Invitees wait until the host arrives and tells them where to sit. Often, after drinking some white wine (白朮), and making a toast four times, the inviter introduces the others. They cannot toast each other, until the host has toasted everyone. No one can drink an alcoholic beverage alone. With business dinners, the discussions start after drinking, eating, and talking about food (Jacqueline Newman, 2004:137–139). Usually, business deals are closed at dinner tables.

From the above, I can highlight some words influencing a formal dinner, including privacy, hierarchy, relation building, sharing, and collectivism. Similarly, it is possible to list the words influencing a formal dinner elsewhere, such as in England. However, that may not represent all the same words or the extent of their predomination in a formal 'dinner.'

In Figure 6, both 'objects' describe instances of the dinner dispositif. In China, and my experience of dinner in England, has tended to include non-hierarchical, romantic, and personal choice features. Both instances express the main purpose as a dispositif, which is to be fed. However, their behaviour and functional properties, when they are employed by Chinese and British, are different. Certainly, the lack of expertise, does not make it possible for me to discuss all aspects of 'dinner' habits; rather, I list only a small illustrative selection, in order to distinguish between elements that might be included in

the different dispositifs. In both models, social values are considered, but in different ways. For instance, for Chinese, today a dinner is one of the most important tools for building and improving their relation network, in addition to other aspects, such as, socialising and family gathering.

Figure 6: An example of dinner dispositif in China.



Also in England, my learning from business dinners (arranged and financed by organisations), is considered as a way to appraise, or to celebrate a success – perhaps a tool used by medium-sized and larger businesses. While in China, in my experience, regardless of the size of business, and occasion, it is employed to expand or maintain their relation network. In a business dinner, they may not talk directly about business during the food, but there is enough time after the meal to discuss business matters.

In China, a man and a woman may go together for dinner without a personal relation imposed between them. Except, in the case of some Western-

style restaurants and coffee shops in the larger cities of China, a dinner is not usually considered solely as a romantic occasion. In Western-style coffee shops, and Western chain restaurants, foods are served individually. People choose their food and do not share it with others.

Another sign of the communicative character of the banquets is that the Chinese order for the complete group and eat all dishes together. It is very rare to order individual menus and eat them individually, as in the West. During a visit by a Chinese delegation, it might very well be that the Chinese order several dishes as they are used to doing in China. When the first Western restaurants opened in China, one could see, for example, chuppies [sig] in Minims ordering several dishes, such as cordon blue, goulash, or sausages, and placing them in the middle of the table-in order to split and eat them in the Chinese manner. (Zinzius 2004:204).

With social dinners, perhaps the habits and concepts are more different between individualism and collectivism. Concepts such as gathering, hierarchy, celebrating, and exotic foods, to some degree may be shared by different societies. Growing the Western-style fast food restaurants and their promotion of individualistic perspective of food concept, are resulting in the developing market in China.

For English people, having dinner, is considered a more personal experience than Chinese. Often, they are able to choose their food and enjoy it on his/her own. In comparison for the Chinese, at most big dinner tables, the person who invites will choose the food and all the food is shared. In particular, a perfect selection of a valued variety of dishes can maintain the host's 'face' and shows his/her interest in creating strong and mutual relationships.

Where and how food is served, the choice of various dishes, their delicacy of preparation, communicate importance and is a credit for the person hosting an event (Newman, 2004:142). Another instance of the educational

dimension of the dinner dispositif involves Chinese food as medicine. For example, with the dinner invitations I received at the beginning of my fieldwork, it seemed to me that I could compare restaurants to a pharmacy! On many occasions, when the host or hosts introduced foods, they immediately mentioned the health and medicinal value of each food or ingredient. In fact, it forms schooling for general health knowledge in public pedagogy. This is good for eyes, this is good for skin, this is good for heart, etc. Due to their knowledge of the medical value of foods, in the 1300s, many Chinese lived to the age of 70 if they managed to avoid communicable diseases. The Chinese have always believed that food and medicine are the same and both provide nutrition and health. In China, both the health value of food, and food as a tool (for initiating and maintaining relations), makes it a perfect gift. Business proposals usually begin with dinner invitations, as a gift to the other party. Several health related products, such as dry fruits, roots, and honey, with luxurious packaging, are always a good choice for family members and elders, however, a 'food' dispositif plays a different role in social relations, gifts can also contribute to learning the ways of exploring the educational dimension of the dispositif.

2.2.3 Gift Dispositif

Unlike Malinowski's unitary view, that exchange in the Trobriands is like exchange in industrial societies, Mauss, M. (1990) saw two different sorts of transactions. One is 'gift' exchange and the other is commodity exchange, which is associated with industrial societies, dominated by class and the division of labour. Then perhaps, in neo-liberal dominated societies such as in the United Kingdom (UK), gifts equate to education, while 'commodity' exchange to 'schooling.' I discuss this aspect of gift later in this section.

The 'gift' exchange is associated with collectivist cultures. Those societies are dominated by kinship relations and groups, which define transactors and their relations and obligations to each other. In gift transactions, objects are inalienably associated with the giver, the recipient,

and the relationship that defines and binds them. This model of exchange, in some societies is more deeply embedded in social relations than in others. It entails a theory of people, objects, and social relations, and the ways they are made and remade, educated, and re-educated in everyday transactions. Objects are not inevitably neutral things that are circulated or given away. Relationships are not always impersonal under modern capitalism. For Mauss, a gift can be any object, or service, utilitarian or superfluous, transacted as part of social, as distinct from more purely monetary or material, relations (Carrier 1991:121-122).

Through this section, I study 'gift' as a dispositif and its relations to inter-cultural misunderstandings, as well as, its educational dimension. I am interested to know, to what extent a different role of 'gift' in individualistic and collectivist societies involves creating different subjectifications.

One morning, a few days after arriving to Zhuzhou, I had breakfast with Qing Tang while talking about various things. Then, Qing Tang stopped eating and asked me, 'Tonight we all are (the four teachers I was working with then) in Mr. Wu's house. You can join us for dinner too. Mr. Wu's mother will cook for us.' I was very happy for the invitation and accepted it immediately.

Wu was a calligraphy teacher and doing most of the administration work for the department, such as room organisations, timetables, and stationery. His mother left her husband alone at their countryside house in a small town near to Changsha in order to look after her son. Wu was given a room in the middle of a residential block behind the tennis courts of Teacher's College. Single floor accommodations of eight individual residences are sitting next to each other like terrace houses in Manchester. To get there, one should cross the tennis court, then go through a garden, which was always full of mud because of a water tap in front of each residence.

With about a 4 x 7 meter front room and a small kitchen separated with an old door, reminded me of very poor countryside houses. The front door was a rough wooden door, with a large window next to it. Inside, behind the window, there was a double bed, a small round dining table, and a very old television (TV). The room was separated by a short wooden bookcase to make a small study room for Wu at the back. The kitchen was dark and very old with the back door usually left open to the small field behind the school. October nights were a little chilly, but, I was wondering how they warmed up this place in winter with this many gaps around the doors.

These residents were not the only type of residents in Teachers college. In fact, staff residences were based on a hierarchy of their employment level and qualifications. A few months later, when I went to pick Nick up the English teacher from his residence, I noticed that he is living in a nice apartment flat on one of the university's main roads, where higher senior managers are living.

When Qing Tang and I arrived there, Tim, the computer teacher, and another, Xiao Wang, a computer teacher too, were sitting around the table and soon after, another teacher with his girlfriend arrived. Wu's mother was a mid-age woman in her late fifties. But she looked so much older. During the day, her time was spent mainly on cleaning, shopping, and dinner preparation.

The dinner was four dishes of various foods mainly fresh vegetable, red chilli's with a trace of meat in one. No need to mention that rice is always the main part of dinner in the Hunan province. Despite my resistance, Wu's mother was looking after me, continuously filling up my bowl as an important guest. This was not the only reason for me to feel embarrassed, I was also the only one sweating because of eating hot food. I had a

bunch of napkins in front of me. During dinner, we were talking about my research, teaching, and teaching conditions. Often I had to stop the conversation and with a very basic Chinese 'Bu ... Bu. Bu. Xie Xie' (No. No... Thank you) to stop Wu's mother from filling up my bowl with more food. Still, I couldn't say 'it's enough. I am full' in Chinese. Everyone was laughing at her insisting on giving me more food and my Chinese communication.

After dinner, everyone just left table one by one. I tried to help her in collecting the table items, but Wu did not let me and Qing Tang suggested I to go to the office where I could access the internet. On the way, he asked me:

J: Why you don't eat dinner in Mr Wu's house every night? It is better than eating in restaurants.

Me: No. I don't want to give anyone troubles. Don't be worried, I will be fine. I can always find reasonable food.

J: No. No. They will be very happy. Like others, you can pay 20 Yuen (£1.30) per week to her, and this can help her with daily living costs.

Although I was a little surprised, I thought the dinner had been only a colleagues gathering, rather than a paid dinner for such a low cost. I tried to hide my surprise, but at the same time I was interested in being a bit closer inside their life and to know more about them.

Me: 'Ah ... Maybe you are right, but I can pay even more. I love their food and their company'

J: No. I'm sure 20 Yuen is enough.

I didn't insist further as I thought it may imply a pity feeling on them. And also I didn't want to change the balance between the guests.

Me: Are you eating every night there?

J: No. you know I am living in my apartment and most of

the times I cook by myself.

After that night, I went there nearly three to four nights per week for dinner. With initially a little, shy and feeling embarrassed of paying so little for that much trouble. However, that nightly gathering, later gained me an insider status privilege. One day before going to Wu's house, I was shopping in a supermarket, noticed a fish tank full of healthy, live fish, and decided to buy two big size fish for Wu's mother. I thought I may offend her with paying more, but certainly, I can give a gift. It was already 5 p.m., but, the weather still was a little hot, and I did not want to walk to the dinner table with a bag of fish in my hand. Therefore, I went directly to Wu's house and gave the bag of fish to his mother. By the time, I took the gift for her I did not know that taking or sending food as a gift is a very usual way of returning favour or showing the appreciation. I was not concerned of sending a right or wrong message. I guess I acted upon my understanding from other cultures.

However, at dinner, I noticed she cooked both fish for the dinner. Which seemed too much food for a usual dinner and perhaps I transferred a wrong message. I thought that probably the type of gift was not wrong but maybe it was about who gave the gift.

For the last few weeks, I was running an English corner session with a few students in Wu's office starting at 9 p.m., usually after dinner we walked to his office together. I wanted to talk to Wu and ask for his opinion and apologies for any possible misunderstanding, but, I was unsure it was something only in my mind or real. After dinner, Wen Fang walked with me toward his office as other days. Before I started to talk, to share my concern about the gift, on the darkness of the road leading to the office building, Wen Fang took a letter from his pocket and told me I wrote some information about Chinese culture for

you. I thought you might be interested to know about it. I thanked him for his help. Later, when I read the note, I was surprised, as it was more a letter than a cultural note. In that letter, Wu showed his disappointment of my gift, as he did not deserve it. He wrote:

'Thank you for your gift at first! I hope you do not buy any present for us next time, OK?'

In the rest of the letter, he gave examples of gift giving culture in China and expressed his feeling, as he knew in China, some people liked to receive a present, but he was not like them. He argued that he did not do much for me and did not deserve my gift.

In addition to the differences, I have noticed through language, there are differences I noticed through our action too, which impact on my sense of identity. There is a change of identity with each learning that takes place in terms of social relations. In the above example, after transferring the wrong message by buying two big fresh fish as a gift for Wu's mother, I tried to understand and learn from the situation. I called Bo Young and shared my experience by telling him the story. He started to laugh and to show his disappointment about my act. He said that 'Wu's mother is old and has pains in her legs. You should buy her medicine, maybe something good for her legs.' In China there are many health shops selling health related products.

I had tried to show them how grateful I was by buying two big fish. I did not think how else I could make Mr. Wu's mother happy. Nor did I think I should take her a health related gift. In Western relations, usually people are reluctant to give someone that kind of gift. This would usually be considered as more appropriate to a professional health approach.

The first element of Mauss's model of gift relations are 'inalienable objects', that is, the gifts are to some degree parts of persons, inalienably linked to the giver. The gift generates and regenerates the relationship between giver and recipient. Thus, it has an impact on the person's identity

and subjectivity as new relations are drawn out of education. What is important in such relations, is that people think of the object as bearing the identity of the giver, and of the relationship between the giver and the recipient (Carrier, 1991:125-126).

However, in the above narrative, what was shaping such relations was unknown to me. That was the tie between 'gift' and 'relations' in Chinese society. That means, the inalienable element of the 'gift,' became conditional to the structure of the 'relations' network, and the giver's identity in such a network. The existence of such relations is realised when something 'goes wrong' with gift giving.

My message was communicated 'wrongly' to the mother in one way, and to Mr. Wu in another way. Mr. Wu compared my gift, with a notion of relations in his culture and wrote a long letter as a reply to my action. His letter started with, 'Thank you for your gift at first! I hope you do not buy any present for us next time, OK?' In his letter, he tried to explain to me gift giving in Chinese culture. First, in his opinion, he has not done anything special for me to deserve a gift. Secondly, he was condemning the ways that gift giving is used in a relational network in China today '(...) I know in China some people like to receive a gift, but I'm not like them.' At the end, he argued that he did not do much for me and did not deserve my gift. Presumably, there is a transition going on that has impact on removing the 'gift' dispositif from its tradition in collectivism culture and is networked with new dispositifs which made it available for different groups of people.

By that time, I did not have an adequate understanding of 'gift giving' in Chinese society. For example, Chinese believe that good things come in pairs. Therefore, a gift must always be in pairs (two, four, and six). Purely by chance, my gift was a pair (two fish). However, his mother's understanding of my gift was completely different to her son. To her, by giving her 'fish' as a gift, she thought I tried to express my disappointment in the lack of meat and nutrition in the dinner I had in their house. Consequently, she cooked both fish that night and tried to add more meat, and sometimes fish, to the usual dinner for the nights after that.

Learning from the above incident, after meeting with Professor Wei and his wife, in Wuhan city, I showed my appreciation by buying two big jars of special honey for them. Honey is considered to prevent ageing and is good for the skin. I noticed that this time my act was more appropriate in Chinese culture. I had received messages through my translator reflecting the thoughtfulness of gift. They asked me to come back to Wuhan and visit them again.

The second element of Maussian 'gift giving' relations is 'obligatory transfer,' which means parties to a gift relationship are under the obligation to repay the gift received (there are some exceptions). In addition, people are under obligation to give presents, and obligation to receive them. This view of Mauss contradicts an important element of the Western academic view of the gift, that it is something voluntarily given, and there is no expectation of compensation (Carrier, 1991:123).

In Western societies like England, a simple gift of a physical object can be a card. It is more rounded up to certain occasions. These days, the majority of cards sold in shops are printed with a message in relation to the specific occasion. The occasions are more important than the gift object itself. Many people only sign the cards without adding their own message. Recipients are happy that they were remembered, as well as, they appreciate the choice of the card, and its relevance. Except in close relations, and with more formal situations, there will be less concern with the gift value. With more formal occasions, usually, a gift is given at the progress of a relation. For instance, a student may give a card to his/her teacher at the end of teaching period, or a gift may be able to be received from a colleague after a helpful attitude.

In my experiences of traveling and staying in seven provinces, and more than twenty towns and cities in China, except in some Western-style shops in larger cities, it is not usual to see cards sold in shops as it is in the UK. However, it is very usual that people give each other a piece of calligraphy, written by himself or herself or a professional artist. There may be no message relevant to the occasion. With more formal situations, a gift is usually given at

the beginning of a relation. The gift has been interpreted as an invitation to partnership, and as a confirmation or acceptance of the giver (Sherry, 1983:160).

The third element of Mauss 'gift relations' model is 'related and mutually obligated transactors.' That is, gift transactors are not individuals who are defined independently of their social or group relationships. As part of relationship, they obligated to give, receive, and repay gifts in appropriate ways (Carrier, 1991:129). The Maussian model of gifts in China, can be seen and sensed in every relation. People are obliged to give gifts to create more relations. As the many other societies, gifts in China are not limited to a physical object. A usual gift to initiate and maintain relations is a dinner invitation, especially in formal situations. With increase the importance of the 'relations' network in China since 1979 (start of open door policy), the number of new restaurants open every day, and the number of guests increasing exponentially. Individuals with limited income may use local restaurants from time to time for eating out, with reasonable prices. However, when it comes to building new relations, they are obliged to invite others to restaurants that are more expensive. In addition, they are obliged to return, if they have accepted a gift. The gift value is more important, specially, in settings that are more formal. That would reflect that how valuable is such a relation for the gift giver, as well as, it would impose his/her face 'value.'

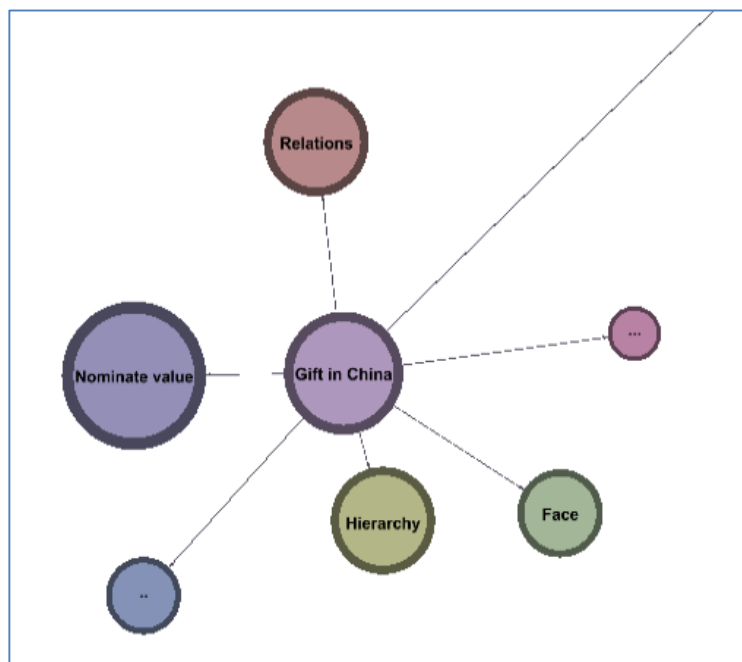
Although dinner invitations, or giving a gift for the purpose of a favour, look similar in comparison with other cultures, but it is beyond a simple bribery. What is important in Chinese relations, is the ability of the host in employing the art of communication, demonstrating face values and playing rules of hospitality in the best possible way. Unlike in other cultures, an offered gift or a dinner invitation is not to exchange for a favour, but it's an open gate for mutual benefits and getting enjoyment from the newly built network. Another network added to possibly many existing ones, a value added to their face. In general, the network must grow at all the times as a hidden net holding all relating individuals with very complicated ties (neuron like links) to each other.

Perhaps as relations and face shape relations between giver, gift, and

recipient in China, as capitalism has shaped such relations in Western societies. Gift relations are becoming more market dominated by choice, brand, and time. The individualistic relations supported by market, promotes a lower degree of 'obligations' to give, receive, or return. Lack of such obligations results in less tendency and concern with rejecting a gift.

As I mentioned earlier in this section, a gift may equate to education and commodity exchange to schooling. Then, how could I formulate my learning to compare the 'gift' dimension as education, and commodity as schooling, with contemporary neo-liberal practices in the UK and the elsewhere. Gift, or education, is the basis of OPEN space, OPEN society. Invading OPEN by contemporary neo-liberalism fundamentalism and turning schools into commodities, make 'gift' dispositifs different from the ones in China, as with the previous examples. The dispositifs networked with gifts in the UK, are various market-dominated organisations, while in China, there are 'relations networks,' and centralised control. Thus, the ways education, schooling, and public pedagogy, play a role in subjectivation of individuals varies. In Chapter eight, I discuss such subjectivation in terms of manufacturing consent.

Figure 7: An example of a gift dispositif in China.



There are many dimensions of 'gifts,' including but not limited to, personal, economical, power, relations, hierarchy, and emotion. In the diagram above, only the discussed dimensions of 'gift' is taken as a sample to illustrate 'gift' as a universal dispositif which can create different subjectifications as the degree of relations between 'giver', 'gift', and 'recipient' influenced by different dispositifs.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to explore two dimensions of dispositifs. One is the educational and social shaping, and the second is the misunderstanding as an issue in drawing out education. In both sections, the inter-networked relations between dispositifs was discussed to explore the ways that a dispositif is hijacked, from free to use (open), and moves to a different sphere. Separation of 'schooling' dispositifs from 'education' and linked to market (private interests) is an example of such hijack, which, in return, not only does not produce its subject, but is also involved in desubjectification.

Dispositifs such as 'communication,' 'dinner,' and 'gift,' are only a few examples of universal dispositifs, common to all societies to use, but in different ways. People have to eat, social relations have to employ some sort of exchange. What makes it important, are the implications for understanding the educational aspect of such dispositifs and social shaping in each society.

There are three themes of shaping education and public pedagogy by dispositifs. The first theme, is that we behave or think differently, because the dispositifs in a given view of the 'world' are linked (networked) differently, in which may be used to satisfy another dispositif's interests. The second theme, is that nowadays more and more dispositifs, which are expected to be free to use, are hijacked by power, and elites in the global dimension. The third theme, is the ways that dispositifs, removed from human sphere, or as Agamben (2009) believes, in the era of capitalism, is more involved with

disubjectification than subjectification.

In later chapters, from time-to-time, I will refer to 'relations sphere.' To me, 'relations sphere,' is a network of all dispositifs involved in building and maintaining relations networks in China. It is different with traditional forms of relations to bring protection and security for everyone. This new sub-network of dispositifs is influencing education, schooling, and public pedagogy, by shaping and reshaping norms of society and manufacturing consents.

In this chapter, I have explored the key dispositifs, as resources available to members of social groups for better understanding the issues, and crises in fieldwork, such as language, as the most important and ancient dispositif. This will generate discussion regarding the methods and analytical approaches to the ethical issues I encountered in trying to enter Chinese communities.

3 Methods and analytical approaches

In this chapter I look at the methods I needed to use to collect the data required to analyse those key dispositifs discussed in chapter two. There were ethical issues encountered when I tried to enter Chinese communities which had influenced the chosen methods. The appropriateness of those qualitative methods, such as, interview, observation, and analysis documents, will be discussed in relation to issues like, face and relations. In addition, to address ethics of the research, I discuss appropriate approaches for participant observers such as covert participation. Then, the second part of this chapter will have a focus in answering the question, What methods do I need to analyse collected data, which enable me to gain insight into the ways of seeing, and the practices that members recognise, as being like an insider? If language has a central role as a dispositif, then it provides a means by which learning the key dispositifs through which a given people's lives are organised. Thus, discourse analysis becomes a crucial part of the methods.

Agamben focuses on the language dispositif because he believes it is one of the most important and ancient ones. Foucault believed that discourse is a certain way of acting upon another person or persons. Therefore, as the best qualitative approach, language as a model would be appropriate. Here, my focus will be more on discourse analysis, in order to explore the ways in which categories are constructed and employed to generate representations of the social. Then, discourse ethnography seems appropriate, since it involves being into the kind of settings where I encountered the deployment of some key dispositifs, such as those described in the previous chapter. Methods such as conversations, observations, and interviews, will be considered as primary methods for data collection.

However, since Chinese was not my first language, there were difficulties of understanding many situations in a way Chinese could be understood. In particular, there were issues of translations, which in most scenarios, I had to rely on a local translator. Considering interpretation as a fundamental methodological issue, led me to sets of new difficulties in

fieldwork. Furthermore, there were situations in which I could not make myself understood even without language barriers. It seemed to me there was something separating me from 'others' beyond the linguistics. Perhaps there was some sort of coding in their discourses, which was not familiar to me as for example in such lines:

1. 逢人只说三分话 *you only tell others 30% of what you know.*
2. *Watch others intentions by observing and listening, wait patiently if you are not sure.*
3. *Expand relationship net and give 'face' to others.*
4. 难得糊涂，中庸之道 *pretend to be a fool and stand in the middle line.*

(莫 2010:65)

Approaches to qualitative data collections, in particular and ethnographic research methods, in general, originated from the West, and consequently, are based on a Western model of thought. Whereas the Chinese model of thought, as explored in chapter 4.2.1, is very different from the Western one. By employing Western methods, it could not be assumed that the Chinese may respond to them in a way similar to Western people. The use and process of such methods, without adapting them to Chinese culture, could lead me to objectivity issues, and thus, the invalidity of the collected data. Through this chapter, I investigate such difficulties with using some methods in China, and the ways I adapted them for more successful data collection.

This chapter is completed in two sections; approaches to collecting data, and the approaches to analysing data.

3.1 Methods of collecting data

3.1.1 Shaping and adapting the methods in use

Being the country with the fastest economic growth, China was attracting foreign organisations for either investments, or expanding their market, even educational establishments. In China, from the middle of the last century to today, there was a battlefield of methodology failure. Researchers such as, Zhang, M. Y. and Stening, B. W. (2010), argued that existing research methods could be problematic. In another account, in an unpublished paper, Elaine Ann (online document in bibliography), mentioned that based on their initial ethnographic research experience in China with Hewlett-Packard¹, conducted from a bi-cultural point-of-view, there is a reason to believe, that ethnographic research methods will require some adaptation, if conducted in China, for results to be accurate and meaningful.

3.1.2 Interview and note taking

I have treated interviews as a production of narratives. As Barthes said: 'Narratives are present in every age, in every place, in every society.' Narratives are a way of understanding one's own and others' action, in which to organise events and objects into a meaningful whole (Denzin & Lincoln, 2007). I will explore the use of interviews, observations, and narratives, in order to compose cases through the multiple views which have been recorded in multiple ways, such as images, videos, sounds, and note taking (Schostak, 2006:145). A narrative is not only a set of recorded discourses, but also contains other background information, such as, biographical accounts and decryptions of the interviewee, and environment, which can contribute to analysis. I found narratives could fill the gaps between interview data and missing related information of what might not be visible, or not included in linguistic forms. The narrative then creates an 'aesthetic' of the visible (Rancière, 2004). Including a detailed description of such information would enhance data analysis, where the linguistic dimension was not sufficient. As a story told to an interviewer, in a relaxed setting or a daily life setting, it could

¹ Elaine Ann did not provide any insights into her company's ethnographic research because of the high confidentiality of the research!

be different from a formal interview by ruling out formal relation factor. For instance, through various interviews, I learned that people could not explain why they do things in a certain way. I experienced that collecting the information about some cultural points, such as, 'face' through interview, which was not consciously known by an interviewee, was paradoxical. In many of my discourses with informants, I asked their view about the 'face' concept in China. In most occasions, they could not really explain the role of 'face' in Chinese daily life. They usually started with an example, 'It is like I lose my face if (...)' But, when I ask them about a certain situations and the reasons behind their action, their reply implies how 'face' shaped their way of doing things.

Generally, with a careful selection of methods - which will be explained in chapters 3.1.1 through 3.1.5 – and the required adaptation of cultural resources, consideration of ethics of the locals, the knowledge will be gathered to shape our understanding of otherness.

One such method is an interview as a window to the views of the others and 'otherness' as Schostak describes:

Methodological and philosophical debates that question claims to 'knowledge,' 'understanding,' and the validity of representations of data derived from interviews, observations and the collection of various artefacts are essential to maintaining an openness to the views of the other and to 'otherness' as the seeds through which creative change can be fostered. (Schostak, 2006:12)

Thus, the interview method is more than collecting data in its verbal forms. Not only the ways that communication is constructed play an important role in transferring the meaning, since it performs as an interface between interviewer and interviewee, but also the situational settings, and non-verbal communication, such as gestures, have a significant role. Also, as an interface medium between interviewer and interviewee, it would not be adequate if the communication operates in one way – that is 'to get information'

communication. Evans Pritchard presents this interview in 1940 to demonstrate his difficulties with obtaining information using the interview method:

T: Who are you?

Cuol: A man.

T: What is your name?

Cuol: Do you want to know my name?

T: Yes.

Cuol: You want to know my name?

T: Yes, you have come to visit me in my tent and I would like to know who you are.

Cuol: All right. I am Cuol. What is your name?

T: My name is Pritchard.

Cuol: What is your father's name?

T: My father's name is also Pritchard.

Cuol: No, that cannot be true. You cannot have the same name as your father.

T: It is the name of my lineage. What is the name of your lineage?

Cuol: Do you want to know the name of my lineage?

T: Yes.

Cuol: What will you do with it if I tell you? Will you take it to your country?

T: I don't want to do anything with it. I just want know it since I am living at your camp.

Cuol: Oh, well, we are Lou.

T: I did not ask you the name of your tribe. I know that. I am asking you the name of your lineage.

Cuol: Why do you want to know the name of my lineage?

T: I don't want to know it.

Cuol: Then why do you ask me for it? Give me some tobacco.

(Seale, 2004:106)

The above interview conducted by Evans Pritchard illustrates one approach to the use of interviewing as a basic tool for collecting data. It was constructed in a formal, dry, emotionless way, which reveals a gap between the expectations of each other. It seemed that Pritchard, insisted on a formal interview with a local whose everyday experience was completely alien to this research interview method. To avoid Pritchard's experience or similar, I found the following steps useful:

- Avoid choosing a random person. In the above account, Cuol was a random person, who probably was not known to Pritchard and vice versa.
- Give enough information. Pritchard did not give any prior information to Cuol about the purpose of interview.
- Expect the interviewee to share his/her thoughts rather than trying to extract information. For instance, Pritchard's purpose was trying to extract information rather than giving him a chance to express himself in a way that is known to him.
- Remove any symbolic barriers in mutual understanding. Was it a usual custom in that community to ask someone's lineage? Or, what could be imposed by it if it was asked by a stranger? What was the role of knowing someone's tribe membership and his or her lineage in a relationship?
- Create two-way communication. From the above account, what was certain, Pritchard was engaged in one-way communication to extract information, like the one we may see in a law court questioning a witness.

The above points suggest a focus on informal interviews, as existing methods could not always guarantee validity of collected data. Alternative methods were introduced to deal with those issues and the one mentioned in the last section, such as 'naturalistic group interviewing' - as collecting naturally occurring conversations chosen from group interviews that members have a previous social relation to each other - which was employed to capture hidden cultural meanings. However, studies (Eckhardt & Bengtsson, 2010) suggested

naturalistic group interviewing as the best method in capturing hidden meanings and shows only a little differences with informal focus groups. Instead of 'naturalistic group interviews' suggested for China, I wanted to engage 'naturalistically' with people in their everyday settings. Being part of the everyday lives of people, noting conversations that are raised, and that are picked up and continue over time in relation to actions and events, leads to a focus on 'narratives,' and thus, on narrative based methods of research. Still, there were some issues in practice to be taken into account including:

- **Language barriers**

With the mentioned linguistic barriers earlier in this chapter, I had to choose my interviewees from a range of people who could speak English, yet not many people were able to understand fluently or reflect their thought as they could do in Chinese. In most circumstances, I had to use an interpreter as a proxy - a term that I borrowed from John Schostak, J. (2006) - which would filter the communication in an unknown way. The ways of how it might be filtered can be explored by analysing the communication before it resulted in a failure.

- **Identity and social status**

On the one hand, my identity as a researcher from the UK gave me a privilege - in the currency of Chinese culture, face credit. On the other hand, conducting doctoral research placed me academically in a superior position than anyone with lower academic status. Considering that hierarchy in Chinese culture plays an important role in social interaction, consequently, only people with the same academic level would discuss or debate sociological or educational concepts without losing face.

- **Inter-cultural**

The construction of my meetings and interviews had to be within the norm of Chinese culture, as a collectivist culture, such as, the ground for formal interview or informal one. Below are some narratives demonstrating issues with selected methods in my fieldwork and the

ways I needed to do them in order to develop my own research dispositif.

The narrative below is another example of an interview I experienced in China. During the early days of my fieldwork, I organised my first interview as an informal one, or rather, as a discussion meeting. The easiest one was the friend I made during my previous visit in preparation of fieldwork.

1. *Meeting with Ms. Zheng, was exciting for me. Maybe because it was my first fieldwork interview. Ms. Zheng was a middle school teacher in Shenzhen. We met when she was with a group of her colleagues during my preparatory visit to China. Since then, we were communicating through email and we were usually discussing different aspects of teaching in general. She loved teaching as a profession. I found her full of initiative for personal development.*
2. *That day we met in a park opposite to my hotel by her suggestion. Perhaps she wanted to make it easy for me.*
3. *At the beginning, I explained about my research intention, the subject, and the reasons of engagement in such research in China. I told her that my interest was having some general information about the education system in China and socio-cultural factors influencing teaching and learning.*
4. *We talked about various aspects of education in China, such as number of students in a classroom, subjects, and national exams. Often, I asked questions and she replied to me with examples of her own teaching practices. When it came to students study style, she said she was trying hard to get student interaction with the lessons, but it was difficult. She blamed herself, as she might not be a good teacher. I assured her that it was not her fault. Perhaps many other factors avoid student engagement with the subjects.*

5. *When we moved the discussion to students' progress, she stated her student's progresses are not bad, but she could do better. She said: 'By some reasons, I cannot improve students' grades. I know I have to do better.'* She continued, *'I'm sure with the experiences you have, I can learn many things from you to improve my skills.'*

Although I tried to keep the above interview as informal as possible, the result was not very helpful or accountable. Besides the known problems and tendencies with interview methods known to me, the unique inter-cultural barriers that I later listed for myself, were key points for better understanding. The above interview can be summarised in four points:

- A. She kept blaming herself for the lack of adequate skills (*see 4*). This was not because she was really lacking of adequate skills. Being humble with your own knowledge, especially in front of someone in a higher position of hierarchy, in Chinese culture is considered as maintaining face.
- B. She intended to improve her skills (*see 5*). This is a way of being polite in Chinese way of reporting to someone in higher position at work, or in social contact. In this manner the person, in fact acknowledges any effort to fit into expectations.
- C. If there were any problem, perhaps it was because of her (*see 5*). Blaming others, or taking other's 'face,' can result in losing one's own 'face' too. This is very common for Chinese in encounters with people outside of their relation group.
- D. She avoided talking about education system in general (*see 4*).

In the above narrative, she saw herself as an ordinary teacher in China, and me, as a Ph.D. researcher from England with much higher social status. Between two people from different social status, it is not accepted that they are engaged in a conversation in an equal manner. Instead, the one from the lower

status must confirm his/her awareness of such difference (*see 5* in the above account). Of course, by choosing my interviewee from a higher or the same social status as me, it could be possible to avoid such issues outlined in the above narrative. However, that way, I would limit the data collections to specific groups. Another way to solve the problem was to earn trust and obtain an insider status.

For those Chinese who are lower in academic status, being humble is considered as politeness. I will discuss this in terms of the 'face' notion in chapter eight. They usually avoided talking about their achievements directly, neither about their success stories, that is for others (superiors) to identify such successes, rather, they will try to show their eagerness in learning more and performing better (*see 5, and 6*). Also, being practical is preferred to talking about their achievements and goals. A famous saying which parents repeatedly remind their children is; 'Don't talk about it, do it.'

As part of a hierarchical system, they will not debate an intellectual subject beyond their qualification, especially in front of someone superior. As long as we talked about the classroom, her teaching, or her students, she made comments and engaged in discussion, but not with subjects beyond her speciality such as the education system.

Also, talking against their superior is taking her/his face, is prohibited by their norms. In addition, those who took 'face' from others automatically lose face too, as they were not acting to the norm (Zinzius 2004a).

The above points are discussed in more detail in chapter seven. I realised that I had to consider the significance of the above points, in order to have successful interviews, which can contribute to the purpose of interviewing with valid data. Setting up an interview with someone from a same or higher academic background seemed a way to overcome the problem with hierarchy and social status. However, in addition to differences in hierarchy and 'face' between interviewer and interviewee, there are differences with symbolic notions. For instance, there are objects known to me in different ways than to a Chinese. One of these kinds of symbolic meaning is using a notebook (especially a black notebook) for taking notes. Those symbolic meanings can be related to

anything within an interview and are not necessarily easy to identify prior to a failure. It can be a book, a look, kind of clothes, or the environment chosen for the interview. I would call a combination of all such notions 'interview space.'

For instance, I experienced an unexpected problem with using my notebook in one of interviews.

When I had a meeting with Dr. Zheng Bo, a lecturer in Wuhan University, I tried to create an informal atmosphere. I started with a friendly conversation about our mutual friend who had introduced me to him. Then, I gave him good background information about myself and my purpose of staying in China, which seemed a reasonable start. He was very excited about my research subject and told me about his experience and understanding about socio-cultural factors shaping students' learning in China with historical and cultural references.

However, as soon as I took my black notebook out from my bag and told him I needed to take some notes because I may not be able to remember the important points he was talking about, his face changed. He became uncomfortable and was not willing to talk any longer!

I realised that I must have done something wrong. I might have turned the informal meeting to a more formal situation! Therefore, I put my notebook back in my bag and changed the conversation back to return to the relaxed atmosphere of our meeting. However, the damage was already done. In an obvious way, he was not interested in continuing with our conversation and I had to change the subject.

Following this, I realised that the formal interviews in China were to be undertaken in a different setting, which involved different relations between interviewer and interviewee and influenced by such relations. What a black A5-size notebook meant to me in England, certainly revealed different messages to

Zheng Bo, and it signalled a change in the nature of the interview.

After that meeting, I thought I had to be in the wrong place at the wrong time! From then on, it was very difficult to maintain communication with Dr. Zheng Bo, and I asked myself many questions, including, 'Didn't he believe the information about the research I gave to him?' Or, perhaps he believed me but did not want to take any risks! In a similar situation, could I expect a similar result from an interview with a university lecturer in England? I had no doubt that he had a fear of the unknown, which could damage his position in the university.

The early fieldwork preparation period was essential to build the experience and be able to develop and carry out the full fieldwork plan. Therefore, fundamental to this, was the development of a network to access the field and its resources. The network I eventually succeeded to build was based on relationships, and as a result, it constrained me with its specific traditional hierarchical rules. Without building or being part of a 'relations' group, I could hardly engage with people's everyday life. Without considering who is the interviewer and his/her position in the relationship network as well as the interviewee, constructing an interview, or the meeting and data collection, is disastrous.

Difficulties of covert recording (chapter five) drove me to rely more on my memory. If there was a chance to make some notes immediately after the meeting, that would be beneficial, but if the meeting was longer or followed by a dinner (as usual), it was more difficult to remember everything. Taking social photos and using my pocket size notebook with the excuse of recording Chinese words was a solution! In fact, most of the time learning Chinese words was related in some ways to the subject of discussion.

That way, I had to reconstruct part or all of the conversation into a narrative. What was lost was the detailed conversation; however, my gain was a deeper understanding in which the extra information compensated for the loss.

Later, I arranged meetings in restaurants and complied with the norms for informal meetings in China. Sitting in Dr. Zheng Bo's office, between his

lessons and discussing education and socio-cultural factors shaping students' learning, with a black A5-size notebook and a black pen, would not suggest an informal meeting in his mind. I assume there was a contradiction between the meeting I arranged and the notion of an informal meeting for him. This reminded me of the film called "*Mars Attacks*." The Martians came to earth and in the first meeting with the Earth's president, they said 'We come in peace' and immediately they opened fire.

I had to be constantly alert to the need to develop trusting relations, and that sometimes was a strain because the possibility of trust being accompanied by suspicion was present. This may not directly relate to the change of methodology, but by learning the ways that dispositifs operate in other words and using them, it is possible to earn trust relations. Jeffrey H. Cohen, (2000) argued the danger of neutrality in fieldwork as a ground to lose such trust relations. In addition, there were times while gaining trust relations strained all my energy, yet it seemed too suspicious, too negative, and too conservative when:

One day, Tong Wu, one of my informants, mentioned that in China, you do not know what people may come up with or what kind of damages they could cause to you. You have to protect yourself and not to trust others. There are many strange stories around with very damaging consequences. I agreed with her opinion and added, that this is not only in China, it exists everywhere and we have to be careful.

Thus entering into a Chinese relations network is not an easy task. Bond M. H. (1991) remarks that, 'Chinese trust their own inner circle of relations rather than outsiders.' Someone from the inner circle provides care, protection, and their relations are for the sake of each other, and constrain less energy to create a 'safety net' elsewhere. Through my research, I learned that to learn about Chinese culture and their way of thinking, I had to be in the

relevant relations network. Otherwise, the collected information would have lacked quality and validity.

3.1.3 Documentary Analysis

Similar to classroom observation, documentary analysis was limited to English language texts and to relying on Chinese translators for the Chinese documents and publications. Having Chinese colleagues in both China and England gave me some opportunity for help in fieldwork with translating related documents. Certainly, it was difficult to train my colleagues to search for what I was looking for. My intention was to find additional sources of publications that originated in Mainland China, rather than solely relying on the research conducted in Hong Kong and Taiwan, specifically by Western authors. Many of the Chinese researchers who are studying in Western countries, do not use resources from Chinese literatures, even when it comes to studying some cultural points such as 'face' and 'relations' in the mainland China. They usually refer to Western research papers or literatures. Among them are, "*Students Learning Style*" by Sally Chan, S. (1999), and "*Politeness in Chinese Culture*" by Pan, Y. (2000).

I tried hard to access as much literature published by Chinese authors as possible. For example in one such occasion, I was looking for some historical information about 'face' in Chinese culture. I spent days with one of my Chinese colleagues discussing my research and my thoughts. Then we went to the library together and searched for the relevant publications. With the given information, she knew what sort of information I was looking for, although it was not always easy and convenient to do this.

3.1.4 Participant Observer

The participant observer is as a 'witness' and so provides a point of view through which the narratives are constructed. As a participant observer, I need

also be aware of when the views of the participant observer are challenged by the other participants. This degree of challenge enables me to get closer to their ways of life and thought.

I entered into ordinary people's life and living style, engaging with eating their food, playing their games, traveling on busy trains and sitting on plastic seats for up to 15 hours, and celebrating their festive occasions. I was learning their language, calligraphy, and Chinese painting. Sometimes I would sit on a little plastic stool in a little street corner café, eating noodles with locals, or drinking 白朮 (bai zhu), a high percentage alcoholic spirit, in the Chinese fashion. I would also play the game of mah-jong for hours, and sing with them in Karaoke (KTV). I tried to be anywhere that locals and ordinary people were. From observing them and their way of living, to be a witness, and to share their happiness, anger, and worries.

For me, living with Chinese, living the way they live, was not a process of pretence. I love it and I thought there was nothing wrong in releasing myself from my own prison into their world. I had to separate myself from the codes that made me and to reconfigure my preceptions to receive new sets of data, to bring about my thoughts to a different way of thinking, and to adjust my habitual ways of seeing to see what was not visible before as a pattern of attention and inattention. Its signs map out the lines which separate me from we, you, us, and them, instead of being the real, such a map of signs stand for a 'real' (Schostak and Schostak, 2013:16). My success was dependent on the degree of such separation, the desire to know 'otherness,' and the integration with 'others.' Yet the process did not involve eliminating me, reshaping and reforming me into another. Then I would become 'other' and that was not my task. Instead, the process was to bring about multiple ways of being, seeing, and experiencing. I became double, triple, and multiple. From that separation and expansion to a new sphere of ways of living narratives evolved, and developed out of ordinary events, of ordinary peoples.

However, the process of such separation and reinvention of myself was not always as smooth as I expected. There were questions of trust, belief, acceptance, and communication, as described earlier (section 1.2.1).

There were difficulties, such as:

- The main barrier to participation was the lack of language. I knew I missed an extensive amount of information as it passed through my wandering attention without leaving a trace.
- My viewpoint was more static in comparison to the fast socio-economically changes in China. I had to keep moving with those changes.
- Sometimes I triggered their fear about why I was in China; people curiously asked each other about me and why I was in China.
- Note taking became difficult after long hours of observing. I had to expand the capacity of my memory, using any piece of paper, a napkin in a restaurant, or my mobile phone to record some words for later expansion. Yet, I had to be, as much as possible, objective in reconstructing everything out of my memory.

Unlike an ordinary observer, a participant observer has to keep a detailed record of both objective observation and subjective feeling (Spradley, 1980). For instance with classroom observation, my focus was not digging into the education system in China and its differences with the Western one; rather I targeted the role of 'relations' and power setting in classroom observation. In general, my experiences showed, that if a class observation was not for producing a positive feedback and such as a report for media, it could be interpreted as a criticism against the teacher or the organisation and consequently would be challenged by both.

Some schools even had an American as the language department manager. Chinese English teachers were usually open to learning new methods from their Western colleagues. In that way, I found Chinese English teachers were delighted to learn new teaching methods even though they could not apply all the methods of teaching learned within their curriculum. To them, it was part of their learning process and improving their knowledge, rather than applying to their practice. Thus, observing Chinese English teachers' classrooms was usually accepted with an open mind as long as that observation fitted into

one of the two purposes; first, to provide learning and self-development for Chinese English teachers, and second, to appraise the teacher or organisation for the purpose of recognition by a Western colleague.

As conducted by Chinese educational authorities or school managers, in China, observation was usually a covert process. Managers used the window above the classroom door, or employed other strategies to monitor the class and the processes of teaching. However, with a person sitting in the class to observe the lesson, students knew if they were to give the best image of their teacher and the organisation, they must sit quietly, show their respect to the teacher by listening to the lesson. Similarly, the teachers tried their best to give their best performance.

In recent years with the increasing Western educational influence in China, there have been some attempts to employ teaching observations in English language classrooms. For example, Wang, Q. and Seth, N. (1998) set out to investigate self-development through classroom observation in Qingdao University.

The overall aim of using this approach was to help teachers adopt a more developmental attitude towards classroom observation by providing opportunities for self-development through self-assessment. The usual power relationship patterns between observers and teachers were dramatically changed by giving the teachers the opportunity to decide what they would like to do throughout the classroom observation process. This meant, for instance, that they could choose who they would like to invite to their classrooms, which aspects of their teaching would be observed, what was going to be discussed in the feedback discussion, etc. It also meant that they no longer worried about being evaluated by an outsider, because they were their own evaluators. In this way, the teachers came to welcome classroom observation as a practical aid to their self-development.

(Wang & Seth 1998:205)

Although I have observed some other classrooms, like computer studies, one of the disadvantages with the observation method during my fieldwork was its limitation to English lessons. Because of my background in teaching computer hardware and software, in addition to English lessons, computer lessons could be the only lessons I could observe. The main purpose was to study students' behaviour and interaction in the lesson.

In some occasions, prior to the observations, I tried to have some contacts with students, and made myself known to them. Therefore, with observations there could be fewer tendencies to my presence in classrooms. I used to sit at the back of the classroom in a series of lessons in order to get students used to my presence. In that way, both students and teachers had completely forgotten about me after few lessons. I became no more than a recording tool. In other occasions, I participated as a helping teacher, interacting with students and lessons. In that sense, neither students, nor teachers, were considering me as an observer. With permission by teachers and managers in both situations, I used my mobile phone for a covert video recording of the class. That was mainly to record the normal behaviours of students.

3.1.5 Development of research tools

3.1.5.1 Research website

From the early days of fieldwork, I realised the need of a research website to explain the purpose of the research to informants, and for collaborative work with designated teachers. In addition, I found it useful in creating background knowledge for building relations networks. The website was a combination of three different powerful on-line systems; Moodle - Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), online questionnaire, and contents management system.

Twice during my fieldwork, I lost my memory stick, once by accident, the other by theft in my hotel room when all my electronic devices, including my computer, were stolen. I incurred financial loss; however using my online-shared back-up system (today we know it as the cloud) I retrieved all the lost data with minimal loss to my research. In general, the research website aimed:

- To reach my research colleagues and informants who were in different cities.
- To record and backup information through a safer online system while traveling.
- To share some resources with some colleagues in educational establishments.
- To use for an electronic questionnaire which had to be delivered online.
- To provide my Chinese teacher-colleagues and their students with Moodle, a VLE, for teaching and monitoring of any possible benefits for their teaching practices.

The research website (annex E) consisted of:

1. Content Management System (CMS), providing all pages and contents with the facility of editing contents at any time and anywhere, without need of any specific IT tool or knowledge. This was especially helpful for translation of my website to Chinese language by one of my volunteer translators.
2. An online questionnaire server.
3. Moodle Virtual Learning Environment.

3.1.5.2 Developing POP USB memory stick

The Portable Open Application USB (as I named it, POP USB) was one of my creations, developed because of learning from difficulties (annex F).

Perhaps it was the most effective method to overcome the problems I had with localization and access to IT. Basically it was a full computer with three different operating systems in a USB memory stick.

A collection of standard multi-platform software applications, as well as Linux Operating System, plus many more software packages for a researcher in fieldwork, was installed into my USB Memory stick and carried a General Public License (GPL). POP USB could be used by anyone without any technological knowledge and yet was not dependent on any specific policy. It was even possible to run it under various operating systems like Linux, MAC, or MS Windows, or even with a computer, without any operating system.

After having difficulties with access to my online server in the US at the beginning of my research, I used my USB memory device to deliver the Internet website locally from my laptop to students and teachers in my research group. A tiny internet server together with a copy of the complete website helped me continue my research without being penalised by a filtering system and geographical limitations.

On another occasion, in January 2008, I was working with two different teachers, one was a computer teacher in Zhuzhou, and the other was Ms. Zheng, an English teacher in Shenzhen. The aim was to study and investigate students' approaches to the use of various Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools with their learning. I sent Ms. Zheng a collection of carefully selected links for online resources. My selection was based on the usefulness for my assessment, and on choosing the least complicated so they could be used by a non-technical person. However, the next day she called me and told me that she could not open most of those links from school. When I reviewed the situation, I noticed that the majority of websites, where delivered from Western countries, which contained some words such as 'education,' were automatically barred.

With such a waste of time and effort, I anticipated that my colleagues would soon lose their interest in participating in my research.

To overcome this issue, I decided to use a similar technique to my research website. I collected a selection of educational portable software

integrated with their required technologies to work, such as Java Script, Java Run-Time Environment (JRE), and Perl (scripting language), and installed them in a USB memory card. She asked me to join her for the first lesson and I did so. We managed to use all the software packages within that lesson without any limitation due to localisation, hardware, licensing, policy, or access.

I have also developed a 'classroom response system prototype' for smart phones to explore the possibilities of using ICT and reducing the 'face' threat in classrooms. In addition, this could improve student's engagements. The idea behind such design was to use existing Information Technology (IT) resources within the organisation, such as, existing student mobile phones, and classroom computers. However, because of the complexities of bureaucratic systems in the schools, I never had a chance to push the development further.

3.1.6 Data gathering activities

In total I have spent over four years through several trips to China. During this time I conducted:

- Ten formal interviews in Beijing university, Wuhan University, Hunan University, a middle school in Shenzhen city, and Shenzhen's education department.
- Fourteen formal classroom observations in Zhuzhou College and three middle schools in Shenzhen city.
- About forty informal group meetings with students in Zhuzhou College.
- Hundreds of meals (formal and informal) with headmasters, teachers, and managers of the above establishments.

3.2 Methods of analysing data

The idea of objectivity assumes that a truth or independent reality exists independent to researcher and his observation. In other words, from this point of view, researchers should not contaminate such reality in any way. Through the last section, I discussed the issues with existing methods and the need for adaptation to improve acquiring insight into the lives of my Chinese friends and

colleagues as much as possible. Here in this section, I address the way I dealt with objectivity, validity, and triangulation issues. This will lead me to data analysis, which evolves coding and categorising collected data through interviews, observations, and documentary analysis.

3.2.1 Role of Language in analysis

What are the codes that can be drawn upon in order to try to understand the lives of others? Can a single code for each given cultural situation help me with interpretations of a text or discourse? Alternatively, perhaps there are multiple codes to be used for such interpretation and categorising each situation. There are times that a misunderstanding or lack of understanding reveals that the codes are not correctly understood. Only in such situations, could I realize the interpretation code must be incorrect.

Here in this section, I discuss the methodological issues in analysing a text. Text can be a written form of a communication, an interview, or a narrative. I will develop the implications of the dispositifs and of Lotman's approaches to analysis.

In order to rule out the assumption that there are identical codes in play, I will look at bracketing, an individualistic point of view in understanding the world of others and dispositifs as resources that the other draws upon when challenged by my misunderstandings or lack of knowledge.

Finally, by looking at monothetic and polythetic analysis, I close the discussion about how methodologically one can grasp the world of 'others.'

3.2.2 Dispositifs and language analysis

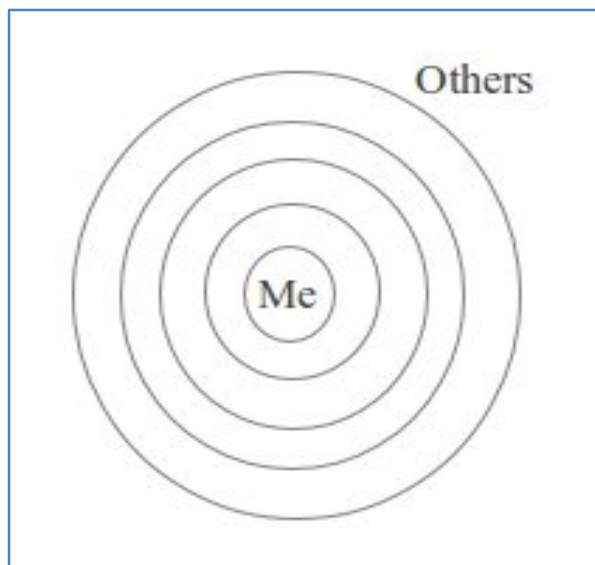
Possibly, language and culture are not two separable entities, but certainly it is not only about the fabrics of vocabulary, or printed syntaxes. In a wider picture, it is about information, values, ways of seeing, and meanings. Communication is not limited to linguistics but also employs all kinds of non-verbal forms such as signs, gestures, and symbols, to transfer information. Giving an instruction to use a word processing computer package is less ambiguous than the text produced by that package. Although we may use our computer with different languages, we share the same information about the physical device as a computer, and its software packages. Similar keyboards, similar keys, and the way they function. Even the ways and purposes in using computers are the same. However, writing about our experiences regarding our relations to the things around us are not the same.

Differences in the structure of language and the way individual groups construct their own grammar systems, are not the only reasons behind the language ambiguity. In other words, these differences are dependent on various dispositifs and the network between a language and other dispositifs.

In discussing the classical model of communication as a single cultural mechanism, Lotman, Y. M. (2001) introduces two possible directions in transferring a message. In both scenarios, the subject of communication is 'I', the possessor of the information. The 'I-I' message is less involved in linguistics and more on signs and abbreviations, because the message itself, and the background knowledge, are clear for 'I.' This is similar to when we leave a to-do note for ourselves. We only need to use abbreviations, or a single word to remember the whole message. It is assumed that before the act of communication there was a message known to 'me' and not known to 'him/her.' When the direction of the communication is 'I-I,' the subject transfers a message to himself/herself, the person who knows it already. In this situation, the addressee, second 'I,' is functionally equivalent to a third party, except that both subject and object share the same historical memories. While

in the 'I-she/he' system, information is transferred in space, in the 'I-I' system is transferred in time (Lotman, 2001:21). Borrowing the 'I-others' model may help to study the transferring of a message and the coding by the object. In the 'I-I' system, the mode of communication is more based on linguistic context or abbreviations as all the background information, memory, and history, all are known by 'me.' However, 'I-she/he' or 'I-others' systems require additional supplementary data attached to the main text, or non-linguistic information such as signs, gestures, and symbols, to remedy the lack of shared background knowledge. The further we move from 'I,' there is need for a higher amount of background information. While this is in a single cultural mechanism, certainly in an inter-cultural mechanism, it requires even more information. In order for the main text to be interpreted more accurately by the addressee, there must be more information given in the I–Others system. Hence, in the I–Others system in Figure 1, the space between Me and Others covered by layers of encoded background information, a clear understanding of the text is essential. As moving from Me, (close relations, members of communities...) to Others, there will be a need for more background information to compensate the lack of background knowledge.

Figure 8: I-Others system.



Addressee and addresser have to have identical codes, a bifurcation or

the same personality. In fact, the code itself is not a binary set of rules for either encoding or decoding. Rather, it is a multi-dimensional hierarchy. It is true that even for the communications use, one natural language such as English, the code is not necessarily identical. Not only is a common linguistic experience required for an identical coding, but also an identical dimension of memory, common understanding of norm, linguistic reference, and pragmatics. In general terms, cultural traditions (the semiotic memory of cultures) and the way with which this tradition is revealed to a particular member of a collective is inevitable. (Lotman, 2001:29)

3.2.3 Dispositifs and codes

Qualitative analysis is a cognitive process and each individual has a different cognitive style. Someone's way of thinking and explanation can make sense and is clear for a person with a similar cognitive style, while it can be very confusing to someone with a different approach (Heath and Cowley 2004:149). However, when it comes to coding, which is extracted from a message, it is not dependent on an individual's cognitive style, but rather is a space which may not be shared between different communities.

Language, semiotic memory of cultures, and all factors influencing a message and integrating it into a natural language, can be encapsulated into one term: Dispositif. The interpretation codes are highly based on how the different dispositifs are used or the ways that similar dispositifs are involved is a similar situation. A text may be coded into an interpreted new text by Americans with their concept of 'social space' but in an entirely different way to Europeans or Middle Eastern people who may not have an equivalent term to 'social space.'

A dispositif as a dynamic network of everything surrounding us, not only structures our past, but also influences the way we think and act. Consequently, any message we transmit is coded according to our dispositifs. This is a researcher's job, to determine such codes from the collected data for grouping and categorising as a basis for the creation of a theory. As a systematic

methodology, grounded theory is used for creation of theory through the analysis of data by achieving the balance between the interpretation and data that produces a grounded theory. The aim is not discovering theory, but rather theory that helps understanding and action in the area under investigation (Heath and Cowley 2004:149). For instance, from the collected data sensitivity to 'face' and need for 'personal space' in Chinese communities can be coded and categorised for developing a theory.

Degrees of hierarchy in social life, bound with strong relations, and aspects of persons 'face' in a group, categorise Chinese culture as a high collectivist culture.

In individualist cultures social groups are smaller, there are needs for a higher personal space, experiences although may be shared, but more individual. In collectivist cultures, with the reduced scale of personal and individual space, especially within a social group, experiences are more in the form of collective. A message is coded in collectivist culture is closer to the 'I-I' model, as more people within a social group are sharing the same dispositifs, or in other words, they share more background knowledge related to a message.

3.2.4 Implications for data analysis and methods

The discussed message systems and integrated background information – or related dispositifs – exist in the way we express our views about the world around us. For Foucault, discourse refers to ways of thinking and speaking about the aspect of reality and it consists of a set of common assumptions that sometimes may be so taken for granted as to be invisible or assumed. If our ways of thinking and acting, captured by the dispositifs which are configured differently from our world, then discourses express different viewpoints to reflect a particular reality. Then, there is a relation between discourse and dispositif – which imposes on ways of thinking.

Although every researcher brings to his or her research general

preconceptions founded in expertise, theory, method, and experience, using the grounded theory method required that the researcher look at the data from as many vantage points as possible to define codes. As a process of categorising, coding of data is the initial phase of the analytical method. By taking a set of codes that were developed in the initial phase and applying them to large amounts of data, forces the researcher to develop categories rather than simply to label topics. This way of coding is called 'focused coding' (Charmaz, 1983:110-117).

As the data are analysed and coded, ideas and potential insights will begin to develop which are recorded in theoretical memos; it is the data that develops theoretical sensitivity. The data is allowed to speak for itself and encompass all other considerations. In this sense, all data is important.

Analysing discourse allows certain ways of thinking about reality while excluding others. It is about the rules that allow us to recognise some statements as true and real, and some not, the rules to construct a map, model, or classification system. While the existence of a single rule is debatable, so as with a single analysing model. Then, multiple codes leading to multiple possible interpretations raise the question, 'How to grasp the world the other?'

Connectedness or intertextuality composed of shared and sharable anecdotes (Schostak 2013:184) can be seen in various narratives. For instance, where the sensitiveness of 'face' and 'losing face' becomes visible in many discourses, there are shared 'real' to confirmed validity. Then there are also compressions of repeated features seen between different groups in the community of my study which can be generalised. This leads a participant observer towards continuous learning, making analyses, searching for opportunities to test his/her understanding, and the theories emerging from the collected data. However, such understanding should require a suspension from researcher's life experience and previous knowledge of similar experiences – or dispositifs. Bracketing, as setting aside what we actually know about those objects familiar to us, is a way to deal with objectivity issues.

In phenomenology, bracketing is the act of suspending judgement about the natural world and rather concentrates in analysis of mental activity. With its

pioneer Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938), bracketing suggests setting aside the question of the real existence of a completed object, and any other questions related to its physical nature.

Munhall (1994) deems bracketing to be a process of unknowing where it is important to avoid the assumption that as interviewer, we know, or his/her life experience. It is the process of knowing our own interpretations of similar experiences. The purpose of the whole process is to lead the researcher to the point of being able 'to just see' rather than interpret according to his/her preconceptions.

Bracketing is putting aside any questions related to the real existence of an object, as well as other questions about the object's physical or objective nature, as these questions are in the interest of the natural science. It suggests that peeling away a message's symbolic meanings is like the layers of an onion. Then only, the thing itself, as meant and experienced remains (Beech, 1999).

As a method, bracketing protects the researcher from the increasing effect of examining a work that may be emotionally challenging material (Tufford and Newman, 2012). Especially, it may be considered as a useful method in the field of health, or specifically in nursing. In contrast, dispositifs are resources that 'other' draws upon when challenged by my misunderstanding or my lack of knowledge about 'other.' My study of the way of people's thinking in different cultures, are not interested in the brain activity of individuals, nor in separating them from the real world. In fact, I am more interested in studying the link between the real, but different worlds, to a group of people. The study of how 'other's' action is related to various dispositif in their world, and the ways that those dispositifs shape their way of thinking and acting.

3.2.5 Polythetic and monothetic

In natural science, there must be an identical and specific category for each substance. For instance, in the 'Periodic Table,' there are continuous

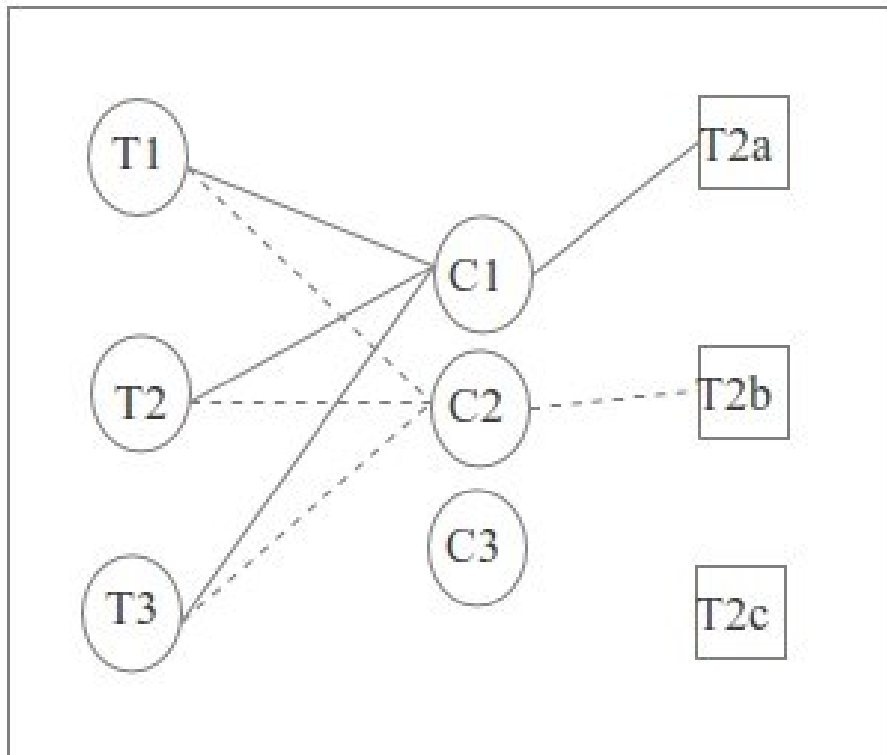
works of discovering new elements. Those elements are identified by the number of protons in nucleus. For the recent discovery of element 115, it is certain that the item is 115, not 115.5, nor 114.9.

The monothetic form of analysis in natural science seems ideal. Whereas in any specific cultural circumstance, it is clear that boundary disputes between one category and other are likely to be frequent. The key methodological question is how to deal with the boundary issues.

Sometimes, when a mistake is made, there may be 'outrage' – as in *narrative 1* (see annex A). As a result, the tacit rules or codes become clearer in terms of what is correct – not to me, to a member of a community in Schutz's terms - and thus how to construct a category, where to place the instances into that category, or in some other category. In contrast, when the work of a researcher is represented in a way that members of the community recognise it as 'their world,' or 'their definitions,' this achieves a degree of validation and reliability (Schostak, 2010:8).

Using the polythetic classification in social science introduced by Rodney Needham, R. (1975) at the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and an Ireland Journal article entitled "*Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences.*" He combined two concepts of Ludwig Wittgenstein's, 'Family Resemblance,' and the numeric taxonomical idea of 'Polithetic taxa.' Taxa is characterised by a set of characters that each member has the majority called polythetic taxa, in which not any single feature is essential or sufficient for the membership. Family resemblances have to do with how we use our words and concepts, while polythetic classification refers to our data chart (Chaney, 1978).

Figure 9: Multi-code interpretation



The idea of family resemblances embraces the fact of 'a complex network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing, sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.'

The interpretations of a culture as a set of texts, even for members of a group who share many cultural resources, sometimes are problematic. What causes such problems or invalidity, is using the wrong codes for interpretation. Problems with codes would not be realised until something goes wrong.

In Figure 9, T1, T2, and T3 are individual situation text that can be interpreted differently by using different codes as C1, C2, and C3. The result of each encoding produces, although is sharing some points, but a different interpretation of given texts as T1a, T1b, and T1c.

Only when the interpretation 'fails,' could I then realise that either the code is wrong, or there can be more than one code to interpret a text. Lotman, Y. M. (2001) argues that, in any culture, there are existing various codes simultaneously. Each code produces a different interpreted text. For instance, in figure 9, the situation text T1 can be decoded using a single code C1 into a new text T2a. However using a different code, we arrive at a new interpreted

text, which is T2b. This is realised only when something goes wrong or a misunderstanding takes place. In a same way I am also able to correlate the views of different interviews in order to see whether there is a 'triangulation' of their views. The codes are reflections of using dispositifs, which are apparently the same but used in different ways. The texts produced in such a way are separated by using different codes.

This chapter has built a range of analytical methods to answer key questions regarding the appropriateness of selected methods for data collection and analysis of the data in Chinese community. In addition, I have explored the ways that identity – the identity of the researcher, of 'me,' of 'others,' is being categorised under different discourses (polythetic and monothetic approaches). Then, the leading discussion would be the issue of identity-in-question and its influence on the researcher and the research.

4 Issues involved in 'becoming' a researcher

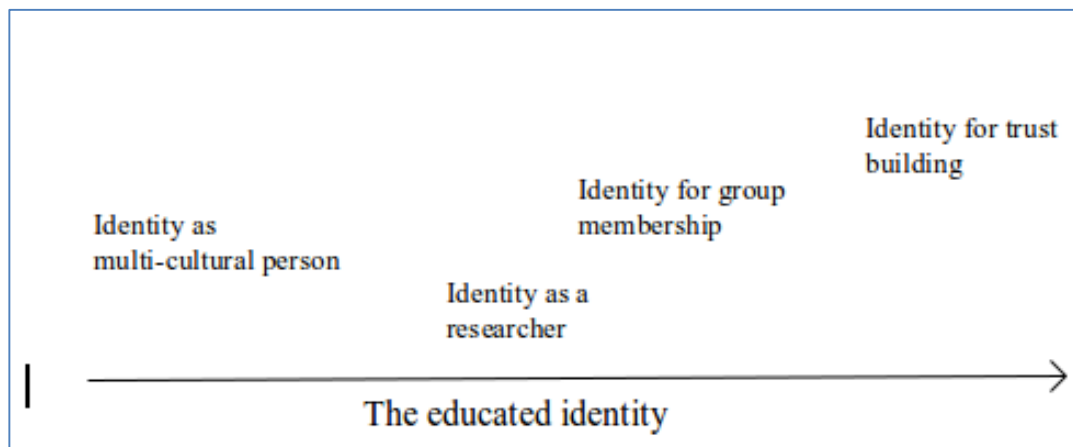
What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of ordinary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-hood, singular or communal, that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha, 1996:2).

The identity-in-question is the focus of this chapter regarding the researcher's identity as being in the space 'in-between' cultures – that is, in the space of differences. In particular, it is about me, as a researcher, trying to enter Chinese communities and become visible, either as a stranger who does not understand, or as one who is behaving in recognisable and acceptable ways. Through this chapter, I recall my multicultural background in order to explore the construction of my identity through interpersonal and intergroup activity. The second part of this chapter is an overview of the 'others' framework of thought in order to understand the discourse of people, which is not only language, but rather, as a product of cultural use of language. Finally, as the last part of the chapter I discuss the sum of identity as language, ways of seeing, and discourse, which all together, brought me to the point of seeing 'aesthetic of language.'

4.1 Identity for a group membership

Dealing with otherness, the otherness of the Chinese to me, and the otherness of me to Chinese, involves critical analysis of my identity as a researcher in China. This involves learning about the key cultural resources that frame discourses. There were multiple possible identities educated in me, yet the importance was to identify the educated identity, which was for trust rather than fear.

Figure 10: education of 'identities'.



By starting the fieldwork, more than a question of 'identity,' there was the question of, 'How such identity is to be 'educated' – 'drawn out' - for the purpose of the fieldwork and in the space of differences of a given group.' What could separate me from others in the field and are those influences to create trust relations? Is the space of differences a source for ambiguity, fear, and favouritism?

Bo Young was one of my informants during my fieldwork. He was a young man who has completed his normal university work in Zhuzhou's Teacher College and graduated in 2005 from sport and health coaching. Eight months before I met him, he had started his first job in a recreation centre in Shenzhen city as a health advisor. Later he became one of my most important contacts.

One day, Ms. Leung (my research helper and translator) told me that Bo Young is scared of me!

With a smile, I asked the reason and was interested to know how she came to know about that?

- *'Nothing. He was asking many strange questions about you with fear, like, 'Who is Amir?' 'What is he really doing here? 'Who pays for his research?!, ' she replied.*
- *'Then how do you know he is scared of me?' I asked.*
- *'He wanted to know if you are a British agent or something like that. He was scared he will be in trouble with helping you,' she said.*

Seeing from Western eyes, it is easy to miss such fear: the fear of dealing with an agent. It is not difficult to see through my dusty memories from Iran prior to 1979 in which we (Iranians) were suspicious of any Western foreigner working or researching in Iran, especially the ones who were trying to get into ordinary people's lives. In a similar way, I could understand Bo Young's fear was more related to the purpose of the research.

In his mind, there could be questions like:

Why does Amir want to understand Chinese culture? What is he going to do with this information? Who is paying for his research and why?

Perhaps in his view, it is not usual that someone would get himself into

trouble only for the sake of knowledge. As I discussed in 1.2, ethnography is more a Western vision, and in China, there was not much tendency for ethnography fieldwork as in the UK (I develop the issue of Bo Young's fear in 4.1.1).

Within the space of differences, the role of a researcher can be easily equated with 'spy.'

Then there is a possible identity ambiguity of a researcher her/himself. With realising that, the subject of identity in general is a very complex study, but as a result of field problems, I found it necessary to explore the researcher's identity both in terms of self and group perspectives. The latter one is the identity related to favouritism or fear, and the former is how our self-image is reflecting the ideology of the chosen membership group, and the ways our research can be influenced from this self-image, or self-categorisation.

One of the theories which explains many relations among different groups of people is conducted by Henry Tajfel and Turner's 'social identity' theory which is based on 'us' (in-group) and 'others' (out-group). Tajfel and Turner's hypothesis was mainly to explain 'prejudice' behaviour between various groups. What Tajfel meant by interpersonal and intergroup, is the assumption that social interaction between people varies along a continuum, defined at one extreme by purely interpersonal behaviour and conceptualised as being based solely on the individual characteristics and personal relationships of the inter-actors. Whereas, purely intergroup behaviour is seen as solely determined by their respective social category membership (such as being English or French) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Their theory consists of three main rules. First, in the in-group, there are discriminations against the 'out-group' to enhance their self-image. Second, in a group, people always seek a way to find a negative aspect of an 'out group.' Finally, we categorise objects to understand them. The same is true with people's categorisations, including self. In a short description, we adopt the identity of the group we have categorised ourselves as belonging to. For example, people categorise oneself as a student, doctor, Iranian, or Irish. This will result in adopting the general identification held by those groups. Our

beliefs, our behaviour, and the way we will interpret the outside world, is highly dependent on the chosen identity, including our self-image, as well as, how we wanted to present our self to 'others.'

I learned that my own identity ambiguity was not limited to the fieldwork only, as I had already experienced identity duality in England, and even in Iran. However, starting the fieldwork in China moved me into another dimension of identity ambiguity. The question of identity for me starts from; first, 'Who am I as a researcher?' and 'Who am I in eyes of others in China?' Tajfel, H. (1974) sometimes referred to his experience of living under a false identity, on guard against an ever-present danger of discovery in his later academic life. He used it to illustrate his

distinction between interpersonal and intergroup behaviour (Robinson and Tajfel, 2000).

Usually, businesspeople and teachers are less subjected to mistrust as much as researchers are, particularly in social science. Of course, I was not the first ethnographer whose identity was under suspicion and will not be the last one. However, suspicion is a barrier to membership and building trust relations. Others might construct my identity as 'unknown,' which could result in failure to achieve membership. An example of a question of my identity experienced often was its connection to fear and suspicion of informants and friends. Most individuals and groups have little knowledge about social research, especially research focused on education or cultural concerns, and as a result, field researchers are frequently suspected by the ordinary people in China. Whilst Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (1995) do not particularly discuss research in a different culture, they make the point that research, as an activity, is often mistrusted.

On the other hand, my complex cultural and multiple ethnic backgrounds at that time caused me to ask myself the most crucial question, 'Who am I?' or more specifically, 'Who am I from the perspective of others?' Perhaps as the most straight forward answer, I consider myself as a socialist, British/Iranian citizen, Turkish native, multilingual, traveller, father, teacher, student at

Manchester Metropolitan University, researcher, ethnographer, and an IT advisor and consultant in a local importer business. This is to say, I saw myself as someone with a multi-layer identity walking into the fieldwork of China and engaged in a cross-cultural research study. However, in a world of single group memberships, this is too muddle, and way too complicated to introduce myself to a Chinese.

Through this chapter, I go through my 'becoming a researcher' process in-between spaces and discuss the issues that arise from it such as identity ambiguity. I learned that while I was in China, the 'becoming researcher' layer of my identity could not be separated from the process of 'learning to know what it means to be Chinese. Then, whether there is a Chinese sphere of thought, how my research identity could be educated through the research process? This will involve trying to understand their views as Chinese about a researcher, and the research itself. It is in that sense, there is a mutual education alongside of the fieldwork and how the in-between spaces can turn into a space of educating identity.

4.1.1 'Me' as someone in-between spaces (my own biography)

I may need to recall my sense of in-between cultural space in order to understand the ways dispositifs, codes, and powers, operates on my past. This will provide knowledge of an educational process of self-discovery, as well as, my position in Chinese Society and my ability to produce research-based knowledge. Although I see myself as a multi-cultural person, a global citizen, or a citizen of Earth, to some people, speaking of a multi-cultural background implies a mixed race or blood rather than the ability to communicate and live in different societies with different ways of living.

I was born in a middle class Azeri Turkish family in Tehran, the capital of Iran on 1st February 1961. My father was

the 10th Child in his family. When he was 12, after the socialist movement in Azerbaijan in 1937, the family was forced to leave their comfortable life in Azerbaijan, and my father had to live in various countries such as Iraq, Germany, Turkey, and finally settled in Zurich (Switzerland). My mother was young and a school leaver at the age of 15 in order to get married, and move to Zurich, where a year later my elder sister was born. My grandparents, who I had the joy of growing-up under their attention, were not be able to communicate in Farsi (Iranian official language). For a very understandable reason of the time, my mother did not want my sisters and me to talk in the Turkish language (the Turkish accent was not considered as a respectful accent). She had enough bitter memories of being bullied in her school for having the same accent. Consequently, I developed a semi-mixed language and perceptiveness through my childhood. During that period, Tehran was under fast Westernisation (maybe modernisation rather than Westernisation). Separated from my grandparents, at age of eight, we moved to the Christian area of Tehran.

By that time, the majority of my friends were Christians (Armenians), and I was influenced by Armenian Christian Culture, while at the same time, I learned about conflict between traditional Islamic culture and Christianity. This period lasted until the age of 14, but its influence stays forever. After that, I was moved to a Jewish high school, and then college. In there, my time as a teenager was spent in a modern mixed Jewish school, which by that time there were only two mixed schools in Tehran. Both belonged to the Jewish community. Although this period of my life was rich in education and influenced by analysing Plato, Bertrand Russell, Marx, Engles, and Freud, but at the same time, this period of my life never allowed me have a chance to be settled in Iran because of my

non-religious belief. In addition, being graduated from a Jewish high school, became an inevitable barrier to having a future in Iran. After the 1979 revolution, my parents were waiting for me to join them in Hamburg, Germany, but my attempt to get a medical excuse (I had stomach ulcer) from the national service and obtain a passport failed and I had to join the Iranian Army in early 1980 during the Iran/Iraq war. After receiving initial training, I was trained as an anti-aircraft gunner and sent to a Kurdish area, on the northern border of Iraq. Being a witness to lost lives and carrying dead bodies were most significant of this period of my life. It was the period of my political activities too and spending my time in villages with Kurdish people who were fighting for their independent. Consequently, I developed an interest in Kurdish culture and their life during the 22 months of my stay. Also, with help of my friend in Azerbaijan, through letters I learned how to read and write in Azeri, as well as studying Turkish literature.

Six months prior to the end of my national service, based on my interest in poetry and literature, I was elected to document the army activities and missions in the area as a book. Being a volunteer in writing the documentary book, about the six months of military activities in the region freed me from any other duties except interviews and writing for the last four months of my national service, which increased my chance in getting out alive from the war. Applying for a passport and leaving the country as soon as I had a chance was my first mission which held me another year in the country. I married in 1983, and moved to Ankara (Turkey) with my wife and started my degree course in an English language based university in 1984. To continue my higher education in England, I settled in Manchester in 1990. With developing my academic skills as a teacher, and being introduced to aspects of Chinese culture

after teaching Chinese students in Manchester from 2001, I became interested in their culture. In result of a number of business trips to China on behalf of the College I was working for, I learned how little I know about the Chinese I met.

The question of 'who am I?' and the thought of cultural ambiguity occupied my mind from the very early stages of my life. Although I did not develop any Turkish accent during my childhood, I never could get away from being bullied in school because of being born into a Turkish family. Also, for the rest of life, anywhere I lived, carrying an alien accent and cultural ambiguity was the result of my multicultural background.

The above mixture of events and histories of being in-between cultures, religions, and languages spaces, shaped my identity to be someone who always wants to see the differences. It can be considered as a self-image of someone who was going through the learning process of events, called research, fieldwork, and participant observation.

As in the above portrayal, in order to represent ourselves, we often put others and ourselves into a kind of categorisation, and labelling by race, religion, or similar grouping. This implies a monothetic form of categorisation. A certain language, and speech style can be an important attribute for membership in a particular group, a salient cue for inter-ethnic categorisation, a dimension of ethnic identity and an ideal medium for facilitating intra-group cohesion (Tajfel et al., 1984). However, this dimension of ethnic identity is educated and re-educated all the time, by various forces in social groups, such as discourse, schooling, and the media. Of course, the social and ethnic identities separations do not only belong to the 21st Century. However, the rise of multiculturalism and the celebration of the ethnic identity and customs of racial 'minorities' have made whites more visible (Romanucci-Ross et al., 2006). This is significant for 21st century inter-cultural discourses driven by international market interests, or power domination, which tries to introduce 'otherness' as a means of subjection and exploitation. An example, was the

shaping of the understandings of American people about communism and Russians during the cold war (Foucault and Gordon, 1980). Regardless of the reasons behind 'favourite' categorisations and privileges (which is not in the scope of this research), its effect on inter-cultural discourse is a significant factor. Barfoot, C. C. (1997) believes basic categories such as ethnic identity, cultural attribution, and cultural differences, are not predefined structures, but are, in fact, themselves constructed in, and thus the outcome of, international discourse. Tsang, E. W. K. (1998) from Hong Kong, in a short paper, shared his fieldwork experiences in mainland China relating to his ethnic identities. He mentioned that the researcher's identity could be a significant factor affecting the data collection and producing results of qualitative researches, particularly cross-cultural studies. He added that his work and data collection benefited highly from his own identity as Chinese, and thus as a researcher he was granted the status of being 'an inner-people' (熟人, shouren). 'Inner people' can be translated as 'insiders;' however, 'shouren' is not necessarily about a race or nationality. It is a passport to enter the group relations who share the same interests with the powerful social network of relations, or (关系, GuanXi). Without having some kind of other significant insiders, it is hardly to conduct research in Mainland China. In this sense, drawing out an acceptable identity is co-extensive with drawing out the network of insiders. My identity as 'acceptable' or trustworthy only exists if this network is available to me. For Foucault, people have no real identity within themselves, rather it is communicated with others in interaction with them (Foucault and Gordon, 1980).

4.1.2 'Me' as an in-between researcher

With being born in-between cultural spaces, and having to carry such an identity provided me with the capability of seeing difference, as well as a preparatory stepping stone for my research journey. I begin considering my identity as a researcher and the person who must create a successful trusting relationship through the fieldwork. The on-going process of becoming a

researcher began with the early fieldwork preparations. By the time I arrived in China, I considered myself a registered student for a PhD course in Manchester Metropolitan University, someone employed part time as research assistant, a technology consultant, and who had been a teacher of further education for six years. Soon after, I realised that introducing myself as a researcher, with the intention to research, wasn't a satisfactory reference for someone looking for an insider status. Then, unintentionally, in their eyes, I became just a Western researcher. The quest for insider or semi-insider status was dependent on two major questions. First; 'How do I see myself as a researcher in China?' The interpretation of collected data is also bound-up with the 'self' of the researcher. The researcher's own identity, background and beliefs have a role in the creation and analysing of data. Being a 'self-aware' researcher means that findings are necessarily more cautious and tentative (Denscombe, 2007). Prior to starting fieldwork, after about twenty years of living in England, learning the English way of living, studying social science with English terminology, and Western theories, I had nearly forgotten that I'm not a native Westerner. At the beginning of the fieldwork, it seemed very natural to me that they recognised me as a Western researcher as I have seen myself for the last twenty years. Then secondly, there is the question of, 'how do Chinese people see me as a researcher?' Certainly, the search for recognition as an insider had nothing to do with my respect, fascination, and influence of Chinese culture or its art effects. As I discuss the 'relations' and group membership in China in more detail in chapter seven, the Chinese are educated to recognise others based on their hierarchic position. A person or a group in a higher position in the hierarchy will receive easier access to membership in other groups. In the case of my interest in membership in a Chinese group, the key criteria for acceptance as an insider was membership in a group from a higher position on an international scale. On many occasions, I was encouraged to be a member of such groups, or better to say I was threatened, to receive no support with my research. Consequently, I kept my identity as I saw it myself, as a British national/citizen. Otherwise, 'me' and my research, were not recognised and I would receive no support and co-operation. However, this was not in any

research guideline that I studied.

In connection with these issues, I remember the story described by Sarup, M. (1996) of a Chinese boy who grew up in an English family:

Once, a 'Chinese' boy was adopted by a white family. Now an adult, many people see him as 'odd' because 'he goes on about foreigners, but he himself is a foreigner.' He has been brought up as English, but he is seen by others as Chinese. Here, 'race' has become culture. I could ask, What is the 'real' identity of this person? I think that that would be a wrong type of question to ask because there is no core or 'essence,' there is a split between how he sees himself and how others see him. (Sarup & Raja, 1996)

Qualitative research provides strategies to explore how perceptions are 'educated,' and socially organised in terms of construction of categories and identities. In addition, perceptions are narratively and biographically guided and organised.

The qualitative research will be interested in the 'identity' of the researchers and how they might have influenced the research interpretation of the situation and/or process of data collection itself. Martyn Denscomb (2007) argued that with an extraordinary cultural transformation of planetary society, the interest in cultural analysis has grown in the past two decades. However, increasing such interest in fact is a globalization impact rather than cultural transformation. Nowadays, cultural transformations are not free from global market's influence and their interest. Then, such growth in cultural analysis argued by Martyn Denscomb, cannot be conducted without considering global factors. Nevertheless, with increasing population migrations and impact of cultural differences on national societies, development of state-of-the art communication technologies may lead to an increase in number of researchers with multi-cultural backgrounds, which may conflict with their researcher's identity - new culturally-mutant researchers.

Particularly, how I see myself is slightly different from the 'halfie,' the word given to researchers with mixed background by Lila Abu-Lughod (1991). In her paper, she discusses 'halfie' researchers with mixed cultural backgrounds due to migration or living/studying in another country (yet she means only Western). She points out the ethical issues faced by 'halfie' researchers are complex, as they write and have to answer to different communities (Abu-Lughod, 1991:137).

For me, it was different. I was researching in a third country with a very different ethico-political background from my country. Despite my attempts to obtain an insider status shortly after entering the field by joining local festive celebrations, cooking Chinese foods, traveling in an ordinary fashion, and learning the Chinese language, there were still times I faced the reality that I am not yet considered an insider by Chinese. For example, recalling Bo Young's question regarding my 'real identity.'

It did not much surprise me when I heard that Bo Young thought I was a British Agent! Like many other Chinese, perhaps one of the main reasons I encouraged him to meet me was improving his English language. When I saw him first, he came toward me and tried to communicate in very basic and broken English. Meeting him over a period and talking about various things, and at the same time, using my electronic translator was helping him to improve his spoken English. Later, I decided to offer him an English Lesson every evening and this arrangement continued for a period of one month during my stay in Shenzhen. About six months later, he was my major contact and helped me by supporting my creation of my research network. In my next trip, I rented and shared a small apartment with him to reduce the cost of the hotel and for him to have accommodations in town.

Eventually I managed to earn a little bit of his trust, but

not as much as satisfying his concern about my identity yet. On one of many occasions and one of many between serious and joke conversations, he asked me?

Bo: *Is anyone paying you for this research?*

Me: *No, I pay all myself.*

Bo: *You, rich man, how much is a ticket from Manchester to China?*

Me: *About £400-£600, around 15000 RMB.*

Bo: *For me it takes about eight months to earn this money.*

Me: *For me it is not easy either, I use my credit cards.*

Bo: *And you are not working?!*

Certain questions, including the above, draw out and indicate particular issues related to a world view. To be able to see this world view, presumably, one requires mapping out how life is to be managed. To Bo Young, how life is to be managed, was based on how certain key dispositifs such as power, face, and relations, administrate his worldview. Such dispositifs will be discussed in chapter seven and eight respectively.

In his understanding of the world, life is difficult enough 'to just survive,' and having a job or work makes it hard to keep it going, why was someone prepared to spend his time and money without being paid to cover his expenses to study Chinese? His way of thinking is a reflection of his own identity in China. Bo Young may ask himself: Who pays for his research? Is he really researching the subject that he is claiming to be? What is he going to do with the research outcome? Will I be in trouble, if I help him? Those, and similar questions, are the ones that I have been asked on many occasions, directly or indirectly, during my fieldwork in China. Although, such suspicion is not unexpected in social science fieldworks, but certainly will be difficult to formulate and conduct them in the research. I will discuss the ethical issues with my research in more detail in chapter five.

4.1.3 Knowing about 'Others' (Chinese)

Traveling to China for the first time to attend meetings with education agencies and to participate in education exhibitions in Beijing, Shanghai, and Nanjing, my initial experiences of the Chinese way of life encouraged me to learn more about their culture. I discovered, that despite my initial thoughts, today Chinese in different countries are different in many ways. Maybe such differences are not in physical features, but more in the way of thinking and living. There is a superficial family resemblance, but it is not monolithic relations reflecting similarities. Presumably, there are category boundaries that need to be drawn out, otherwise real differences will be ignored. Education of identities and category boundaries are necessary to see the world as others see it and thus create a condition to become a trusted insider as a key step in the process of becoming a researcher. Even in the cities like Guangzhou or Shenzhen, the neighbouring cities of Hong Kong, there are boundaries. Although they were sharing similar cultural background, they see themselves as different from people in Hong Kong. Among the many factors that may influence the educated identity in mainland China, are the political and economic atmosphere, poverty, and World War II. Those experiences, like many others, drove the Chinese in mainland China into very different cultural experiences than the Chinese in Hong Kong. Moreover, China today, has been recognised as a country with the fastest growing economy. Such experiences for Chinese people are specific to Mainland China, but not to Hong Kong or Taiwan. However, these latter have their own stories about what it means to be a Chinese person under the influence of colonisation. My experiences through this journey of learning were not only about a particular Chinese way of living, but also rather about others as ordinary people living in 21st Century China.

With my early trips, I began to realise the tensions concerning 'identity' in Hong Kong and in Shenzhen. The narrative below is my meeting with Lu Jie, who shared his thoughts and feelings about such tensions.

In one of my trips to Hong Kong, I had been invited by my friend, Lu Jie, to his flat for dinner. My Emirates flight landed in Hong Kong Airport in early morning. I was thinking, How familiar everything is here. Signs leading me to passport control, custom officers with white uniforms and white gloves, exchange office at the left corner of waiting hall, and the Chinese restaurant in the middle of arrival hall with a McDonalds next to it.

I was not sure it was because of some similarity with the whole atmosphere to England from the colours to the signs, from peoples behaviours to the breakfast menu with white tea, or because I was here many times before. Not only with every trip to China, I buy my ticket to Hong Kong and then cross the border, but I also had to have a short visit to Hong Kong after a 30-day stay in China. I usually apply for a multiple tourist visa from the Chinese Embassy in Manchester, which is between one month to one year, but with a maximum stay of 30 days. As Shenzhen city is on the Chinese mainland, it is just a road crossing away from Hong Kong, and this never troubled me. In fact, I enjoyed every time I travelled by train to Hong Kong to a different station and spending a whole afternoon to learn about people and the town.

That morning, I thought it was too early to call Lu Jie. Taking the fast train from the airport to 'KowLung' station took about 30 minutes. There, I could leave my luggage in a locker. After a few hours walking in nearby streets, I called my friend and his happy and welcoming excited voice asked me to go to a shopping centre nearby and wait for him. Shortly after, his son met me and directed me to their flat on the 18th floor in a super luxurious apartment building complex. We passed through a huge reception hall, a large swimming pool and entertainment centre behind glass walls, an internet café and finally a five-star

hotel-style lift. Surprisingly, their flat was small in comparison to the one I had visited in mainland China. Lu Jie had studied at Oxford University. Most of his family members are living in London. His wife and son are living in Manchester and he visits them once or twice a year, especially at Christmas time.

After dinner while his wife was busy with washing dishes in a 1 X 3 meter kitchen, I was talking to Lu Jie. After talking for a short while about him, I asked myself:

'As a Chinese, how do you see yourself after your country returned back to China?'

He started: 'There are different views about this and (...).'

I interrupted him: 'No, no, I mean after 100 years of being under the British (...), how much do you see yourself as a Chinese? I've noticed that even your diet is slightly adapted to the English?'

He started to think for a short while playing with a piece of paper on the table and with a little bit of hesitation, he said, 'I feel myself definitely 70-80 percent Chinese.'

The tone of voice and the use of words definitely showed his attempt to protect and retain his Chinese identity. Also, I felt he is not very comfortable with the subject or his further comments, but cruelly, I continued:

'Are you happy that your country is joining China?'

'Yes... emm ... We are the same ... We are Chinese,' he said. Then after a short breath, he continued, 'I remember the time that there were signs on the pubs entry (...) No Dog. No Chinese.' He stopped and glared at the paper, as he was busy with an important reading.

I noticed that was the time to change the conversation and release him from either embarrassment. With an enthusiastic voice, I said:

'You should come to Shenzhen while I am staying in Shenzhen. I can show you everywhere. I am pretty familiar with the whole town.'

Immediately his wife, from the kitchen said, 'He doesn't let us travel to the main land. He thinks it is not safe.'

'But I am traveling there more than two years and have never faced any problem. To me it seemed very safe,' I replied.

Lu Jie said, 'For you maybe, but we are Chinese. The only place I travel to most of the time is Shanghai. Shanghai is different, Shanghai is like Hong Kong.'

Then he started to talk about his projects and the ones in Shanghai. Lu Jie is an interior designer for modern and international buildings, such as, five star hotels and exhibition centres. The plans and photos were so impressive that at the beginning, I doubted they were his work!

I asked him: 'Why Shanghai, why are you not concentrating in Hong Kong?'

He replied, 'The Hong Kong market is too small for my project, I need to expand it. Shanghai is different from the whole of China, both politically and economically. Also, because I am from Hong Kong, I have an advantage and (...).' He was looking for the right word. I helped him, 'privilege?' I said. He rushed, 'Yes. Privilege.'

We talked a little while about Hong Kong and living in Hong Kong. He mentioned that he has a friend in Shanghai running a small school and maybe I would be interested to meet him.

After some time, I left them and went toward main land China.

One year later, in Manchester, Lu Jie's wife called me and asked for my advice and help in having a business address in

England for Lu Jie. She said:

These days China is growing very fast and they don't see people from Hong Kong as before. In Shanghai, he wanted to introduce himself as a British Chinese to have a better face.

In this story, there are complexities I needed to explore in attempting to become a researcher, who requires some acceptance as an insider in order to understand such issues as face, as well as, their attempt for drawing me into their relations network.

4.1.4 How 'others' (Chinese) see me?

From the early stages of my fieldwork, as my facial features helped me, I chose to be a Westerner and a researcher without disclosing my place of birth (as in recent years, place of birth is also proof of identity). I decided rather than describing myself at the beginning of every conversation with, 'Ah (...) I was born in Iran (...) but I am Turkish (...) now I am a British national, (...) I just refer to my hometown and say that 'I am from Manchester/England' (I discuss the semi-covert participant observer in a later chapter, in detail).

Why did this matter? I am not sure, maybe one of my very early trips to China over a dinner table that Ms. Leung and me were invited, provides an insight. Ms. Leung was talking on behalf of me in Chinese with other people around the table, then from time to time, she asked for my confirmation, 'Isn't it?' I nodded my head to confirm it. Then the host asked me, 'Mr. Amir, where are you from?'

While I was getting ready to tell my complex biography, I was interrupted: 'From Manchester, England.' Ms. Leung immediately replied with a suggestion looking at me. I noticed that I must comply with her judgements.

I never felt that I needed to talk about the issues with my identity in China, until sometime later when she mentioned to me that it is better to introduce myself that way. She said that I would get better conversations as a result. Although, sometimes I felt, as if I was deceiving others by not disclosing

my place of birth, or my origin. However, as Ms. Leung was my translator as well as my guide through the Chinese culture, I felt I had to trust her on this.

Although I agreed to play this game, I did not try to hide it all the time. Unexpectedly, there were some situations where I was considered to be lying or pretending after which I lost potential collaboration for my research. An example of such a situation was the time I met Dr. Shi in Beijing University.

For me, adding Dr. Shi to my relation network and her help in understanding the impact of socio-cultural factors in Chinese learners was important. Her experiences in England researching in education could contribute to my research. We were similar in many ways except one. I chose to do Ph.D. research at the cost of losing a good paid job in a place I was living for almost twenty years. She paid a substantial amount of money to take a Ph.D. research in England for a better job prospect in China.

When I arrived to Beijing after spending 26 hours in a train in the winter of 2007, I texted her and informed her of my arrival to Beijing. She gave me direction for her place in the university. Finally, I found her in the middle of a large hall behind a laptop on a small desk. The hall was full of other things and some people, but for some reason, my mind deleted everything else from the scene, without any record. After some short introduction about my thesis title only and our mutual friend in Manchester, I explained my experiences of teaching Chinese for some years and that I wanted to know more about the social and cultural factors in shaping their learning styles.

She immediately started to talk in a way which made me feel I'm her student.

- Ah, yes the important thing is your methodology ... Which methods ...?

I found her talking about writing a Ph.D. thesis rather than sharing any knowledge regarding Chinese study style. Despite my few attempts to change the channel of the

conversation, I did not get anything more than how to write the methodology chapter.

To my understanding, perhaps she did not want to discuss the education system in China, for the reasons I discuss further in chapter three. She pretended, in an obvious way, that I was there to learn how to write my thesis.

However, the significant part of our conversation was when she asked me,

'You are not really British? Where are you from then?' Dr. Shi asked, with a strict and disappointed voice.

Although I did not introduce my ethnic background and did not think, it could be necessary. However, as I was introduced to her as someone coming from England, she was probably expecting someone more British than I am and probably used her experiences in England to identify a non-native British accent.

Dr. Shi had completed her Ph.D. in Chinese education in England the year before. She returned to Beijing holding a British Ph.D., consequently was given a job at Beijing University. Her qualification was not considered only a Ph.D., but a Western institute issued Ph.D., which in China, means it is a double qualification. Perhaps she paid a fortune for it, something that minorities in China are unable to do. In this manner, perhaps the way she saw people was not only based on what they do, but who they are.

Another similar experience I had was in September, 2008.

For a long time I was looking for an opportunity to expand my experiences of relations in the workplace in Chinese society by working in China, as well as to ease my research expenses. While I was accompanying my friend and his wife to

a job exhibition in Shenzhen, they found me a job opportunity to stay longer in Shenzhen. The job was offered by ZTE Company when they talked about me with the company presenter at the desk. Although initially for me it was fun and interesting, it later it turned into a question of identity.

They took me to the desk, and wanted to know about my experiences with e-learning developments and explained their need for their product-training centre, an e-learning site for overseas customers. I gave my details, we shook hands and I left.

After few months, one day when I was in Wuhan city working with teachers in Wuhan University, someone called me and referred to their interest in interviewing me as soon as possible. A week later, I was at a large conference table with an interview panel of five people communicating in fairly understandable English. At the end of the meeting and on the way to the elevator, their leader accompanied me and showed their interest in having me on their team.

After some time, they asked me to attend a technical interview, which had an excellent outcome. I waited for them to give me a starting day, however, I did not hear from them for nearly six months. One day, I received an email giving their apology about the delay and explaining the changes in the department. A new head of department had been appointed and she wanted to meet me. Fortunately, I was planning to go to China for follow up fieldwork and could place in the schedule that meeting too.

After arriving, I was guided by the same group leader. He was very excited and happy to see me. He guided me to the head of the department office.

The new head of the department started asking me about my qualifications, experiences, and my Ph.D., however,

toward the end of the interview,

- *'Your name is Amir. Are you Moslem?' she asked.*
- *'I was born into a Moslem family,' I replied.*
- *'What do you mean by I was born into a Moslem family, (...)?' She raised her voice and with a little harsh voice continued:*
'Can you say I am not Christian if you are born into a Christian family?'
- *'I see religion as personal belief,' I replied.*

She did not continue the argument and after couple of questions, said, 'I am sorry, I think you are over-qualified for this position. Thank you for attending the interview.'

What is important in this conversation, is not the outcome of the interview and the question of my suitability for the position, but was her comment and her tone of voice about my religious background. What surprised me was her interest in my religious identity because, so far as I could see, in China, the concept of religion is completely unimportant.

With further analysis of the above narrative, I realised that criticisms were not about me as in-between, but rather it related to the Chinese in-between their new identity in the globalised era. Similarly, for the schools I visited later, or the one I was working for, there were different aspects of my identity. As well as seeing me as a teacher, a researcher, or a colleague, there was the aspect of being a foreigner, which, from time to time, was highlighted in most of our relations. In large cities like Shenzhen, their interest was only to build an outstanding image for their organisation with having a foreign face among them. Yet it was important to have a Western image. I will discuss and analyse this further in chapter five.

4.1.5 How other Westerners in China see 'me'

In China, in my experience, a Western foreigner in academia typically means an English teacher. By 2007, when I started my research, not many Chinese had experience in meeting a researcher in Education from the West. One of the difficulties I was faced with was explaining myself as a researcher, not a teacher.

In the foreign English language teacher market, in order to overcome competition, companies and their Chinese agents, promote the 'native speaker' concept as a benchmark for choosing foreign teachers. They reduce their cost by hiring young or specific groups of native English speakers often without any teaching experience or qualifications. Those I met were the American Bomber crewmember (Joe), the bankrupt manager (William), the ex-chef from London (Ben), and a taxi driver. I also met many qualified education professionals.

The idea of 'native speakers' being a source of grammatical accuracy and the sense of there being 'proper language use,' is used to establish a norm against non-native speakers. They have traditionally enjoyed a natural prestige as a language teacher, not only because they embody an 'authentic' use of language, but also as representatives of an authentic original cultural context. However, in recent years, the native speaker's identity has been put into question when, for example, German-born Turkish children claim to be native speakers. Although raised and educated in Germany they carry a Turkish surname, which means they may find difficulties in obtaining a job abroad as a language teacher. Today, a 'native speaker' is, moreover, a mono-lingual, mono-cultural abstraction. It refers to a person who only lives within one national culture and speaks his/her native tongue (Kramsch & Widdowson, 1998).

Thus, in China, the English teaching market searched primarily or only for, native English speakers. The Chinese, especially in the smaller towns or high schools, did not mind having unqualified teachers, because their main

target was only to contribute to the teaching of listening and speaking skills. They have their own curriculum in teaching grammar and other skills. However, in my experience, non-qualified mono-linguistic and mono-cultural teachers experience more difficulties with inter-cultural discourse. Certainly as native English speakers, they transfer their own and true cultural points. In those cases where they are not qualified English teachers, eventually they will learn how to teach while having the opportunity to learn their own language more academically. For example, Ben a former Chef, employed as an English teacher, talked about his job:

Sometimes students are asking me questions, which I don't know myself... you know what I mean, my grammar is terrible. They know more than me (...).

Cultural differences also added to those teachers' frustration. For instance, during my research, I engaged in some lesson observation at four different educational establishments in two different cities. The lesson observations were limited to English language speaking classes and I made sure that teachers understood the purpose of my presence in their class. This was to study students' approaches to their learning style. One of my lesson observations involved a British teacher called Sam. He was from the countryside near Cambridge, and as my expectation from former experiences, he had no teaching experience of any kind. He was hired by a recruitment agency in London and sent directly to Zhuzhou, one of the major cities in Hunan province. During his one-year stay in Zhuzhou, he claimed to experience nothing but disappointment from his living environment. Indeed, Zhuzhou, compared to major cities in China, was not much developed and was considered a poor city.

In one of my conversations with him, he mentioned that Zhuzhou is not a place to live. Through the conversations we had, I formed the opinion that he was an honest and simple man without adequate knowledge of Chinese

culture. For instance, in one of my observations, he decided to run a police and theft game, however, by his shouting and playing a realistic scene, the young students became frightened and disturbed. Chinese language is a tonal language. They use loud and shouting to show their anger, and thus it is not a welcome way of conversation. During another occasion, some students mentioned to me that they had a problem understanding Sam's accent. I told them that a part of learning a language was to understand different accents. However, with my experience from the teacher observation as an English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) manager at Manchester College, it was obvious that he did not try to make himself understood in the lesson appropriately. In most of my observations, I realised that he talked louder or shouted when trying to make himself understood rather than speaking slower and more clearly. This, therefore, was not really a problem with his accent.

There was no doubt that he was not happy working in Zhuzhou. He was totally disappointed and negative about every aspect of his life in China. When I asked him, do you like Zhuzhou? He replied,

'You know, Amir! Zhuzhou is not the best place in China.'

One night I decided to invite him for a drink and introduced him to my Chinese friends. Despite his negative way of seeing Zhuzhou, I thought I could encourage him to see China and the Chinese through my eyes! Although he accepted with hesitation at the beginning, by the end of night he told me,

'During one year of my stay in China, this was my best night.'

He was happy all the night, making jokes with the Chinese and was enjoying their company.

Later, I had further chances to explore the experiences of Western teachers' lives in China through some interviews. What these teachers told me was that their dreams as an expat (expatriate) in China were turned into a

nightmare with their first lesson. What their recruitment agencies promised them was accommodation and a fully paid 18-24 hours teaching per week, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) training, with a qualification at the end of a one-year contract. No experience would be necessary, as all training would be provided. These jobs targeted native speakers who wanted a change in their life, and an experience living in another culture for a year or two. However, upon arrival, without any training, they were sent to classes of 50 students who saw a teacher as a master of the subject. What the new teachers had to face in addition to their inadequate academic knowledge of their own mother tongue, were unfamiliar foods even in comparison to Chinese food in the China towns of Western cities, with their Western-style of sweet and sour tastes, a highly difficult language to learn, very little recognition of personal space, understanding 'relations,' and many more.

During my stay in Zhuzhou I ran an 'English Corner' with about five students from two different classes in the Teachers college. It was undertaken as voluntary work in order to know more about students' life and education. We used to get together after I finished dinner at Wen Fang's house about 9 o'clock in the evening. We talked about various subjects related to their education rather than just the English language. We talked about their lessons, how they can improve their English language as a second language, their future and sometimes about education and life in China. Mostly, it was about everything but the English language itself. One of the students was Mr. Chan's sister. Mr. Chan was a computer teacher. Because he could speak in English, even though not very fluently, it attracted my interest and I wanted him to join the research group. He accepted happily, and from time to time, we shared ideas during the dinner at Wen Fang's house.

One afternoon, at the end of an 'English Corner' session,

one of the students asked me,

Our English teacher Sam said you are not even British, is this true? Her eyes were looking at me for an answer. And probably asking, 'please say it's not true!'

Later, I found that students raised a question to him that 'Why don't we understand your accent as good as we understand Amir's?' Without any knowledge about my background and my experience of teaching Chinese students for seven years, which provided insights into their weak points in the English language, he suggested this was because I am not British; consequently, my English speaking was easier to understand. While I tried hard to hide my surprise, I said to the students,

He is right I am not a British native. I have lived the longest part of my life in England, however, I was born in Iran and have a Turkish background.'

I was worried that I might disappoint my students with the answer, but to my surprise, I saw a glance of trust in some of them. However, after that night, two of the five students were not the only people who were disappointed by my ethnic identity. Mr. Chan never showed any interest in working with me and he refused to join the dinner invitation I made on later visits to Zhuzhou.

In Chinese culture, accepting a dinner invitation is seen as a commitment to the rules governing relations. In my case, it was a commitment to collaboration with my research. In chapter eight, I discuss both 'face' and 'relations' in detail.

4.2 Do 'others' look different?

When I was eleven years old, my parents placed me in a

Catholic convent in Hong Kong as a boarder. Soon I came under the influence of Catholic nuns and was quoting the bible.

During one of my rare visits home I discussed my newfound faith with my grandfather (Ye Ye) and he compared our respective beliefs.

'As a boy, your father got into big trouble with an American firm once because he wrote on his job application form next to 'Religion?' 'Catholic, but willing to become Methodist as well, if necessary.' The manager summoned him into his office and called him 'rice Christian,' ready to turn his back on Catholicism for a job with a Protestant firm (Mah, 2002:8).

The above account can be explored in relation to dispositifs and different ways of thinking in as described in section 1.1. Although both Adeline Mah's father, and the interviewer in the factory drew upon a belief dispositif, the way they used it was very different from each other.

Our perceptions from the world around us are built in relation to the dispositifs of our life. For Adeline Mah's father, like other Chinese, the belief dispositif is a kind of education. They used to study Confucius from Childhood, as well as respect him as a teacher, a first teacher, but not to worship him. If people can learn a way of living philosophy, why should they not learn another one? Why is studying two or three different ways of living considered wrong? However, for Christians or other popular religions, it is about worshiping.

These different kinds of ways of seeing the world around us influences the way we see and understand others. We face difficulties if we try to understand others by removing them from their dispositif network and position them within our own dispositif network for analysis purpose.

China consists of 56 distinct minorities with their very own cultural heritage, language and dialects (Neville-Hadley et al., 2004). While Chinese culture is greatly influenced by its social pioneers such as Confucius, Tao, and Buddha, but the role of Deng Xiaoping (邓小平), Mao Zedong (毛泽东), as well

as recent changes in a country of tremendous growth over the recent decades cannot be ignored. Chinese historical related notions such as 'face' and 'relations' must be studied as living practices, rather than just as an abstract of Confucianism, Taoism, or Maoism. Chinese culture is a culture privileging collectivism in which 'self' is more inclusive of, and dependent on others. One's achievements concern everyone in the group. Group is a total of relations organised in a hierarchical order, whereas in individualist cultures, self is independent of others (Pan, 2000).

4.2.1 Framework of thought

Every Chinese wears a Confucian thinking cap, Taoist robe, and Buddhist sandals. (Mah, 2002:10)

The previous sections and earlier chapters have focused on a number of differences in approach that I experienced in terms of how I was accepted as a teacher and a researcher. In this chapter, I explore these differences in terms of the earlier discussions of the concept of dispositifs and its educational dimension. As a first approach to the study of differences between Chinese and Western societies, I explored the distinction between cultures. In individualistic cultures, the ties between individuals are loose. Everyone is responsible for his/her act. In collectivist cultures, individuals are integrated into cohesive in-groups throughout their lifetime. The relations are mainly based on hierarchy, respect and loyalty.

I will now adopt a more nuanced approach to exploring the different roles played by dispositifs in everyday life, particularly in addressing power and power relations. My understanding about power dispositifs, which I was used to in the context of the UK, certainly was different from the one I experienced in China. There are certain power dispositifs that are the everyday resources for dealing with social life of the people I met in China. For instance there are the dispositifs of power relations, trust, and 'face' that influence people's every day activity, they shape their way of seeing and acting.

Broadly, to understand how these dispositifs are shaped involves recognising that Chinese culture and education is mainly influenced by three philosophies stemming from, Confucius, Tao, and Buddha, while Western culture has its roots in Christianity, Athens, and Rome.

In the West, the Christian tradition has reinforced the notion of individual rights. The Bible speaks of God creating Man in His own image and letting him 'have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth' (Genesis, 1:26). However, in the Chinese world of obligations, self exists in a different space.

'(...)obligations to serve the ruler, obligations to work for the family, obligations to obey elders, obligations to help relatives, obligations to do well to glorify the name of ancestors, obligations to defend the country in times of trouble, and obligations to oneself to cultivate one's own virtue.' (Yung, 2008)

It is difficult to understand the role of Power dispositifs without exploring their history.

4.2.1.1 Heritage as a resource: Confucius influence

To understand the way traditional dispositifs such as the power of hierarchy and relations network operates in Chinese society today, in this section I discuss some of Confucian's views as a resource for later chapters.

Confucian culture is traditional throughout China. It is not a religion nor was Confucius a religious leader, even though some Chinese in about 1920 attempted to make him one (Murphy and Eddy, 1998). Chin, A. (2007) remarks, that in China, Confucius is known as xianshi, (first teacher), and the teacher before all teachers. However, in real life he did not choose teaching as a profession until he was in his mid-sixties, just a few years before he died.

The psychological foundation of Confucius' educational thought was based on human nature is neutral at birth. Because of neutrality of human nature at birth, the environment, including education, plays an important role in raising children. Confucius believed that education must be for everyone regardless of their social status and background. He said, 'I instruct regardless of kind.' It is reported that some of his best students were from very poor backgrounds. Confucius was giving attention to individual student's capability and characteristics. In the book called *Analect*, it was reported that Confucius commented on his students' individual differences and suggested that they are suitable for different jobs. Confucius used five classical texts in his instructions:

The book of Odes (Shi Jing), The book of History (Shu Jing), The book of Rites (Li Jing), The book of Changes (Yi Jing)², and the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chun Qiu).

Confucius emphasised studying classics rather than acquiring practical knowledge, during the imperial examination, the test items were solely based on the classics. In addition to intellectual education, moral education also played a very important role in Confucius educational theory and practice. According to one of his students, the Master instructed in four aspects; culture, moral conduct, wholehearted sincerity, and truthfulness. The last three aspects are reflecting moral education. He said; 'To restrain oneself and return to the rituals constitutes humanity, for a man of humanity is one who, wishing to establish himself, helps others to establish themselves, (...)' Confucius emphasised the importance of humanity in daily life in the way one treats parents and others (older or higher in the hierarchy). He said that, 'What you do not wish for yourself, do not impose on others.' Confucius also emphasised on humanity in governing. He observed that, 'If you yourself are correct, even without the issuing orders, things will get done; if you yourself are incorrect, although orders are issued, they will not be obeyed.'

There are two aspect of Confucius influence in Chinese society. First, traditional values, such as xiao (孝) or filial piety, respect for the elderly, and modernization. Second, the emphasis is in education and learning (Palmer et

²Known as I-Ching.

al., 2001). In this sense, Confucius positioned power to 'relations' with emphasis in 'family relations,' 'relations with elders,' and 'relations with superiors.'

Confucius believed in the action of a man rather than his claim for knowledge. Still families in China raising their youngsters with reference to Confucius saying 'Don't talk about it. Do it.' Consequently, he believed oneself cannot claim for his own knowledge.

Confucius said:

When I reach the age of fifty, I may try to understand the principles of change and I shall be able to steer clear of making serious mistakes. (Confucius & Soothill, 1995)

Knowledge is power. In this sense, if one cannot admit his knowledge, then he cannot also exercise power. The role of hierarchy then comes before knowledge.

In many of my conversations with participants in my research, they showed their hesitation in debating or even thinking about powerful settings such as the education system. They believe that their knowledge of the subject is not sufficient to engage in such discussions. Evaluation of knowledge must be performed by others (usually more knowledgeable in that area) and one cannot claim or promote his own knowledge.

Confucius functioned in government as the national philosopher. The reason for the Confucian influence was the adoption of his teaching in the civil service examinations used in selecting Chinese leaders. This formed the backbone of Chinese education for over 2000 years and it was discontinued officially in 1905. His theories have been taught at universities and had a profound influence on how the Chinese government made decisions and how the people now cope with conflict. (Palmer et al., 2001)

4.2.1.2 Pre Confucius influences

The significance of knowing pre-Confucius influence, is its contribution to historical dispositifs to framework of thoughts. It is also can provide a ground to understand how networks of dispositifs operated in people's life in the past. Then, in chapter eight, I discuss the ways that contemporary dispositifs operating differently by influencing from 'power' dispositif to manufacturing consents. Perhaps I-Ching is an example of operation of such historical networks of dispositifs in capturing human behaviour and views. After many years, it has lost its relation to people's immediate dispositifs and lost its legacy.

Studying Confucius influence in the formation of power dispositifs in China interested me to search for power dispositifs in his time. He was highly influenced by classics. When they ask Confucius what type of teaching you prefer, he replied, 'I prefer to teach classics.' One of the books he meant by 'classics' was *I-Ching* or in Mandarin language *YiJing*. *I-Ching* is a book dated to about 5000 years ago, before Confucius, Tao, and even Buddha. Although today, Chinese culture and education is influenced by Confucius, Confucius thoughts were also inspired by Chinese classics in general, and *I-Ching* in particular. He spent most of his time helping some of his disciples to write ten appendixes to interpret and clarify the main text of *I-Ching*.

I-Ching (Wade-Gills³), *The Book of Changes* or *Yi Jing*, 易经 (Mandarin pinyin) is considered the oldest book in the world. *I-Ching*, The book of unity and dialectics, claimed that it is organised by a cultural hero, Fú Xī (伏羲), one of the earliest legendary rulers of China (2800 B.C. – 2737 B.C.). Although the Divination or Geomancy system is not unique to China or the *I-Ching*, the book is considered the earliest scholarly manuscript. Its oldest forms were found on bamboos and bones discovered recently in ancient tombs.

I-Ching should not be considered only as a geomancy system, but a rich philosophical and valuable classic literature, which is reflecting traditional Chinese culture and their model of thought. It contains many basic Chinese traditional concepts such as 'Yin' (陰) and 'Yang' (陽) (we know it as dualist

³ Wade-Gills or Wade is a Romanization system for the Mandarin Chinese language. It developed from a system produced by Thomas Wade in 19th century.

theory) and Wǔ Xíng (五行).

According to Yin/Yang, everything in the universe is divided according to this 'Yin' and 'Yang.' They are not competitive, or exclusionary, rather complementary, interdependent, and eventually transform into one another. They are each other's universal counterparts.

Cheng Yi (1033 – 1107) of the Song Dynasty describes Yin and Yang as:

Yin and yang are everywhere, in front and behind, to our left and to our right, above us and below us. Darkness is the same as diminished light. Light is the same as diminished darkness. They are complementary, a universal counterpart. Yin does not exist without yang and yang does not exist without Yin. Two in one and one in two. (Geddes & Grosset, 2002)

Wu Xing, means five elements, five forces, wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. They correlate with five directions, north, south, east, west, and centre. They also correlate with five seasons, spring, summer, earth, autumn, and winter. Finally they correlate with five colours, senses, tones, flavours, classics (Chinese five classics), and so on. These five element or forces guide and control all natural phenomena. For example, wood produce fire, fire produces earth (ashes), ashes produce metal (one is extracted from earth).

Consequently, *I-Ching* does not specifically predict or prescribe what the future outcome of any present situation will be, rather it suggests the suitable course of actions to take in any specific situation. *I-Ching* consists of a collection of texts, written, and expanded through different period of Chinese history reflective of many aspects of peoples' life of the period. The text was developed through different periods of Chinese history and mixed with poetry, philosophy, psychology, social insight, and practical advice.

What is reflected in the text of *I-Ching*, is the Chinese model of thought, at ancient times and later. By the change of peoples' lifestyle, it required development and to reflect the new situations. Perhaps that is why people such as Confucius, Tao, and others, contributed so much to the text.

4.2.2 Dispositif and frameworks of thought

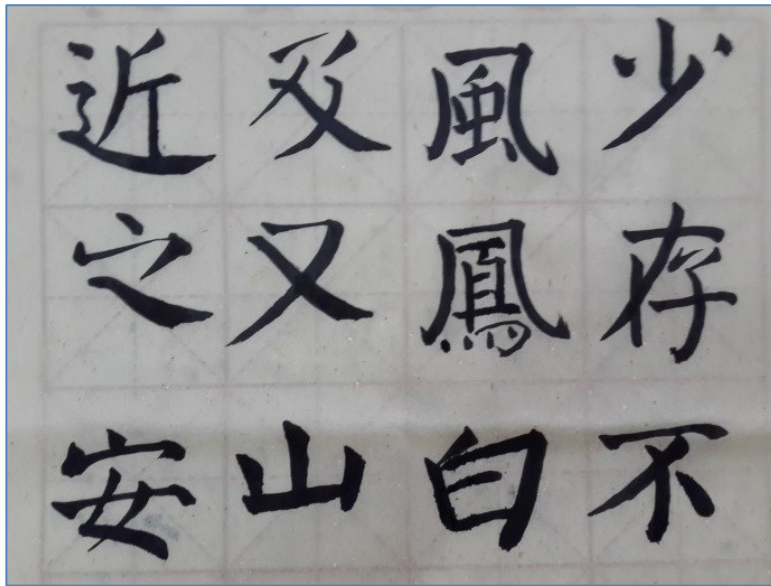
In order to develop research dispositifs, here I would like to investigate the possible relation between 'dispositif,' such as language and communication, and a framework of thought. Without an appropriate channel of communication, not only can we not understand a framework of thought, but we will be unable to know the role of dispositifs in 'others' worlds. Basically, it is a step in being involved as a researcher and trusted member to their relations network. I am going to explore how calligraphy helped me in developing a sense of insiderness.

4.2.2.1 Chinese calligraphy

The first time I found myself interested in Chinese calligraphy was after a discussion with my Chinese colleague about a piece of calligraphy. To me, it was only a random, rough, aimless use of brush to illustrate Chinese characters. To my surprise, my Chinese colleague was fascinated by the beauty and artistic style of it.

I realised that there was a beauty that they could see, but I could not. A code that was not obvious and I should learn, to decode it, to understand, and more importantly, to be able to see it as they see it. I asked myself, What different cultural resources are available to them that enable them to see differently?

Figure 11: My writing practice.



I started to learn basic strokes and sketching those hundreds of times, for many days. However, in my teacher's eye still was not good enough. At the beginning, sometimes, I foolishly thought that my writing was more beautiful. It was obvious that I had not detached myself from my beauty dispositif in order to learn and understand another instance of beauty dispositif. Three years learning gave me a chance to enjoy my writing. Sometimes, while writing, my colleagues stopped at the open door of my office and were staring at me, or taking a photo. For them, it was strange to see a foreigner, a non-Chinese, trying to engage with Chinese calligraphy.

One day, in the third year of my learning, I asked my wife her opinion about a piece of calligraphy written by a famous calligrapher:

'Look! Isn't it beautiful?'

'I can't see any beauty in it. I think that one is more beautiful.' She replied and pointed to an immature work, a different style of calligraphy practiced by one of our colleagues. I smiled, but did not say anything at that time. From that day, there were two questions in my mind. One was that, if I think I understand Chinese calligraphy with a very limited understanding of Chinese language and culture, how differently Chinese may understand it. In that sense, my calligraphy is more drawing than writing. Secondly, 'How can I reflect my learning and understanding of Chinese calligraphy?' Nevertheless, I

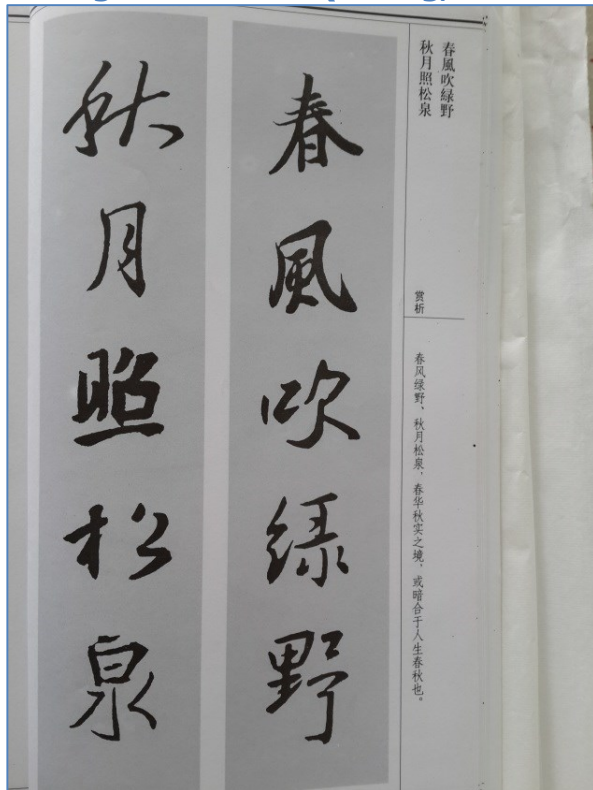
am not qualified to write about Chinese calligraphy and only can reflect my own learning and understanding.

There are different styles of writings, from straight to curvy, from printed to handwritten style. One needs to be written slower, one needs to be written faster. Choice of paper is also important. Cheaper papers used by a novice, are easier to write on, more professional, and at the same time, papers that are more expensive, absorb ink much faster. A momentary delay in writing can result in a big black stain on the paper. Therefore, in hand writing style (xing shu), not only the fluid movement of the brush, but also the thickness of writing is important.

In my opinion, writing (Xing Shu) style requires 3D (dimensional) thinking, and 3D writing skill. Although the brush and paper only share part of the space, which produces a 2D image, however, the trace of the brush prior to meeting and after leaving the paper is visible to Chinese eyes.

Part of the movement and continuous change of speed happen on space above the paper, and changes in brush pressing creates different thicknesses in different parts of a character, and will be recorded only on the paper. Without appropriate movement of brush on air, which I call skill of writing, producing an artistic writing would not be possible.

Figure 12: Chinese calligraphy. Written by a professional artist. '(...) wind blow the sands and bring the snowflakes to dance, water flow through mountains (Huang, 2009:16).'



Then, the full writing will be in a 3D space, but only part of it is visible (2D) to an ordinary observer. The 3D perspective is a record of brush movement in the air and on the paper. Like a wind blows the sands and brings the snowflakes to dance. Like water flows through mountains, sometimes narrow, and sometimes wide, sometimes slow, and sometimes fast.

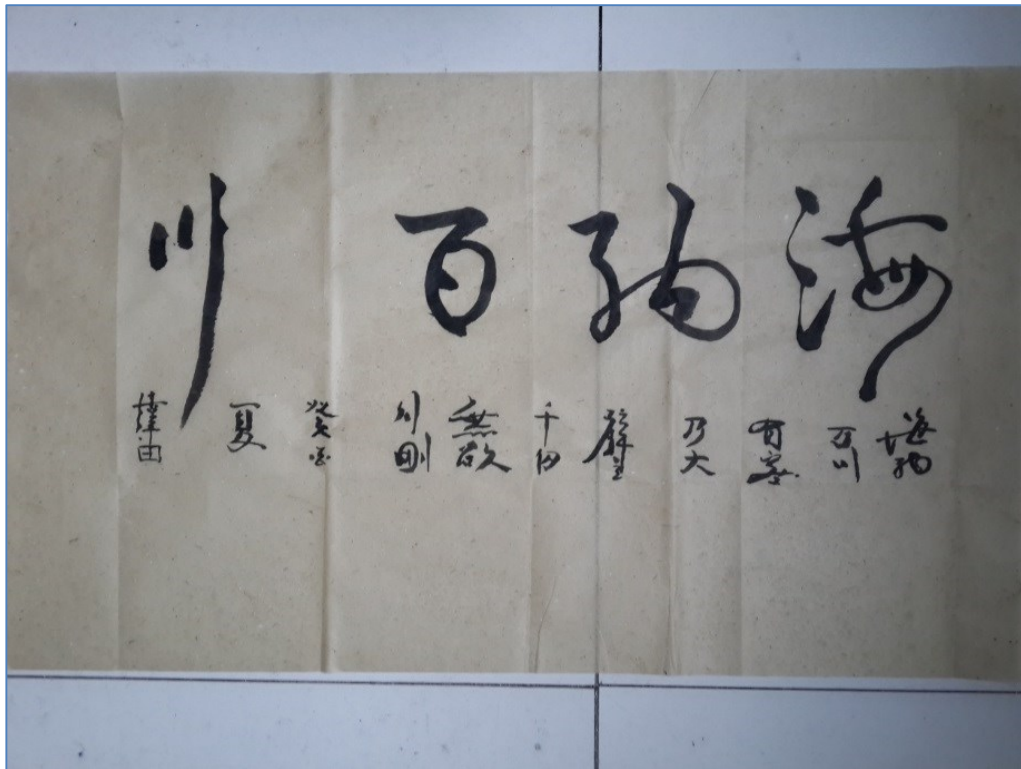
Then same as a boat on a river, it is also about symmetry and balance. The margin to the left must match to the margin on the right, so with the top and the bottom. The weight of the writing (thickness) in each side and each corner need to place the whole text in a balance. Even, to avoid changing such balance by adding signature stamps at the end of writing (right lower corner), there must be similar weighted signature stamps on the opposite side, at the beginning of the text (upper right corner).

Figure 13: My work, different style.



It was not possible for me to understand and feel such beauty without practicing, and failing, without trying tens of different brushes, papers, and inks. It would not be possible to see the beauty without seeing the full 3D movement of brush, and without discovering reflection of nature and movement in nature in Chinese calligraphy. It was a long process of detachment, learning, and engaging.

Figure 14: My calligraphy.



4.3 Aesthetic of communication

To Rancière, J. (2006) aesthetics is not about beauty or sensibility. Rather it is about visibility and intelligibility.

Aesthetics is a [sig] historically determined concept which designates a specific regime of visibility and intelligibility of art, which is inscribed in a reconfiguration of the categories of sensible experience and its interpretation. (Rancière, 2006:1)

Here, I like to bring out the theme of the aesthetics involved in coming to understand the Chinese ways of life that I encountered. This involves language as a dispositif and its harmony with other dispositifs in its network. In chapter seven, I expand the aesthetic of communication, with insight into the relation between forms of knowledge, knowing, and power with referring to Rancière's theory of aesthetics.

Translations mainly look at the best way of mirroring verbal or textual

contexts from one language into another without digging much into cultural points linked to the language. Without showing enough interest and compassion about the stored values beneath each word, the outcome is varietal. Perhaps our needs for communication originated from our environment, or in other words, from various cultural artefacts forming our actions. Even similar cultural artefacts may have different roles in our life and consequently causing entirely antithetical sub classifications. No matter how closely we match the linguistic meaning for a given cultural artefact, its personal and social values differ from one group to another. For instance, 'God' may not mean the same for Christians as it meant for Zoroastrians 2500 years ago. Similarly, the 'food' concept for a Westerner may not reveal the same meaning for a Chinese. In Chinese society, 'food' can be expressed with consideration, caring, appreciation, manner, socialising, open to verity, new, sharing, meeting new people, relations building, 'face' maintaining, value of hierarchy, etc. However, in another culture it is not necessary that all of these cultural values and artefacts are implied by 'food.' While 'food' is essential to everyone's daily life and can be translated to any language, sharing similar ingredients, can imply different meaning, feeling, and behaviour in 'others.' Certainly Chinese never choose to use 'food' as it is today in China, rather it is a reflection of a way dispositifs capture their desire for these purposes. It is also interesting to think that it is not a shared dispositif defining the meaning, rather the way it is known, the way it is used, and its network with other dispositifs form an intelligible meaning within a social group. With distancing from the cultural centre of a community, the degree of sharing the same understanding will change slowly as the use of certain dispositifs and their network change too.

If, as Agamben says, there are only two classes as mentioned earlier, one, living beings, and the other, everything else, then most of our communication is reflected in the views regarding various dispositifs or our relations to them. In that sense, a word is not only the relation between syllables and meaning, it is also a way of indicating an object for consciousness – a dispositif object, with many properties, which varies from one culture to

another. Perhaps this reveals the problem with misunderstanding others, and translations.

It seems that 'gesture,' 'relations,' 'face,' and many other dispositifs are acting on an extension to communicative language to create the aesthetics of communication, in each society. Without these extensions, our communicative language has no difference with a spoken robot language and this is what makes a machine translation lack reflection of the real meaning.

In other words, the aesthetics of communication is the art of using a language with its related dispositif, and a harmony between language, gesture, and situation, which can compensate the lack of the sharing of such dispositifs. Without appropriate understanding of aesthetics of communication and other elements involved in-between spaces, I would not be able to position myself as a researcher within the community of my research.

4.4 Getting to know the people of my study

After having explored the various elements involved in-between spaces, I began to develop strategies for getting to know the people of my study.

Maybe, knowing of otherness is not only accepting that there could be differences, but also perception of differences even in the actions that seem so common to us. For me, the learning of otherness started with basic concepts, which I considered common to most of societies such as inside and outside.

I was in a very small town in a cold winter. Chinese students in the school puts layers of clothes on, something I was not used to. As my habit, I kept my apartment warm, however, they were reluctant to turn on the heaters at school and neither at their homes. Even sometimes, they left the doors open. Most of the time, I was frustrated and felt the whole my body shivering. In response to 'Why don't you turn the heaters on,' they used to say, 'You must put more clothes on.' I realised that in terms of the weather, for them, there was a different

understanding from inside and outside. To me, inside was a warm room, isolated from the weather conditions, noise, people, having security, and privacy, however, to them, inside concept were less physical isolations, rather it was rooted in the perspective of relations, and trust. After a month of struggling with the cold, I gave up the challenge and put more clothes on.

The way that different power dispositifs rule our way seeing and acting, we become different, 'us' and 'others.' Our understanding from 'others' worlds becomes dependent on our knowledge of dispositifs shaping social relations.

I learned that there were times when even saying things in a clear, understandable language, was not satisfying my or others expectations. It was not only about the situational or non-verbal parts of communication, as I was reasonably aware of such issues. Rather, I learned there was something beyond verbal or non-verbal language that shaped the communication. Discourses, even in English language, did not seem adequate to make myself understood by informants adequately.

Only then, I realised the hidden part of Chinese language. Like many people living in Western countries who have a different understanding of the 'face' notion, I did not have sufficient experiences in the role of 'face' and 'relation' in Chinese everyday life. I read about 'face' and 'relations' in China prior to starting my field work, but I was assuming it was the same as in other collectivist cultures such as Iranian, or Turkish societies, as 'face' reviles embarrassment, or shame. My way of thinking did not equip me with adequate understanding of any acts which cannot be discussed by linguistic directly, as Chinese sometimes avoid it, as well as encrypt, even straight forward and direct communication in many situations.

Without even speaking one word, I was judged most of the time. Others were monitoring my every action to compare with their own, and judging me with their own rules. However, being judged did not surprise me at all, as I used to be judged in my whole life by 'others.' What was unclear, what was I

being judged for by Chinese? In addition, I was not clear about their rules of judging, categorising, or excluding others.

Then, the knowledge and experience of one culture is not adequate for adapting it to another culture such as Chinese. It took about ten years for an experienced person such as Bill Gates, and a team of his advisers, to achieve his goals in China. Perhaps as he overestimated his universal power, I was over estimating my previous knowledge and experiences.

In general, there was a set of key issues with the fieldwork experience such as impression management, representation ethics, 'face,' misunderstanding, relations and power sphere, identity, interpretation, globalisation, greeting rituals, gender, losing control, social positioning, and selection. In chapter five, I illustrate the range of problems that I had to overcome in engaging in fieldwork to address those issues.

The identity-in-between discussed in this chapter reveals that the notions of being 'in-between' and 'identity-in-question' were the first steps in understanding others and attempting to see their world. How I prepared myself for becoming a researcher and dealing with issues such as identity, communication, and trust, in becoming involved was by understanding not only my identity as in-between, but also knowing dispositifs operating in their world and shaping their framework of thought. Then, to be able to be involved and have access to resources available to 'others,' aesthetics of communication is necessary for creating communication, which goes both ways.

Then, this will lead to the steps of entering into the fieldwork, which was coming to grips with language and the aesthetic of communication for building trust relations and becoming visible as a member, which I explore through the next chapter.

5 Stepping-into fieldwork and developing Trust relationships

The following is a note from my research diary at the beginning of the fieldwork:

I think I do not understand!

In China, from time to time, I am getting agitated by misunderstanding. I cannot explain it exactly. I cannot even describe it for myself. Why is it, when I tell someone something, she/he does not understand it as what I said? At the first glance, it seemed a matter of trust, but surely, it is not. At this stage, they trust me. Instead, it seems a kind of diffusion in transferring the meaning, although I speak in easy and clear English with informants. Something similar to telling someone, 'Oh. I'm so thirsty (...) then they are telling me 'really? I know you must be hungry.'

The above experience was one of the frequent problems and a basis for failure in developing adequate understanding between informants and me. Considering that, I already had a problem of language and translation when engaging in the fieldwork, and such difficulties were adding to the existing problems.

Exploring difficulties in setting up the fieldwork as issues involved in getting to know others, in getting to access others, and getting permissions to enter their symbolic world, is the discussion of this chapter. The main theme here is 'How I began to comprehend the methodological issues involved with creating the necessary trust relations?' By exploring stories that demonstrate a range of difficulties in action that start with the story of my entry to Hong Kong, I will discuss those issues. In order to have an understanding of the invisible ties in 'relation networks' which was not known to me at that time, I

needed to see a different aesthetic of power. Thus, the question of 'power' and its relation to various 'dispositifs,' is the main discussion of this chapter.

Stepping into fieldwork was far beyond the simplicity of its picture in my mind. There were certain numbers of unexpected issues for making first contact. I could only be aware of such issues, when something went wrong or results were out of my expectation, and only at that moment, was it possible to watch my step. Difficulties like communication and translation, identity, 'face,' and power relations, became practice by stepping into fieldwork. Now, I am going to discuss my learning process in terms of how my research dispositifs were constructed.

However, there is a question yet to be explored, that is, What methodological strategies were available to me when I entered the field?

5.1 Stepping-into fieldwork

As Saunders, M. (2009) points out, the difficulties of stepping into fieldwork as a participant observer started with access to the institute or the field. Especially for me, fieldwork in somewhere like China, both politically and culturally a much more closed society, could be even more difficult. My knowledge about China was going back to 18 October 2004, when I travelled to China to attend an educational exhibition, as well as some meetings on behalf of my organization in Manchester. Since then, I had many visits for my research, which started with a fieldwork preparation in September, 2006. At that time of the year, Shenzhen has a very smooth, yet moist weather. I could recognise most of the cities I have visited by their smell, but Shenzhen city had a different smell every time I visited it. A sub-tropical maritime city located in Pearl River Delta. A hilly small fishing village with only few hundred thousand in population, that after 1979, transformed into a modern city in neighbouring Hong Kong which only took half an hour to travel between. Today, the population of Shenzhen is over 3 million.

Because of the key issues mentioned in section 4.4, of dealing with 'otherness' here, I feel it is essential to go through a long narrative of stepping-

into fieldwork. While each paragraph is numbered for later discussion, from time to time, I also give a short explanation in between.

1. *My flight was to Hong Kong. My colleague Ms. Leung had arranged an official pick up from Hong Kong Airport by a black seven-seated car from the Shenzhen government office. I was not used to this luxury nor was I expecting it, however, for the sake of my research, I considered that the most powerful advantage that not many other individuals or researchers could have. I knew that the powerful link I made through my preparatory fieldwork visits would open many doors for me and possibly eased unknown difficulties through my fieldwork.*
2. *Except for a few words, such as 'OK,' 'Please,' the driver was speaking all the time in Chinese, thus I had no clue as to what he was talking about. The way he was talking to me seemed to me, either to show that he was pretending that I understood him, or he broke the silence, either out of respect, or to create a welcoming atmosphere. I was thinking that perhaps he might be experiencing great pressure and stress by looking at my blank face listening to him.*
3. *After leaving the area that was crammed with concrete tower blocks over an uneven ground, we travelled along a long and quite bridge over the beautiful sea surrounded by miles of green mountains. When crossing the Hong Kong border we did not need to leave the car, and within seconds, we arrived at the Chinese mainland custom building. I remembered from the previous trip that all passengers had to go on foot toward the custom building and through long queues, through passport and security check. I wanted to leave the car and walk toward the passport control office, but the driver said something in Chinese, which sounded in disagreement. He drove through the way that was only for drivers. At the control kiosk, he asked for*

my passport and gave it through his window to the immigration officer. I entered Shenzhen without leaving the car.

I did not realise that the issue of 'power' and its impact on fieldwork and the research relationship is something that will become a key methodological question. Perhaps, at that time, I was caught up in the moment and the excitement of the new.

4. *It was a warm night of 20 October. Closed windows and coolness of air condition did not let me feel the weather of Shenzhen at that time of the year. The dark was slowly taking over the busy tropical roads with the palm trees alongside.*
5. *We arrived in front of a luxurious hotel Where Ms. Leung was waiting in the hotel lobby for me. Ms. Leung was my colleague in Manchester back some years ago. She was born to a family with a well academic background. Her father was a music lecturer, graduated from Oxford University. During her childhood, she trained as a pianist under harsh discipline by her father. She told me.*
6. *'When all the other children of my age were playing in the street, I had to watch them through a little window during my piano lesson's break. Since I left the university, I never touched the piano again.'*
7. *Her mother was a housewife looking after her husband and their two daughters. She never talked about their living condition during childhood, until one day when I complained that people in Shenzhen city seem to have a very materialistic approach to every aspect of life, she said,*
8. *'What do you know about Chinese people and where they are coming from? During my childhood, we could barely feed ourselves. In my parent's time, if a man wanted to marry, he had to have two things, a bike, and a job (...).'*

I began to realise that biography and getting to know the lives of people were important dimension to doing fieldwork.

Otherwise, my assumption only could draw on my understanding of my own world.

9. *At the age of sixteen, she was sent to a boarding school like many other Chinese students. Shortly after that, her father separated from her and later married another woman. By the age of 18, she earned enough money from tuning and giving piano lessons to give to her mother. She bought a house with it. Her life was difficult and she had little money.*
10. *She left her hometown to go to the land of opportunity for young people, Shenzhen city in 1992. Her first job was in Shenzhen government office (town hall). Ms. Leung spoke very pompous, could speak both Cantonese and Mandarin. She was highly organised, punctual, demanding, and strict. She never recognised a mistake. Nor have I ever seen her make one. In 1999, she moved to England to work for a project organised by the Chinese tourism department to deal with a visit to the UK by Chinese pensioners.*
11. *After six years, she decided to return to China. China was not the same as it was when she left years ago. At the beginning, it even felt unfamiliar. She had to learn a new emerging style of living. In England, she was very traditional and followed traditional Japanese or Chinese fashion. However, after returning to China, she became more westernised and followed the latest Western fashions and Western look.*

There must be issues of globalisation to explore which impacts self-presentation, status and identity.

12. *The driver helped me with my luggage and handed it to the porter coming toward us. I thanked the driver and walked toward a long reception desk with three girls in uniform behind it.*
13. *As soon as Ms. Leung noticed me, she welcomed me with a very wide smile and a voice that had everyone's attention. I was*

surprised by her very official and loud welcome. It was as if they were waiting for a special guest.

- 14. 'Hello Mr Amir (...), welcome to Shenzhen (...).'*
- 15. After exchanging some casual and polite dialogue, she mentioned that this hotel is mainly for government people and she booked a room here with the help of one of her friends in government, which had a much cheaper rate. Then we walked toward the hotel reception desk together.*
- 16. It was a very large lobby with a marble stoned floor and very high ceiling. On my right, there was a café in Western-style and next to it, a shop full of luxurious Chinese goods, a big globe, and some dragons made of Jade stone, carpets, etc. To my left, there were some clothing shops. The reception desk was nearly 10 meters long with three girls behind the counter standing at equal distances from each other, watching us walking toward them and giving each other smiles. It was not difficult to guess that I was the only foreigner in this hotel. Behind the reception desk on the wall, there were three round clocks showing 'Beijing', 'New York' and 'London' times. These were not correct, at least for London. The porter was carrying my luggage on a golden, red trolley similar to five star hotels everywhere. In fact, 'Jing Ming Da' hotel was only a three star hotel. However, it was very different from other three star hotels.*
- 17. The room was beyond my expectation. A very large room on the ninth floor, with sliding windows, long curtains and a king size bed. The carpet and bedding seemed new. The room smelt very fresh. Through the window, I could see the small canal on the other side of the road, a nearby hill coloured green, and some out of reach building lost in the pollution that covered the city.*
- 18. Ms. Leung had connections with some friends who were working in Shenzhen government offices and arranged official*

meetings to visit some schools based on my request. First, I wanted to know some schools and learn about the current education system in China and possibly to make initial links and trust relations.

- 19. From my previous trips to China, I had experienced jet lag: feeling sleepy in the middle of the day and having sleeping problems at night was expected for the first few days.*
- 20. However, to Ms. Leung, there was nothing worse than wasting time. The following morning at eight, Ms. Leung called my room phone and with a very official voice, which was unusual, even for her,*
- 21. 'Good Morning, Mr Amir. I am in the lobby and waiting for you. Are you ready?'*
- 22. I could not open my eyes yet, but considering her initiative to help me, and my research without any expectation for a return, pushed me out of the bed and within minutes, I was ready. However, her organised style and strict approach to my plans was making me nervous. I did not want to seem to be inadequate for my own research! I rushed to the lobby wearing a black suit and white shirt.*
- 23. In fact, working with Ms. Leung reminded me of my national service in Iran. Although she had a very gentle, aristocrat voice, there was always a seriousness and strict expectation in it. She had an extremely organised and task oriented personality. For her, no excuses could explain the mistakes of others. When she asked me, 'Are you ready?' I could hear it, as you'd better be ready! In fact, I was expecting the first day of my stay in China to start with a nice Chinese breakfast after which she would ask me about my preferences about visiting schools and then she would schedule them to take place over the next few days. Perhaps walking around the city, while traveling to a school, I could get to know more about Shenzhen. However, I was wrong.*

She had already scheduled my visits.

24. *'How are you today?'* Before I got a chance to reply, she said, *'We are late,'* and nodded in the direction of the car waiting outside the hotel and suggested that, if I am ready, I should go. The car was a black Mercedes. By the time, I got closer to the car; the driver got out and approached us. Ms. Leung, with a very sharp look, prohibited me from touching the car handle! The car door was opened by the driver and with a weak voice, he said, *'Ni Hao'* (Hello). I guess I could not hide my surprise on my face from all those ceremonies. *'Thank you!'* I said. We were sitting in the back seat. A white phone was between us. The car was very similar to the one used for political guests.
25. *Ms. Leung ended the silence after a little while and spoke in Chinese with the driver. Then she turned to me and said,*
26. *'We are going to visit a school in Fuchian first. They are waiting for us at nine. After that, we will visit another school in (...) at 11:00. We will have a lunch at 12:30, and then we go to the Shenzhen Government building to meet the education minister. He is a very busy man and cannot see us for more than 15 minutes. At 3 o'clock, we visit the third school, which is a little bit far and is in... Ah one more thing, I didn't mention anything about your Ph.D. I told them about your position in England as a senior lecturer. Once the doors have been opened for you, it will help with your research too.'*
27. *I wanted to say 'Wow, wow. Slow down. Let's talk about all of this first,' but I noticed it was completely out of the question to do so. Instead, I decided to make myself ready for the first visit and try to comprehend the situation. 'Anyway, I could meet some important people who could be good for access to fieldwork,' I thought.*
28. *When we arrived at the first school, two people were waiting at the top of the stairs in front of very wide doors. Ms. Leung*

asked me for the papers I was holding, as it is not good for me to hold anything. As I was expected, I waited for the driver to open the door for me and we walked toward the building. I was welcomed by the school principal, deputy principal, and two teachers, who were introduced to me around a very large dark oak meeting table. The meeting started with introducing themselves and exchanging business cards that were offered with both hands, then the head master started to give me some statistics about the school,

29. 'Our school has over 6000 students and (...).'

30. At the end, to respond to their presentation, as well as my interests, I asked some questions regarding the students, teachers, and lessons. The principal, instead of directly answering my questions, asked someone to show me around.

31. The school had 6500 students, with six dormitory buildings, six American teachers, and each class was equipped with computers, projector, and interactive whiteboards. Walking next to each classroom, I could see through the wide windows, the extremely quiet classes with a teacher pointing on a wall size screen with a laser pen. Next, we saw the computer room, dance room, playgrounds, and the huge student dining room. At the end, we had exchanged some information about each country and further education in England. During all this time, Ms. Leung acted as my guide and translator. I should admit that her translation during my research in China was one of the best. It does not mean I understood her translation, but from the replies, I could guess that my words were translated in the closest form. Her translation was, precise and slow, with a very clear voice. To me, it sounded as if she was reading a poem. Later I learned, that her talking style was recognised as highly intellectual and represented higher classes in China.

32. Soon after, we arrived at the second school. A team of six

people, including an American teacher, the head of English language studies, and a photographer were waiting for us in a large meeting room. It was perhaps not as big as the first one but it was luxurious. My initial feeling was that, there must be a misunderstanding, either about who I am, or why I am here. However, my later conversation with the American teacher gave me first-hand information about the school and English language curriculum. The principal of the college was, as in the first school, more interested in giving me statistics about his school and showing me around.

33. What I observed in both schools were spotless, perfect, and ultra-modern teaching environments, extremely professional and excellent management.

34. As the education minister was busy that day, Ms. Leung arranged a meeting in the afternoon with Mr. Hong, director of the 'student exchange program' for Shenzhen city. We went to a luxury hotel, which, that day, was the venue for an international conference in education. Mr. Hong gave the opening speech for the conference. We arrived when Mr. Hong's speech had started, so we went to the café at the rear of the hotel that had very comfortable red sofas. There was a 5-6 meter high glass wall at the side, with water running over the glass window. It separated the café from a garden with nicely arranged tropical plants.

35. I was thinking about the two meetings we had in the morning and trying to reach a conclusion about the difficulties I was experiencing in separating the formality from practicality of doing my research. Meeting China's officials, the luxury places, and my new identity as an important visitor was a little bit unexpected for me, as well as unnecessary, not because I found it uncomfortable, but maybe because I was not sure if they could contribute to developing my research dispositif.

36. *I tried to be grateful, considering that perhaps it was easier to visit a prime minister of England than the education officials of Shenzhen. It was only two years ago when I had been invited to No. 10 for a dinner reception and a meeting with Tony Blair and his wife. I was chosen among a number of other educators in Northwest England by my institution. While in a calm and confident voice, I talked to Cherrie and Tony Blair, inside me was a feeling of excitement mixed with a bitter pleasure thinking of the achievements I had made despite the difficult life I had had. Perhaps my calm voice and the comfortable feeling were due to lack of the importance of having luxuries in my life. Even when I was invited to a dinner party together with the head of Panasonic and Sony co-operations six years prior to this. I was there because of my achievements, which usually results with luxury dinner receptions and meeting important people. For me all were success stories. However, in China those luxuries were not about achievements, they were about power of relations. Besides, the only support I had from England, was a letter from my supervisor for building a possible collaboration link between an educational institution in China and the one in England for the purpose of my research. Having friends, holding powerful relations in China positioned me between them, or gave me chance to meet important people.*

37. *While I was busy with my thoughts and calculations, Ms. Leung was nervously making calls and her voice was tense in her conversations in Chinese. Between her calls she said, 'He can't see us,' and continued to make another call, which made her face a little bit more relaxed.*

38. *'His secretary agreed to meet us here. They're coming after the opening speech,' she said.*

By that time, I had a feeling that those meetings became more crucial to Ms. Leung, than to me. I thought she might be very

excited to meet Shenzhen officials, something I did not realise the importance of until sometime later.

39. *She transferred her stress to me. I started to feel that, that was a meeting, which must happen. That is why I am here, to meet the director of student exchange of Shenzhen city. It seemed that time had stopped. We looked at our watches and exchanged short conversations about the morning visits and the upcoming meeting.*

40. *Ms. Leung said, 'He is a very important person in Shenzhen's department of Education.'*

41. *I said, (...) 'I know. You told me this before. Do you think he is going to meet us?'*

42. *Ms. Leung replied, 'A few minutes ago, my friend talked to his secretary and asked them to meet us. They are above them. They have to accept it.'*

43. *I asked, 'Who is above them? Who has to accept it?'*

44. *Ms. Leung answered, 'You know my friend's office. It is Shenzhen city government.'*

45. *I said, 'But don't be worried if they don't. You have done your best.'*

46. *She did not seem to hear me and started sending a text message.*

47. *Those days, with every opportunity, upon my questions, Ms. Leung gave me information about people working in government, their talking style, their car registration (which were usually different from others), and their appearances. People in higher positions in government had access to government cars with a driver. Others usually used a very ordinary car to avoid being tagged as subject to financial corruptions.*

48. *Ms. Leung herself was not someone influential, but had some strong relations in government. Her style and fashion was a*

combination of Japanese, with a touch of Western fashion, elegant and smart. One could think that she is very wealthy. At the same time, her style of communication in Chinese language and her body language was in harmony with her looks. Her accent was north Mandarin and she was very fluent in the Cantonese language. She was talking, very slow, calm, and caring, but highly authoritatively. Yet her style was not the style of a person in government, rather it was of a newly born bourgeois.

From the time I started my fieldwork, I realised the existence of two poles of powers in China. One was held by people who worked in government, and the second was exercised by people in young, but fast growing markets. I discuss this in more detail in chapter nine.

49. A few minutes later, a group of people in black suits came out from the rear door of the conference hall, which opened onto the rear of the café. We stood up and waited for the crowd walking toward the café. A man at his sixties with a woman dressed very elegantly in front of the crowd walked toward us. Ms. Leung whispered, 'They're coming.'

5.2 Developing the research dispositif

Here in this section I discuss the previous narrative in order to begin the process of developing the research dispositifs.

Chinese relations network, as part of dispositif networks (chapter two), are organised in a hierarchical order with a top-down power structure. Every Chinese during his/her life explores opportunities to enter into this network from the highest possible branch of this network. The top section of the network is the people holding the most power over the society, and the lowest part has the minimum. I develop further discussion regarding relations networks in chapter seven.

Although my understanding from the 'relations' network in China was very limited, I was convinced that by entering into that network, I could gain the trust. With tendencies to the hierarchy in the relations networks among my Chinese friends, top-down powers (who have the most power in the network) seemed the most effective way of action.

I could have an advantage for building trust relations and developing my research dispositifs. Knowing Ms. Leung, with her strong relations in Shenzhen government, was the key element of this imagination. I record and create narratives as a basis for representation, analysis, and discussion. So, the research dispositif develops to meet the key issues of validity, objectivity, generalisation, impression management, representation ethics, 'face,' misunderstanding, relations and power spheres, identity, interpretation, globalisation, greeting rituals, gender, losing control, social positioning, and selection.

Understanding the key issues such as power and its impact on my fieldwork and the research relationships was not possible without Ms. Leung's help and access to her relations network. Only after experiencing such issues and analysing them, was I able to start developing my research dispositifs to deal with the immediacy of the face-to-face encounters I have had. I now discuss my learning process in terms of how my own research dispositif was constructed.

The first theme at the beginning of the above narrative was aimed to introduce Ms. Leung, a Chinese character in the middle of transformation from Traditional and closed China, to the Modernised, economically strong, politically influential, and open China. I also realised that biography and getting to know the lives of people were important aspects of doing fieldwork (8). It was not because by doing that, I could fully understand informants and the relations in the field, but because without biography I would not be able to understand those relations at all. Still, there were many hidden dimensions of the relation sphere to be explored.

One important aspect of biography in the above narrative was the aspect of globalisation (11) and its impact on people's identity and self-

presentation. Ms. Leung was only one example of such impact. While she was fully complying with Chinese norms, at the same time consciously and intentionally, she was presenting herself as someone different from other Chinese. However, when it came to relations sphere, she committed herself to all the rules of relationship networks in China in order to build her own relation dispositifs. Ms. Leung's connections (18) that assisted her in ordering and making those meetings possible reveal the methodological importance of relationship building.

The second theme of the above narrative is the impact of power relations in my fieldwork and losing control. As I discussed 'relations sphere,' in thesis introduction, and later in chapter two, it is composed of all the connections and the related dispositifs, which, in some way, contribute to the construction of such networks. Those connections will be drawn upon and configured for specific purposes at some future time. This configuring of particular relations sphere is the dispositif that she was able to bring into being to meet her purposes.

In the case of my fieldwork, both because she knew I was not familiar with the role of relations in organising those meetings, and the interest of building her own relations network, she scheduled my time (23). However, the arrangement was not for the purpose of data collection, neither for building my research network.

That also raises the issue of losing control over my fieldwork. When the day after arrival she called me from the Hotel lobby, I was expecting to have some discussion together and planning. It was not only the issue of taking over organisation, but there were issues of selection too. For example, with the first meeting (26), I wanted to ask her, why this school, or why can't I choose a school from a list of suggestions? However, the plan was already made and was there, waiting for me. In many occasions afterward, she mentioned that I do not understand the 'relations' in China. Indeed my understanding from building a relation network was based on my experiences in England, to meet people, exchanging our interest, and perhaps creating a collaborative work. Back home, I could contact them again, or arrange further meetings to discuss

or share our interests.

I started to learn about a new form of 'relations network,' the one that operates in China, and I saw myself part of it. During that period, I met many Chinese Education Officials in Shenzhen, Beijing and Kunming, and of course dinner invitations and luxuries (36). Despite Ms. Leung's hard work and outstanding arrangements, I was not completely satisfied by the result of those meetings. To her, we had very successful days. We had visited places and people that even could not be easy for official foreign visitors, we had photos and they gave us their business card, which Ms. Leung added immediately to the big bunch of other cards she had in her bag. To me all were similar to be invited to a party, and when the party is over everyone goes home.

A few days after the visits, I emailed the visited schools, to let them know my appreciation for the time they gave to me, however, I received no reply. Talking to Ms. Leung and some of my other friends in China, they believed this was because of their lack of confidence in the English language. They did not understand my insisting in contacting them. For Ms. Leung, that business was very successful and closed. Where as, my business was not even started yet.

The methodological importance of understanding their expectation could be a key step in entering fieldwork and constructing a research dispositif. In relations networks in China, member's commitment to each other is based on their position in the hierarchy. To all those people visited, despite my face value as a foreigner, a Western visitor, I was an outsider and someone they were unlikely to meet again. Thus, there was no value in terms of relationship building on this way. Whereas, the business cards that Ms. Leung kept might one day pay-off all of her hard work. For the people we met, she was the person who had the power of relations (especially in government) and arrangements. That is someone they would want to keep in touch with in future. That was another reason for her always appearing to be my official translator and guide rather than an old friend who wanted to help me. Indeed, it was not my relation network.

Secondly, to be introduced (or advised) by government office, meant I

should have access limited only to the information they want me to see and only for the period of my visit. Like an inspector, their warm welcome was expected to end as soon as I left.

Thirdly, their interest in meeting with me was in the 'document-based evidence' of the photos. Two years later, when one of my Chinese friends was searching Chinese Google, (google.com.cn) he noticed that my photos and name are posted as a visitor from the UK on those school websites! Although I could always arrange further meetings with them through Ms. Leung, it was unlikely I could build any trust relation or create a research network through her. Her relation in government expressed an obligation on her to arrange the meetings not me. The business cards we were exchanging had no use for me. To develop my research dispositifs, I needed to build my own relations network.

The third theme was methodological issues of impression management. All those visited schools presented the best of their schools (32), and did not earn me any inside knowledge or valuable investment for building my own relation network. Visited managers or officials had obligation to their own relations who asked them to meet me. Acquiring insight knowledge was not included in the protocol. Assuming I accompany with a Chinese interpreter, there was no one else that would be able or interested in speaking English. The only moment I felt that I had useful communication was when the American English teacher answered my questions about the school in a fashion of 'answering questions (32), and giving insight knowledge. Others, both Ms. Leung and visited people, were playing the 'impression' game. Ms. Leung aimed to impress them with my constructed (not fabricated, but trimmed) identity (26), and they tried to impress me with the figures of achievements. My questions were not answered in a straightforward manner (30), and usually turned into showing off a fascinating aspect of their school.

Through a series of 'blind date' meetings, I realised that I must start from the bottom of the hierarchy to establish trust relations for understanding others, otherwise, I would get no more than a mirage, or 'impression management' issue in trying to engage in strategic research interactions that

helped me achieve my research goal on 'insider-ness.'

The fourth theme of the narrative was methodological issues of different symbolic meanings, and gender related issues. In some occasions, behaviours and enthusiasm by people who were helping me was unusual to me. Until sometime later, I thought Ms. Leung might have had some sort of benefit by helping me with those meetings. What I learned later, was that she was transmitting codes that I could not encrypt at that time. The codes separated my views to building relations from hers. With every meeting, she was more excited than I was with introducing herself and trying to impress them with her identity. I had the feeling that my presence, and I, became part of her purposes. When a meeting was cancelled, she became more upset than I was. For me, they were just a meeting for building trust relations, if not this one, maybe another one, however, organising those meetings from the top of the hierarchy was not a simple task. Chinese usually invest a lot of effort, hope, and money, to be engaged in each of those connections. I started to learn that for Chinese meeting new people from higher social status, and trying to add them to their relations network, is a regular attempt.

From the beginning, when Ms. Leung called me from the hotel, lobby (24), I realised that she was trying to act as an official translator, who was just introduced to me. Being a friend or a colleague could reduce my status lower to become a normal person. This would make it difficult to arrange those meetings or have a benefit of developing further her own relations network – her dispositifs. In addition, there was a methodical issue of gender - a Chinese woman with a foreign man in China imposes two possible relations, translator or personal. The first one was adored, but the second was not much welcomed in China at that time. I had similar experiences while I was with other female friends and informants.

Despite my initial thought that the power relations in China could be a great help for my access to the field, I was unable to build my research dispositifs. I had access to the relations sphere, but not access to knowledge of others' way of living, or to the educators and students life in educational environments. I realised that the power relationship, that with help of Ms.

Leung I was engaged with, could be perfect for many other purposes. It could be a gate for collaborative research work between a British educational organization and one in China. It could be a fantastic opportunity to make a TV report on Chinese schools, or perhaps a green card to make a business deal. However, undoubtedly for my purpose, to know others, I needed to find real others amongst ordinary people in their everyday lives. My search then was not for Westernised Chinese ladies and gentleman who had adapted every aspect of their life

to a European life style; German Black Mercedes cars, expensive French red wines, traditional luxurious Italian furniture. They may well echo a European aristocrat life style, but not a Chinese one, the one I was looking for, however, I have to admit, that I gained insights into the luxurious life of new generations of China's aristocrats who construct and hold the 'power of relations.' An immediate question could be asked: In a globalised age, is there a 'Chinese way' at all, or it is just a holy grail?

Exploring issues with building trust in relations with identity-in-question, in this chapter I have demonstrated my failing with the first attempt with building such trust relations, as well as, learning about the power setting in Chinese community which was not visible to me before. However, without the above experiences, I would not be able to search for an alternative way in building my research dispositif (trust relations).

6 Next step - meeting with people

One day, when my wife and I went to a local street market in Siyang, we were stopped by an old man who was between crowds in front of the market entrance. He asked me in Chinese if I am a foreigner. I replied, 'Yes.' Then he asked again, 'Are you really a foreigner?' I said, 'Yes, I am.' Then he told me that I am the first foreigner he had ever seen in his life, and with happiness, started clapping and moving like dancing.

The last chapter illustrated issues with entering fieldwork and building trust relations through the top of the hierarchy and powerful relations, such as, educational bureaus, government related bodies, and important people. However, my experiences showed that for my purpose, and in order to build my research dispositif, the research dispositif could not be developed with help of those relations, even though they were very powerful. Instead, to have an insider status and build trust relations, I had to find an alternative way by moving down the ladder towards more real, more common people, who didn't know about me or my relation groups. In this chapter I will discuss such attempts and followed issues with identity-in-question as raised in the first question: Who is Amir? With the previous experienced relations group, I and my identity were not important at all, while they created a virtual Amir to satisfy their purposes. So, can I become a flesh-and-blood Amir in a Chinese social world, rather than a virtual Amir?

6.1 Becoming an insider

In contrast to my experiences of a top-down approach and attempt to construct a research dispositif, in this chapter, I discuss the ground-up approach (see 3.2.1). Through a series of narratives, I examine the key methodological issues. Narratives of the 'next step' will be used to indicate the contexts, within which, key issues emerge. The way I dealt with the mentioned

issues in the previous chapter in order to build my own research dispositif, required a different approach for building trust relations. Without such, my own relations network and to be considered an insider, it would not be able to establish the research dispositif. However, face-to-face with people, brought new sets of difficulties and challenges to deal with.

Face to face with people

- 1. Every night after they left me at the hotel doors, my second life – an alternative to a precursor - started. I changed and took a walk to the downtown area with its alley ways between the BBQ stands on the corners of streets, with assorted little wooden sticks of shredded beef, a little fish, a slice of squid, pieces of tofu. There were crowds of people who came from work, people were sitting on little plastic stools on the corners of roads, groups of three to five, would talk loudly, laugh, and drink large bottles of beer. The men had half-lifted their shirts to absorb the cool weather and women wore clean dresses and shiny shoes and had fake Louis Vuitton (LV) handbags. I did this despite Ms. Leung's prohibiting me from going out at night by myself. She did not feel China was safe, especially for foreigners. However, I felt even safer amongst the common people.*
- 2. In one of my random city excursions, I ended up on a very narrow road in a highly populated area covered with tall apartment buildings and full of children, old people, and bikes. Due to my presence in such a hidden part of the town at that time of night, the road unexpectedly became quiet. In the darkness, there was a heavy atmosphere of staring eyes. To assess the situation, I forced myself to stop at a BBQ stand to look at the foods. A few rough-looking men were standing in front of me and inspecting my every movement with a look of seriousness on their faces. I felt I must be in the wrong place at the wrong time. My legs were not sure whether to continue to*

walk even deeper into the alley roads or to return along the already long distance I came from. In the quietness of the street, with a uncertain voice and in broken Chinese:

3. *'Zhe ge. yi ge.'* (This one.., one please...), I said and pointed to something that I guessed must be a Chicken piece opened between two wooden sticks in a shape of a flying bat.
4. *Immediately everyone started to laugh and began pointing to show me to each other while saying something in Chinese. The BBQ person kept asking me something and I could only raise my shoulders to show my inability to communicate with him in Chinese. One of the rough men kept asking me:*
5. *'Ni cong na li lai (where are you from?).'* I did not understand whether it was a comment or a question. The man who was losing his patience continued with something like:
6. *'Ting bu dong? ... Bu dong ma?'*
7. *I just replied, 'Bu dong,' as I guessed it must be something like 'Don't understand, or don't have.'*
8. *He laughed and touched my shoulder. The street returned to normal, people still stared at me holding a BBQ chicken in my hand, but were smiling. It was the most delicious spicy chicken I ever had.*

Although in the above narrative, to be in that road, at that time of the night (2) was not planned, it had a great role in building my confidence to take the 'next steps' necessary to escape Ms. Leung's controls and prohibitions. The feeling of being free to face ordinary people in their ordinary activities was great after those organised programs, fake ceremonies, and impression oriented visits. There is no doubt that there could be a danger, as I took a risk to be there on my own. However, the risk of missing the opportunity to meet ordinary people was greater. I would not have a chance otherwise. I had to overcome the fearful situation of knowing that I was on the spot as 'other,' alone and isolated from my world, unable to speak their language, to visit the

field. The tension was released by buying and eating their food (3), as a notion of sharing a little moment of their ordinary life (4). The significance of such vignettes was in generating insights about fieldwork and the start of a process of dealing with others.

6.1.1 Creating Fieldwork Opportunities

Bo Young

- 1. I was teaching Bo Young English on a daily basis for few weeks. After some weeks working with him, I managed to awaken his memories of the English vocabulary that he had previously studied. One day while I was teaching him, I mentioned to him that I wanted to travel to his home province, Hunan. He said that he could introduce me to his teachers in Zhuzhou who could look after me on arrival. That was the moment, which I had been waiting for, for many months.*
- 2. Bo Young was a Cantonese student in Zhuzhou's Teachers College for three years studying 'coaching.' Soon after completing his study, he moved to the economically booming city of Shenzhen in order to find his dream of being rich. His parents were living in the countryside near to Shenzhen. His first job was as a health trainer in a health centre in Shenzhen, where I met him for the first time. Being witness to his enthusiasm in learning English encouraged me to offer him a one hour teaching after finishing my swimming every day. His progress was very slow and the pronunciation of English sounds was very difficult for him. Those teaching sessions became the grounds for a long lasting friendship. We made the first trip to Zhuzhou together and he introduced me to his teachers. Then, I had a chance to ask them for their participation in my research and we arranged dates and exchanged contacts.*
- 3. I had offered him the full cost of his trip if he wanted to be my*

companion on the trip to Zhuzhou. By then he had a friend from Zhuozhou, who was visiting Shenzhen at that time. I offered to pay her cost of travel too and asked Bo Young to arrange train tickets for three of us.

- 4. Bo Young insisted on booking a train bed for me and a seat for themselves, but I didn't want to differentiate between them and myself from the beginning. In addition, I was not prepared to sleep during my first experience of train travel to Zhuzhou. I asked him to buy the cheapest possible ticket. Certainly, not because it was beyond my budget, but I would rather see how this many people typically spent their time traveling long distances. After 12 hours sitting on a hard seat in the train from Shenzhen, we arrived at Zhuzhou on a cold and early morning of October.*

That trip, as my preparatory fieldwork trip, made my fieldwork possible in China, in the way I hoped. Bo Young's English teacher, Qing Tang, was very interested in helping me with my research and every aspect of my stay in Zhuzhou. That was more promising in comparison to Ms. Leung's approach. I was beginning to draw upon the 'relation sphere' that could solve my problem about how to create the possibilities for fieldwork, and to start the planning process with others.

After a week's stay in Zhuzhou, we made the necessary arrangements for their participation with my research. I asked him to find a reasonable single room flat, or a shared accommodation to stay for six months.

- 5. Qing Tang and Mr. Wu were waiting for me outside the train station. We had some breakfast together and had a walk toward the college. Qing Tang explained to me the reason why he could not keep his promise to find a reasonable accommodation (flat) for the duration of my stay. He said no one wanted to rent for such a short period. He mentioned that we could find it together now and took me to various local inns. Based on the places he*

took me, I had some idea about his own financial circumstances. However, the places he was suggesting had minimum facilities and levels of hygiene. They were places that even I have not had to experience in my life before! The rent difference for somewhere cleaner and safer, could be only few pounds more a day. My financial circumstances allowed me to spend a few pounds more for such luxury, but I found it difficult to pursue my preferences as I thought it could be interpreted differently and create a separation between poor anonymous Chinese teachers and me as a rich Western researcher. I was trying everything possible to reduce any spaces between us and to be closer to their living condition to understand them better. I ended up in a little dusty room on the third floor of a very busy, small road, full of local shops, cafés, and had a daily vegetable market alongside the road. There was no separate shower room, only a shower above a traditional Chinese style toilet. However, it was five minute walk to the Teachers College.

- 6. The room had one bed without any cover or duvet. There was a fan in the room with about half an inch of permanent dust on it. Even running the fan did not remove the dust. I had a toilet on the floor with a shower above it. The room was part of a six-room inn located on the third floor of an old building and run by a woman and her sister. The second floor was an internet bar, and I never knew what was on the ground floor. The street awoke at six in the morning and was extremely busy until midnight. I could hear the outside noise as if I was sleeping in the middle of the road. Every time after locking my room door with a skeleton key, which had no tooth, I gave the key to that woman sitting behind a little desk near her own room.*
- 7. Qing Tang, at Zhuzhou's Teachers College, was an English teacher, and he was the main contact for my fieldwork in Zhuzhou. Qing Tang, together with Mr. Wu, a calligraphy*

teacher, helped me with my research. They promised access to classrooms, students, and teachers, however, they both knew something that I had no idea about. There was a Foreign Relations Department in every educational organization as a control, policed for any foreign access to the organization, in addition their other duties. One year later, in one of the follow-up visits during a conversation with Qing Tang, he was sure, by that time, that informing that department would not be necessary, however, Wu insisted on doing it officially and made a request formally to the Foreign Relations Department for a research permit! Eventually, the department, on condition that they could manage it by themselves, approved my research in Zhuzhou Teachers College, which is part of Hunan University. Long after starting my research, I noticed how difficult it was to obtain such permits as I failed to do so from some other universities.

Entering Zhuzhou's Teachers College was the first step into the organisation. I had also established a network with two professors at Wuhan University, and a professor at Beijing University. Later, I expanded the field to Mrs. Zheng's classes in a public middle school in Shenzhen, and a school in Siyang, in which I undertook hundreds of hours teaching with follow-up meetings. However, Zhuzhou's Teachers College, played an important role in starting the field works with its unique difficulties, such as, the function of 'foreign departments in each college,' translations, 'face,' and 'relations,' which is covered in the next chapter.

Xiao Wu

- 1. I was with my Chinese colleague, Xiao Wu, on the way to a restaurant. I used to arrange most of my meetings during a lunch or dinner for three main purposes. First, it had to be outside of informants working hours. Secondly, having meetings*

over dinner was more common in Chinese culture. Finally, because it is an informal atmosphere, which was more relaxed for informants. She was a teacher in high school, and as usual, we had our meetings during her lunch break.

- 2. That day we were waiting at the traffic light on our way to the restaurant, when a man was crossing the road in the opposite direction of ours. By the time he reached us, he said something to my colleague in Chinese. I thought he was someone who knew her, however, her face became red and upset. I realised that something really bothered her. I asked her, 'What happened?' What had he said? Initially, she insisted that it did not matter and tried to smile, but eventually she repeated the man's words, and the unpleasant innuendo, 'I bet you did a good job!'*

Maybe, it was not in a verbal form of abuse like the above example, but it was not the first time that I experienced an uncomfortable atmosphere for the female informants working with me. As a foreign man, many times I lost important contacts because of gender issues. Unpleasant fieldwork experiences do not arise only from what may be done to the ethnographer, however (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), even more important is how to maintain the participant role for informants. Their help and participation as a teacher, for me, were extremely valuable and I did not want to lose their support and engagement with my research, as well as, their friendship. I had to arrange and adopt my meetings in a way to minimise that sort of unpleasant situation.

6.2 Summary of Methodological and theoretical issues

Unlike the top-down approach in chapter five, being with people of my research and understanding their experiences of the world and their situation was a helpful approach for building my research dispositif. In addition, as an

insider, my understanding of their way of thinking and acting could be validated by their confirmation. As I discussed in Chapter four, when the member of the community recognises it, it is correct and valid.

'Face to face with people,' the narrative indicates my attempt to find an alternative way of building the 'research sphere' to the one prescribed by Mrs. Leung. As mentioned in the comments after the narrative, the experience helped me to develop confidence to escape from Ms. Leung's control. By being in an alleyway of downtown Shenzhen city on that night (2), I experienced the possibility of risk, danger, and fear, instead of staying in my comfortable room in the luxury hotel and waiting for the next set-up visit and meeting. Perhaps the confidence developed through that night, being face-to-face with people, helped me to understand my next step.

Not a long time later, offering Bo Yang free English lessons (2) -In Bo Yang narrative - was an unplanned gift, which contributed to later ethnographic opportunities. Furthermore, it created friendship which played an important role as the first step in building relations network. Later this friendship became part of building my relation sphere which in turn became the ground for developing research dispositif that enabled me to solve problems like 'where and how to do the fieldwork.'

My relations sphere was going to be constructed with a different social status than the one created by Ms. Leung which was not reflecting the exact picture of me and my research intention. Instead, I tried to have a different social status, which could create a better ground for the development of fieldwork opportunities. In terms of developing my first relations network, I preferred to be with them, not to be invited by them. I did not want them to have a VIP picture of me. I tried to solve the methodological issue of being seen to fit in (5), by not acting or living differently. In addition, enjoying foods that others may not be very interested to try, because of its strange and different taste, living in similar conditions as locals do, and listening to their very own relational problems, all are the key in unlocking the gate, the gate of understanding a different meaning system, interests and obsessions, goals, and power in the society.

Other methodological issues were the policy and access. Without Qing Tang and Mr. Wu's interest to get permission from the 'Foreign Relations Department,' it would be very difficult for me to access the college and its resources for developing research dispositifs.

As mentioned in Chapter four, Chinese calligraphy has strong ties with Chinese culture. During my stay in China, in addition to learning Chinese language, I started to learn Chinese calligraphy, for a period of three years. On many occasions, I received comments such as: a) 'Ah, you can write Chinese better than me,' b) 'My husband said that he can't write as good as you,' c) 'If you work a little more, you can join provincial competition.' The above comments were more than compliments to my Chinese calligraphy. Rather, they were statements of recognition. Me, and my understanding of Chinese calligraphy was validated by members.

I gained trust and succeeded in becoming an insider. 熟人 (shouren), or 'inner people,' is the Chinese translation for insider, a term given to people within a relation group. It is not an easy step becoming a member in such relation groups, as it is not based on particular privileges, such as, race or nationality, but rather, it involves sharing the way of seeing the world. Now, my research dispositifs consist of relations networks I recognised, as a member, Chinese language, which enabled me to communicate and be seen as a member, Chinese understanding of beauty, especially calligraphy, that let me see the world closer to the way they see it.

7 Development of methodological and theoretical insight

In this chapter, I discuss the aesthetics of seeing the world as an integration of three themes; a) the distribution of sensible, b) community, and c) communication. Each theme is explored in detail for a better understanding of the 'relation sphere' in a Chinese community. Through this chapter, I demonstrate the role of language in understanding 'others,' with focus on roles of 'face,' and 'relations,' in Chinese culture, which will lead to discussion of issues with 'face' and 'relations' through the rest of the chapter.

Indeed, the business of trying to understand a foreign nation with a foreign culture, especially one as different from one's own as China's, it's usually not for the mortal man. For this work, there is need for a broad, brotherly feeling, for the feeling of the common bond of humanity and the cheer of good fellowship. One must feel, with the pulse of the heart, as well as, see with the eyes of the mind. There must be, too, a certain detachment, not from the country under examination, for that is always so, but from oneself and one's subconscious notions, and from the deeply embedded notions of one's childhood and the equally tyrannous ideas of one's adult days, from those big words with capital letters like Democracy, Prosperity, Capital, Success, Religion and Dividends. One needs a little detachment, and a little simplicity of mind, too, that simplicity of mind, so well typified by Robert Burns, one of the most Scottish and yet most universal of all poets, who strips our souls bare and reveals our common humanity and the loves and sorrows that common humanity is heir to. Only with that detachment and that simplicity of mind can one understand a foreign nation. (Yutang, 1998:7).

In Yutang's sense, meeting people from other cultures is not enough to understand 'others'. Instead of traveling to their country, and obliging ourselves to go to the process of learning, and applying their cultural points is required to understand what is common to that community, either in visible or non-visible spaces. The 21st century provided ease and an affordable way of traveling around the globe and meeting others. This is not to say, that moving to the others' space is enough to understand the others' way of living or thinking. Chapter four, was included and introduced the aesthetic theory of Rancière. In Rancière's, J. (2006) view there is an aesthetics of the perceptible. Hence, ethnography will involve 'educating' (drawing out), and aesthetics enables me to participate in the world of others and see it the way they see the world. For such understanding, there is a need for engagement with their life and their ways of doing things, learning their forms of communication, their discourses, and their ways of seeing, that aesthetically construct the field of the visible in Rancière's sense. There is an aesthetic that enables the construction of the relations sphere (as patterns of valued networks) and aesthetics that underlines the potential to create useful dispositifs to bring to bear on the issues and questions that arise in everyday life people need to solve. If I cannot 'see' how a dispositif can be created and deployed, then I cannot solve my problems.

From the start of my research, communication was a problem. I could not speak Chinese and many could not speak sufficient English. In the beginning, communication problems were solved by selecting all of the informants with English language confidence, and by arranging fieldwork settings in the English language related educational establishments, such as English lessons, or subjects taught in English. However, this was not sufficient.

There is an intimate link between the aesthetic way of seeing the world and language. Thus, it is not simply a matter of translation. Recalling Lotman's perspective in 3.2.2, even for the communications that uses one natural language, the code is not necessarily identical. I explored the way I could deal with the issue that translation posed in practice, which, led me to try to learn Chinese language, as well as, reading and writing. This, in turn, led me to some

insights into the issue of the aesthetics of seeing which is at the heart of coming to understand the ways of life my Chinese colleagues introduced me to.

In addition, learning Chinese language played two important roles in my fieldwork. One was the recognition as an insider. People started to introduce me as someone who can speak Chinese and write with the brush, instead of who am I and where am I coming from. My identity was replaced by a new one.

Secondly, in many occasions, even using my novice level Chinese language, I could communicate much easier than using English with less ambiguity. Then again, as mentioned in the last section, my understanding and learning about their way of life was verified by their recognition.

7.1 Translation and understanding 'others'

In Chinese, often for greeting someone, they say '你吃了吗' (ni chi le ma?), which means 'have you eaten?' Imagine if I had one of those electronic translators in my hand and I tried to translate the question. If the translation were literal, I was puzzled why they cared whether I had eaten or not.

Although I bought a Chinese-English translator in my preparatory fieldwork visit to China, the complexity of Chinese tonal language meant that I could never use it in communication with informants. Maybe an electronic translator's function is suitable for situations such as buying a train ticket, but surely is not appropriate for transferring culturally influenced meanings. However, my informants used their mobile phones with its built-in SMS translator for sending me messages or receiving them from me, however, they did not always reflect the intended meanings. In China, they call the resulting language 'Chinglish.' In addition, at that time, I was not aware when they did not understand my texts or what I was saying. If they did not understand me, they would not always admit it, in order to keep their 'face.'

One day I found Ben, The English teacher from London, frustrated with his lessons that morning. He said a student

approached him that morning with a dictionary. She asked his opinion for the meaning of a word. He told her another word, which is more common in English. The student was not happy, and she insisted on using the same word she found in the dictionary.

For this student, although teachers have a high position in the hierarchy in Chinese society, a dictionary has an even higher position. As Mah, A. Y. (2002) wrote regarding Chinese respect to any written forms in Chinese language, about one hundred years ago, there were boxes in Beijing streets for people to put any written text they found. More generally, a written text for Chinese is a valuable and respectable piece of art, especially a Chinese text. Their language has a strong link with their art. Perhaps it is a kind of harmony and similar to Rancière's aesthetic (see 4).

Back in 1990-1992, I was a computer programmer with an enthusiasm for artificial intelligence and building a multi-lingual translator. Upon my own initiative, I took some Open University courses based on programming AI (Artificial Intelligence) and started a project to develop such a program. After one year of hard work developing a software prototype capable of translating sentences between three languages (Persian, English, and Turkish), I quit the project. I noticed there are sentences that I could not translate into another language. Today after about twenty years, I understand the reasons behind my failure. Although I was familiar with both Iranian and Turkish cultures, I did not know how to make a computer handle the speaker's historical elements of the conversation. Today, Google has developed an astonishing universal translator, which is used globally, yet cannot translate one paragraph between English and Chinese language in its true form.

In fieldwork, much of my communication with my friends, colleagues, and informants, was through either SMS messaging (examples will be given with each relevant discussion) or QQ⁴. The reason I relied more on text messaging, was the cost savings and being appropriate to my contacts. In

⁴QQ is a social networking system and includes sharing, messaging, audio and video conversations. Today there are more than 250 million people uses QQ.

China, when you are traveling to different provinces, national call charges apply to both caller and receiver.

SMS 1:

Early one evening, one of my female colleagues sent me an SMS message to see whether I was in Shenzhen or not. I replied, 'I arrived yesterday.' She replied to me, 'I am free tonight and can play with you.'

Although I did not take her message literally, I was frustrated and anxious. It took me a little while to understand the meaning of the message as; I am free tonight and can meet you, however, the frustration was for a different reason. This brought home the wider implications for misunderstanding, not just in the use of SMS, but in spoken conversation and even in the use of interpreters. Of course, I could train myself for a correct translation of the scene and communication, but I could not have any control over or guarantee the same thing with the informants.

My second concern in translating messages was over the unspoken interpretation by my Chinese colleagues, or better, the codes (as referenced to Lotman – chapter three) they employed in translating texts or spoken communications. Perhaps their concern with 'face' or loss of 'face' meant to act in this way. While an electronic message (translated or not), can be misinterpreted due to inappropriate literal translations, they would not talk about it or mention it to me as that would reflect on their relations with me. In fact, the beginning of my fieldwork experience was full of such experiences. Therefore, the practical fieldwork task is to overcome such problems in some way.

7.2 Overcoming field problems caused by translation

All the languages I can speak use similar tones of communication, but

Chinese language tones were completely unfamiliar to me. Their harsh voices or soft voices have nothing to do with their emotions. The lack of knowing the language itself was driving me to lose my temper. In addition, I was trying to understand them through my universe of dispositifs. Perhaps, like anyone else, I drew upon my own sphere of meanings. For example, I could not leave a restaurant in England without paying the bill. In most cases, I could not use a restaurant phone. It was unusual to ask to use the phone in a restaurant. No prior experiences in the UK and elsewhere were helping here in China. Chinese encryption of meanings were based on their own cultural codes or related to their network of dispositifs such as 'face' and 'relations.'

One day prior departing Shenzhen to Zhuzhou, I went to dinner with Bo Young. I was running late and had very little time to eat. After having a table in a restaurant, I had to go and buy something. I asked Bo Young to tell the waitress that if she can bring food in 15 minutes, we stay, otherwise, we have to go. 'OK. OK. I understand. You go.' I came back after ten minutes and we were waiting there for another 20 minutes and still we didn't have our food. I asked Bo Young, 'Did you tell her what I said?' Bo Young became quiet for a little while, and then told me, 'Why you get angry. If you are late, this is not her problem.'

Bo Young himself was not sure we could leave the restaurant in an arranged time, however, to him, asking such a question to the waitress was not appropriate or usual. Perhaps it was not appropriate because it was not her problem. She would do something about it, if it were her problem. In Western context, staff might recognise the problem and tell me immediately whether they can or cannot address it. In the above narrative, the waitress did not perceive an issue to be addressed at all. There was a dispositif that came into action, which was different from mine.

I was introduced to Dr. Wang Li by Professor Wei in

Wuhan University. Dr. Wang Li had previously undertaken research on teacher and student relationships. When I called her and introduced myself, she was happy to meet me. From the telephone conversation I had with her, I realised that she may not be comfortable with a conversation in English, so I asked one of my colleagues from Zhuzhou College to join me as a translator. Dr, Wang Li was the Deputy Director of the Development department of Hunan University, which also controlled Zhuzhou College. She was very happy to meet me and share her doctoral research in Chinese classes.

I asked about her lessons and a possible observation of her classes. She was very happy and said, 'You can observe my lesson tomorrow, but it is in Chinese.' I told her that I am interested in students' interactions in the lesson and that it is alright with me.

During the conversation, I noticed translations were taking much longer than the English version of my conversation. Eventually, Dr. Wang Li was more involved in conversation with my translator than me! I noticed that their conversation was diverging from the purpose of the meeting and tried to get the control back again. By the end of the meeting, I noticed Dr. Wang Li's interest in working with me was no longer the same as at the beginning of the meeting! At the end, in response to arranging a time for observation of her lesson, she said she would contact me and let me know.

I said goodbye to Dr. Wang, shook hands, and we left her office. Qing Tang, my translator, told me that he left his pen in Dr. Wang's office and while I was in the corridor waiting for him, he continued the conversation with Dr. Wang for another 5-10 minutes. Later, he did not talk about his last conversation with Dr. Wang.

After leaving the meeting, I felt my plans were invaded.

It was clear to me that the meeting was unsuccessful because of the conversation between my translator and Dr. Wang Li, however, I did not understand the reasons behind it until long after that! That evening I was with my translator for dinner and afterwards in my 'English corner' meeting with students, I saw the translator sending several messages. With the knowledge I had about him, that was unusual for him. Inside me, something was saying that he was sending messages to Dr. Wang Li. Although I felt uncomfortable with this possibility, I could not say anything. Finally, shortly after another message alert, very calmly and without emotion in his voice he said, 'You cannot join Dr. Li's class tomorrow.' I thought he meant a problem of travel or something that I was not aware of it. 'Why?' I asked. He said, 'I don't know. She sent me a text message.'

The above narrative is a story of the failure, that with exploring the complex way in which 'problem,' 'face,' and the use of 'relations' interacted, it helped to develop an effective fieldwork of dispositifs. Here 'relations' and hierarchy were important issues. Dr. Wang Li was in a high position in Hunan University, which could be seen as a useful contact for my translator who was only a teacher. It was not easy for a teacher to obtain a connection with such a highly positioned university manager. My experiences show that many Chinese people, without having a strong relations network, believe it is only a matter of chance, however, with two people of different social statuses, it is usually difficult to engage in such relations without a middle party and I was the middle party to make it possible. My translator was building his 'relations sphere' and Dr. Wang Li was a valued addition. Of course, if he succeeded, there would be no harm to my plans, but he did not.

I tried to correct the wrongly delivered message with another approach for a second meeting with Dr. Wang Li after one and a half months. I called Ms. Leung, explained to her the situation, and asked her to call Dr. Wang for another meeting. In addition, to tell her that I'd like to meet her again. Ms.

Leung managed to arrange another meeting for me, but Dr. Wang Li preferred to have her own translator! I guessed the translator could be from the foreign affairs' department!

The second meeting seemed prearranged and the conversations were already prepared. After introducing the translator as one of Dr. Wang Li's students, the conversation was completely opposite to that of the last meeting. Dr. Wang Li started to talk about our conversation from the last meeting. 'We believe this is the best way of learning. Our education system (...).' Here, the translator took the lead of conversation from Dr. Wang Li and with an authoritative voice started to talk about values in China's education system and about their achievements. By that time, I understood that I could not maintain the trusted relationship with Dr. Wang Li anymore! I felt I lost my 'face!' In Chinese 'relations' building, if the introduced party is not willing to be engaged in the new relation, would show it indirectly by maintaining a cold atmosphere in the meeting and show no interest or indication for future meetings, however, the other party who initiated the contact would lose 'face.' Any further attempts would cause more lost 'face' until they received a 'no' answer directly. In theory, to re-build such trust relations, is only possible by entering her relations group from another node to demonstrate that my 'face' value is recognised by another member of the group. But that required spending a lot of time, and money.

7.3 Relation Sphere

Prior to the start of my fieldwork, I studied some literature regarding Chinese culture to ease the entry into the fieldwork. One of the books that influenced me was, 'Beyond Chinese Face' (Harris, 1991). In his book, Harris reflects on his observations and studies during his work in Hong Kong. Reading his book, I was convinced that I had a reasonable understanding of cultural differences in China, including the notion of 'face,' and the concept of 'relations,' however, my failings and experiences described above was a basis for new learning.

According to Confucius Analect (论语, lunyu), there was a man who reported his own father to authorities for stealing a sheep. Although to the law this was assumed a right behaviour and an obligation toward the law, Confucius commented such acts were incorrect, as the father-son relation is more important than the law. (Confucius & Soothill, 1995)

Unlike the time I started my thesis, nowadays there is available, extensive literatures, some already referenced in this thesis, discussing 'face' in Chinese culture. In general, they are agreeing with the extent of the 'face' notion in Chinese society. Authors such Pan, Y. (2000), Chan, S. (1999), Lee, S. H. (1997), and Bond M. H. (1991), researched and discussed the influence of 'face' in Chinese people's everyday life. Most of the literature mainly explores the 'face' concept on its own, however, they have lack of explanation that why 'face,' as a social status, dignity, or norm of societies, are so important for Chinese. I could not stop asking: What are these terms important for? Are there other concepts in people's lives, which are in association with 'face,' or is there a mechanism to maintain the power of such concepts in a society? How do they influence an individual's life? They talk about acceptance by group. However, what would happen to their life if they are not accepted by the group? Could they continue their life in another way? Would they lose some opportunities?

In the same way, most literature referenced in this chapter and chapter seven are investigating the 'relations' concept with its role in management or business with Chinese. They may emphasise 'face' as another Chinese cultural point, however, there was lack of its connection to the 'relations' concept. Studying both 'face' and 'relations' as two interrelated dispositifs, would lead me to a better comprehension of their role as the main pillars of Chinese culture construction.

When I first started this chapter, I planned to have two separate chapters for 'face' and 'relations,' however, later I noticed that for my purpose and learning, 'face' and 'relations,' are inseparable entities. I cannot talk about

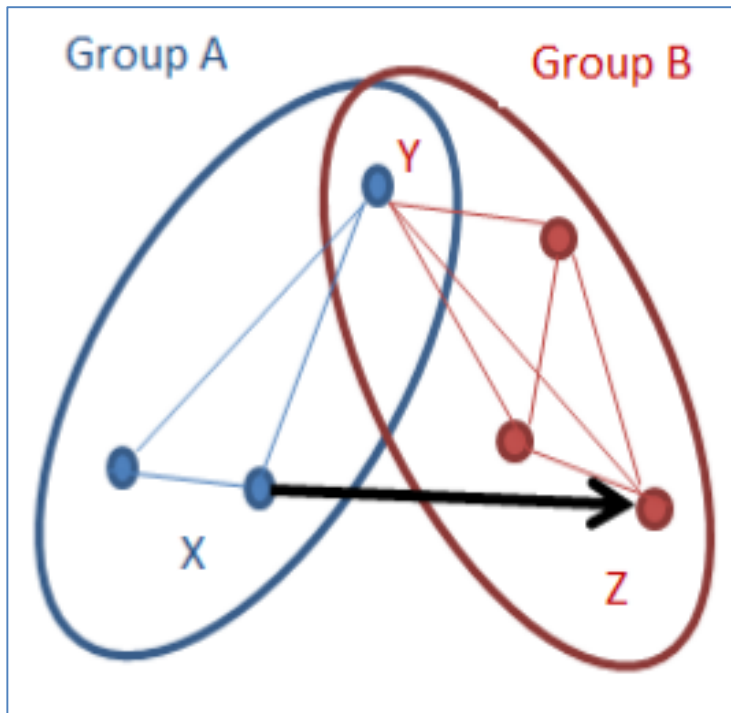
'face' without referring to 'relations,' and it is not possible to talk about 'relations' without talking about 'face.' 'Face' is the essential requirement for 'relations' and 'relations' is the dynamics of 'face.'

The Chinese society is built on Guan-Xi, the relationships and networks of friends and family. The society built upon Confucian five cardinal relationships. One- ruler and subject, Two- father and son, Three- husband and wife, Four- elder and younger brother, Five- between friends (Sriramesh and Verčič, 2003:94). The values and norms emphasised in these relations are different, as the roles in each relations are different, righteousness between superior and subordinate, closeness between father and son, differentiation between husband and wife, hierarchy between elder and younger brother, and trustworthiness between friends. In collectivist cultures, and particularly in Chinese society, it is relationship, rather than law, that provides the security necessary to do business and secure people's lives. Recognising hierarchy is one of the very first rules for a strong trust relationship. Every person's existence is defined by bilateral relationship with another person.

Bond M. H. (1991), remarks that Chinese trusted their inner circle of their relations rather than someone outside. Someone from the inner circle provides care, protection, and their relations are for the sake of each other, and constrain less energy to create a 'safety net' (trusted relations) elsewhere.

Bond M. H. (1991) describes the 'association' in Chinese relations, as a broad category of persons to whom one is connected either directly or indirectly. This relationship can be to a superior person or to someone at the same level. It can be a relation at school, at work, shared residence, and so on. The indirect relations can be thought of as 'third party relations.' We may also experience relationships like this in other cultures, but third party relations are more common in China. It is possible to present it in a diagram similar to 'intentional network and mirror group diagram presented in 'Participant Observation' by Schostak J. (2008).

Figure 15: Third party relations network.



X and Y both, are part of relations networks (Group A). While Y is also part of another relation networks (Group B) and in association to Z. If X needs resource from stranger Z, he may be able to obtain it by 'pulling on his relationship' (guanxi) with associate Y, so long as Y is indebted to X and Z indebted to Y. Then Y may be able to repay the debt, which he owes to X by allowing Z to repay the debt owed to Y indirectly.

Bond M. H. (1991) remarks that the intermediary must first decide if he has sufficient 'face' in his/her relationship with the more powerful and superior person and to make sure that the request is accepted. In other words if this request is rejected and refused, it would be an embarrassing situation, one perhaps due to having miscalculated one's own 'face value.' Similarly, one can gain face by maintaining relations to more powerful ones (Bond, 1991:59).

In collectivist cultures, good deeds are rewarded with group recognitions, similarly, misdeeds result in a loss of recognition by the group. There is a main difference with individualist cultures, which misbehaviours are only punished when others know about it. While in individualist cultures, misdeed and misbehaviour result in guilt feeling as well as losing self-esteem, even no one else knows about it (Lee, 1997). Therefore, one's achievement, by praising the

person in front of others, as much as a lack of knowledge, can be expected as criticism in the group.

The further is called losing 'face.' It can be translated in English with so many words such as shame, embarrassments, losing social image, losing dignity, etc. Each word expresses the loss of 'face' in different settings. Then, what makes 'face' in China very different from elsewhere, is the number of situations influenced by 'face,' or 'face threat.' The sensitivity to 'face-threat' is dependent on the degree of formality of the situation. For Chinese people living in a Confucian society, the social situation for gift giving is an example of a formal situation (Hwang, 2011). According to the research outcome from education and social change in China, in inequality in market economy, girls do not lose 'face' if they lose to boys, but they will lose 'face,' if they give a wrong answer (Postiglione, 2006).

Later reviews of my experiences of teaching Chinese students during 2000-2006 in Manchester, it seemed to me 'face-threat' is also dependent on the type of the society they are living in. Thus, my Chinese students, after few months of living in England, were not living and studying according to their experience of 'face-threat' in their motherland. There must be something else associated with 'face' that makes it so important, sensitive, and sometimes difficult to comprehend.

In another example, I was introduced to a professor in Beijing University through a third party. He was involved in research about using ICT in education. There could not be a better opportunity for me to expand my background knowledge to the Chinese use of ICT in education. I had already been in the ICT field for many years with a vast amount of development in business and educational organisations, as well as, being involved with research in my university. Our mutual friend, a professor in Beijing and Shanghai Universities, arranged a meeting with him. He also asked two of his research students to pick me up from the train station and to act as interpreters.

Early in the morning, I arrived at the Beijing train station and expected to meet the two students. On my arrival, a girl was waiting for me in the Beijing Railway Station. She apologised for the absence of the other student. After a short conversation, we left the train station to go to Beijing University. In Dr. Wu's office, I was introduced by the student to him. His English was good enough to communicate with me and there were no need for an interpreter. Nevertheless, the student preferred to stay there and to listen to us. The professor sometimes engaged the student in translation to make sure of his accuracy in English. He looked very excited and asked questions about my research and background. We talked about half an hour. He showed me his research and his work in ICT and I told him about my background. At the end of meeting, he gave me his business card and asked me to send him some of my work. He said he would be delighted to meet up again to talk about possible research work together. I said I appreciated his time for the meeting and promised to be in contact with him. In return, he promised to send me some of his research works before we met again. A few days after that meeting, when I was in Shenzhen, I sent him some of my work, however, I received no reply to my email. After that, I sent him many emails and SMS messages, which were all unanswered. I could not understand what could have gone wrong.

In the above narrative like many other similar experiences, the most obvious problem was 'face-threat.' Analysing the meeting, I identified three possible reasons for the failure in creating trust relations. They can be listed as:

1. He did not feel confident with English writing and he was concerned about 'face-threat' by asking the student or someone else help him with his written English.

2. As a stranger in China, I had no particular 'face' value, thus, he was not obligated to reply to my calls. Although I had sent my reference from my supervisor, Professor Somekh, in which she clearly stated her support for any shared activity between me, and any higher educational institution in China.
3. a)- Drawing on my later understandings of the 'face' concept, I realised that when he accepted meeting me, it was because he was obligated to his friend Professor Feng, our mutual friend. Professor Feng, had a strong 'face' value and thus he could not refuse his request. This is also part of the 'relations' obligation. To maintain his 'face,' he had to accept the request. b) - However, in the subsequent phase, it may be that I lacked enough 'face value,' thus there was little value in replying to my messages.

Perhaps 'face-threat' can be comparing with 'spoilt-identity' that Erving Goffman discussed in the theory of 'stigma.' He argues that a stigma is an attribute, behaviour, or reputation, which is socially discrediting in a particular way. She describes that stigma disqualifies the stigmatised individual from full social acceptance or in other words, spoils normal identity (Goffman E., 1963). In that sense, the process of losing 'face,' or 'face-threat,' make a person stigmatised and the possibility it involves 'face-threat,' must be calculated.

7.4 (仁, ren)

To understand the role of Confucianism in analysing 'face,' 'relations' and the problems framework, it is important to explore some elements of Confucius teaching. Elements such as (仁, ren), embedded in Chinese culture for over two thousand years, can contribute to the drawn out educational dimension of dispositifs.

Chinese characters are built-up from radicals, or a mixture of different characters, which together form a new character, meaning, and pronunciation. In the former type, often one of components conveys the meaning, while the other implies pronunciation. 仁, similarly consists of two characters, 人 (ren)-

which is written slightly different, and 二 (er). The first means one person and the further means two. To Chinese, an individual is incomplete and their existence is of an individual outside a society considered immoral and unjustified (Zinzius, 2004b). To Confucius, human (仁, ren) is someone who influences others toward ethical actions with the example of his excellence. Although 仁 originally, in pre-Confucius time, meant handsomeness, but Confucius expanded the meaning of the word and linked it to humanity and a person's action rather than the handsomeness. 仁 can be considered as someone who should say nothing improper, hear nothing improper, see nothing improper, and do nothing improper. Confucius related 仁 to the order of heaven 天 (tian) and offered the concept of 仁 as humans were more important than other creatures (Do-Dinh, 1969). This definition of 仁 is not too far removed from the 'face' concept. In other words, 仁 is someone having adequate 'face' value and in constant maintenance of it in his relation with others. Hence, to Confucius, being such a person does not require rank or high social status, or even a good appearance, rather it is dependent on the model of the family and hierarchy of relations. As a result, 仁, 'face,' and hierarchical relations, are in harmony, and the social order would be ideal.

During the early weeks that my wife joined me in Siyang, from time-to-time, we were invited to various dinner gatherings with school teachers and managers. My wife was teaching in the same school, so usually, both of us were invited. The dinner invitations were usually on a regular basis, about four or five times a month. Although she was very flexible with the type of foods, sometimes very unfamiliar, such as, heads, legs, etc., and the level of hygiene of some places, there were times that she did not feel prepared for such flexibility. From other hand, the dinner invitations usually came by a phone call with only few hours' notice. At the beginning, my wife needed longer notice for being prepared mentally for a dinner party. One day, our manager called us to learn where we were. When he

realised that we were not far from him, he asked us to go and join them in a coffee shop. By that time, we did not know who the other people were. We went to that coffee shop within a short time and found him accompanying the head of the school and a few other headmasters, playing cards. They welcomed us and asked us to join them. The head of the school asked our manager to tell us we would go for dinner after they finished their game, however, my wife, who was not expecting such a short notice protested the idea with whispering:

'Tell them that our son is going to call us from England and we can't join them for dinner.'

I did so, however, after leaving the coffee shop, I told my wife about my worry for refusing the dinner invitation. She was a little bit confused and complained that people cannot expect us to always be prepared without giving a reasonable time in advance.

The result of refusing that dinner invitation was to be ignored for four months. There were no dinner invitations and no telephone calls.

After four months, when the head of the school sent a dinner invitation message through our manager, without any hesitation we said; 'Of course we will come.'

Reflecting on the above narrative, in front of other headmasters, I should not refuse the head of the school's invitation, which cost him, a 'face lost.' That was my responsibility to know about Chinese culture and the problems with dinner invitations and 'face.'

There were many occasions that I failed to adhere to the situation concerning 'face' and 'relations' appropriately. Those mistakes contributed to my learning of the role of 'face' in creating harmony between hierarchy and relations.

In another narrative, I experienced more problems with running weekly

teaching sessions for teachers.

When in a School in Siyang, I was asked to run weekly sessions for English teachers. Knowing about my research and my background as an educator, they were looking for an opportunity to encourage and improve English teachers oral English, as well as, to build up their knowledge about England and their formal education. To me, it was an opportunity to expand my research knowledge in this small town. We used a classroom for the weekly sessions with about 20 English teachers, three managers, and the head of the English language department. The seating plan (in hierarchy order), reminded me TV shows where officials are invited. The head of the department was sitting in the middle of the first row, and next to her, her managers (officially or unofficially), and the teachers behind them. To avoid turning it into a lecture, and to make a relaxed atmosphere, I used a mixture of talk, videos, and presentations. After three sessions, I found I was talking all the time. Despite trying hard to get them engaged in a conversation, there was no response, except from the managers. With my experiences of 'face' (面子, mianzi), I could understand the reasons for their silence, but I was unsure about how to break it. After some sessions of watching video clips, I asked them to move the seats from a traditional classroom format to a large circle so that we could chat about the film. They accepted, and we made a little circle with desks, where everyone could see each other. I started with;

'I don't know many of you yet. How about we introduce ourselves with saying our name, teaching classes, and hobbies.'

I managed to break the ice, or mianzi. After introducing themselves, I asked them questions in relation to the movie, and I won their engagement. With a feeling of achievement, I

worked hard to plan the next session even better, however, I was too busy to see that the head of the department and the managers were not happy and that there was coldness in their conversations after that session. The morning of the next session, I was on my way to the school when one of the teachers called me;

'Hello Amir. You don't need to come today; the teachers are having a meeting.'

Moreover, the session after that one was cancelled too. I was not sure if I had done something wrong or it just a coincident. I didn't want to give up, and also I was very curious to learn if I made any mistake, Through the messaging system that I used to send them messages regarding the topic of next sessions, I sent them a message about a listening activity for the next session;

'(...) we will watch the Ground Hog Day movie, as it has repetitive conversations throughout the film, as well as, contains many idioms. You may find the story interesting. The attached is the transcript of conversations only for the film. It may help you to have a look at it before the next session.'

The next session, everyone attended and we watched the movie. This time I did not change the sitting layout. From time-to-time, I stopped the film and explained the idioms, and some cultural points unfamiliar to them or the technical words used in the film. Each session was only forty minutes. At the end of that session, I gave them the website address to watch the rest of it at home, which would prepare them for discussion of the movie during the next session.

At the beginning of the next session, I asked them if they watched the movie at home, however, no one answered except the head of the department, who confirmed that she watched it and found it very interesting. I asked further questions about

the movie, no one spoke, not even one word. I had to play the movie from where we stopped in last session and just let them to watch.

The next day, a few of teachers separately came to me and told me they had watched the full movie and enjoyed it. They commented about different parts of it and wanted to discuss it further.

A year later, when I had been asked to run monthly sessions for primary schools English teachers by the education department of Siyang, I managed to solve the problem in another way. If I could not change the hierarchical relations there, I can isolate them. To accept the proposal, I made a condition that there should be only teachers taking part in those sessions. In addition, I planned all feedback and engagements anonymously, which with considering a great number of participants (about 200), was not a difficult task.

Nevertheless, it was not a good idea in general, as I was seen as a revolutionist collecting a group of people to break traditions.

With the first session in the school, it was not difficult to see that teachers were not willing to speak English as they could lose their 'face' with the 'face threat' I have had created. There were some features of the situation, which I am going to expand.

1. Siyang was a very small town by Chinese standards. Despite the one million population, it was closed to the outside world with no train station, no airport, no cinema, not even a McDonalds. Most of the teachers were from a countryside background (see introduction chapter).
2. They were teaching in primary and middle schools for years. Consequently, there were not enough margins to improve their spoken language beyond the national curriculum.
3. A group of teachers, each having different strengths in English, and having different positions within the hierarchy, create conditions for 'face threat.' Especially in front of their manager, their competence in

understanding and speaking English, could be under question.

Interestingly, their managers did not encourage them or push them to be engaged in any part of the activities. Back to the earlier discussion, using Zinzius, B. (2004a) argument one should not take someones 'face' or cause others to lose 'face.' Even managers would not put any of the employees under a 'face threat.' That was why they were not forced to engage in the session.

However, when I forced them with asking them to sit in a circle, I broke the harmony between 'face' and 'relations.' Here by, harmony, I mean, the way that 'relations' and 'face' come into play and one satisfies (or completes) the other. None of them wanted to be witness to 'face lost' of others by sitting in a circle and be engaged in conversations that they may not be able to perform well. In addition, the created sitting plan by me, was ignoring the hierarchical relations and assuming that everyone is the same, for the sake of that discussion, during that session. In other words, the managers' and the head of the department's hierarchy status was violated by treating all the same, regardless of their role and/or status. Also, although it might be important to give myself and others 'face,' it was important to maintain attention to the delicate hierarchical structure. It would be wrong to treat one's subordinate as one treats one's superior (Zinzius, 2004a).

Unlike the Western version of relations, it was in that school that held what I have learned to see as representing traditional views. Although my experiences were not much different in Zhouzhou and Shenzhen, but maybe, in other more Western influenced settings, things are changing or more complicated in other ways.

There is no such a thing as a purely business relationship anywhere, but the question is the extent of such a relationship and its influence over the law. It is rather a long process of blended formal, as well as, personal relations. Lasting such relations can be built over time, however, for Microsoft, it took about 15 years to break through, and only with help of Microsoft Research Asia, originally envisioned in 1991. It has proven to be an extremely effective means of mending broken fences and building 'guanxi' (Buderi & Huang, 2006).

Bill Gates' first visit to China was very short and was on March 21, 1994,

when he was 39. As *Science Daily* described, he met President Jiang Zemin and the meeting was short. Jiang Zemin talked to Bill Gates regarding Chinese civilisation and mentioned that Bill Gates should try to understand Chinese language and culture in order to collaborate more (Buderi & Huang, 2006), however, this was not the full story. What his first visit described as, by members of his company's Microsoft Research Asia was;

The head of the Microsoft China business office, Jia-Bin Duh, went to the airport to pick up Gates. He was expecting a man in a suit, but Bill only had a backpack: no luggage. He had a computer in the pack, and he looked just like a student, a computer-science student. When asked if that was all he had, Bill said, 'Yeah, let's go.'

The next day, Bill went to meet the president, Jiang Zemin. He wore jeans again. It too was a short visit. A Jiang spokesperson later told the press the Chinese leader had mentioned that Bill should learn more about Chinese culture. That was a polite way of saying the president was insulted (Buderi & Huang 2006:2).

Microsoft lost about a decade and millions of dollars to learn how to do business in China.

Bill Gates second visit to China took place on September 18, 1995. He did not tell any media about his visit. He was accompanied with ten people, including his wife and his father, and stayed for a week instead of short visit. In his meeting with the president of China, Jiang Zemin asked Gates where he would visit this time. Gates answered, the west part of China, including Xian, the Three Gorges, and the Yangtze River (Buderi & Huang, 2006).

Considering 'face' as an agent governing personal quality for engagement in 'relations network,' then, for the 'face' to play its role as creating harmony between 'relations' and 'hierarchy,' personal engagement becomes crucial. I had to go back and forth many times to put the pieces of

the multi-dimensional puzzle together. During fieldwork, finally, I gained participant trust, but only after I added a touch of personal relations, and when I overlapped the personal relation with the professional work. By that time, I understood this in a way that, because the participant was not paid, did not have to help with my thesis, that something else must inspire them, such as friendship. However, that was not entirely correct, as for building a trust and a mutual benefit 'relations' network, there was a need for a portion of personal relations too, as the Bill Gates story, with his meeting with the president for doing business in China. Personal relations is necessary for this traditional system of network, a man, or better to say, a gentleman (Confucius description of 仁), is described by certain characteristics which one only knows about after moving the relations into a personal space.

Here, I tried to explore the role that 仁 (ren) has in the dispositif model. 仁 is the human who must not say anything improper, hear anything improper, and do nothing improper. Hence, this human, to Confucius, was someone regardless of his hierarchy status, or wealth. It could be anyone, or to say, everyone. In other words, he must use any available dispositifs to him in order to develop a good harmony ('face') with the hierarchical order of the society ('relations'). In fact, 仁 (ren), is the specific relations between human actions to various dispositifs, which, all together, construct the Chinese way of employing 'face' and 'relations' dispositifs in their life.

Agamben (2009) mentioned a theological concept as *oikonomia*, a Greek term used between the second and sixth centuries C.E. by Church. In Greek, *oikonomia* referred to the administration of the *oikos* (the home) and, mainly meant the management. However, by that time, fathers of the church, used this term to explain the threefold nature of the divine figure (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). Agamben explains, the ways that fathers of the church, by using this term managed to explain that although God as a creator is one, but as the management and administration of his home, his life, and the world he created, is rather, triple. Later Agamben used this theological term to explain the relationships between humans and dispositifs.

What is common to all these terms, is they refer back to this oikonomia, that is, to a set of practices, bodies of knowledge, measures, and institutions, that aim to manage, govern, control, and orient - in a way that purports to be useful – the behaviour, gesture, and thoughts of human beings.
(Agamben et al. 2009:12)

To explore the role of 仁 (ren) to create harmony between 'face,' and 'relations,' I need to recall a previously mentioned discussion. As Agamben took the definition of dispositif further beyond Foucauldian dispositifs, he stated there are two large and massive classes. One is the living being, or substances, and the other dispositifs, that living beings are increasingly captured. On one side, the ontology of creatures, and on the other side, the oikonomia of dispositifs, that seek to govern and guide them toward the good. However, between those two classes, there is a third class, subjects. He called that class subject, as it is result of relations between living beings and dispositifs. In that sense, anyone, as a substance, can be the place of multiple processes of subjectification. Use of 'relations,' mobile phones, and Internet, are all a subjectification process on a human substance (Agamben et al., 2009). The definition of oikonomia and the third class, led me to review the 'relations' dispositif in Chinese culture, and subjectification process of Chinese - human substances. That is to say, 'relations' dispositifs captured behaviour, gesture, control, model, opinion, and discourses of people. Perhaps 仁 plays the role of oikonomia in the introduced model of dispositifs (Chapter two) for 'face' and 'relations.' The way 仁 defines people's behaviour and action in relation to dispositifs such as 'food,' 'gift,' or 'language,' which governs and guides people toward the good. Consequently, each dispositif will act as power on people. Foucault's (1982) definition for power is: 'Power is action on others' action.' However, these are not the only 'power' dispositifs exercised on people. Through the fieldwork, I have recorded other types of powers in people's lives, such as, powers of associations and powers of protection. Power dispositifs, either exercised on others action by another person, or a dispositif, has a

capacity to create, reshape, and control others. It is a way to manufacture consent and obedience.

The aesthetic of seeing the world and its themes has been discussed through this chapter as a resource for exploring the relations sphere. Questions of how the legitimate practices of the multitude are to be managed was raised from exploring the fieldwork narratives. If legitimacy resides with people, then there needs to be dispositifs by which to manage this. Then, Agamben's notion of 'oikonomia,' as 'managing the household,' was introduced as such a dispositif. However, this management involves the ways that power operates in our societies to manufacture consents and ways of seeing. This will lead to the question of how power and elites deploy dispositifs to manufacture consents.

8 'Oikonomia': Management and administration of 'household'

Here in this chapter, I use Agamben's use of the term *oikonomia*, 'management and administration of household,' as the key element for me as a researcher that I need to come to understand, in terms of managing my life in relation to the expectations of my colleagues and friends in the communities. Certainly, this requires knowing about the power relations and the forms for the manufacture of consent and obedience. Powers may organise differently in different cultures, but still it is power and involved with the reshaping of ways of seeing and acting. Only by knowing and understanding the way power operates in China, is it possible for me to 'manage and administrate my household,' that is, manage myself and deal with issues in everyday life. Certainly, my Chinese friends and informants may be familiar with the types of powers in their communities, but not the structure of power in Western societies. Similarly, as a researcher coming to understand my Chinese colleagues and informants, it is crucial to know how to manage my life by knowing powers that operate in their life. The ways that elites and markets in Western societies, such as in the field of technology, involved in manufacturing consents and manipulating the norms, do not necessarily operate in the same way in China. In a similar account, the way that relations networks operate in China, may not be able to function in Western societies. In addition to traditional power operating in China, there is an emerging global power which is as important as the first one. Irresistible demands for having an iPhone, swarms of people for buying expensive women's handbags, operating of tobacco companies in China, and their advertising billboards, increasingly populating credit cards and credit purchases, are examples of operating global power hand-in-hand with traditional ones in China. While for Chinese, having an iPhone or Louis Vuitton (LV), is considered as a way to get into powerful branches of relations networks, global elites enjoy expanding their market and their power. Therefore, to 'manage and administrate household' in terms of

understanding my Chinese friends, and building trust relations, I needed to learn the ways that their way of seeing and acting is manipulated by both global and traditional local powers operating in their society.

In one of my research trips to the Hunan province of China, I was desperate to make some amendments to a text document written in MS Word (a Microsoft office application) and email it to my supervisor in Manchester. My laptop was infected by virus when it was connected to the hotel network in Shenzhen and was out of operation. All available computers in Internet bars had no Microsoft office installed and to increase security they did not contain Java to run my online shared documents in 'Google Docs.'

I called Mr. Wu, who always helped me with this sort of trouble. Mr. Wu was a calligraphy teacher and was dealing with the use of ICT for various applications in Zhuzhou's Teacher College. He was one of the key informants during my fieldwork. When he saw me so desperate, he suggested to me, to go to his office and use his computer, and I did so. Their computers were installed with a Chinese version of Windows and Microsoft Office. I had to rely on his help to use his computer for my task, however, after amending the document, I found there was even a greater problem with sending the document using my email account. My online Web mail was blocked. I decided to use Mr. Wu's email account, which was hosted in China, however, by that time, I found another barrier in sending the document. The Manchester Metropolitan domain name (mmu.ac.uk) was blocked too and he could not send any email to that destination! Finally, I managed to send the amended document to my supervisor in MMU after 5 hours of

dedication, hard work, stress and inconvenience.

The narrative describes the tension I faced during my fieldwork. Although there were a few different aspects of problems with using technology in China, my intention in this chapter, is to explore a specific aspect of the above narrative, which is 'management of my research.' When I came to try to solve my technology problems during the fieldwork, I confronted the wider social and cultural dispositifs through which communities and organisations are managed, or policed. That is, the 'power relations' were operating in a different and invisible layer of social life. To Foucault, power is a mode of action upon actions. Power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus, reconstituted above society, and a society without power relations can be an abstract. (Foucault, 1982:791)

In previous chapters I introduced the theme of power in various sections, including power of dispositifs, such as, relations, 'face,' or power of elites in highjacking dispositifs from open (free to use and belong to public), to manufacturing consent. While the source of power in different societies may be different, the challenge for me and my Chinese friends was the same, to administrate our lives in relation with 'others.' The impact of highjacking dispositifs in order to control every aspect of a free being (human) raises many questions, which is not the concern of this chapter.

In the first part of this chapter, I will look at the history and differences between the structure of power in China and the West. Then, learning from experiences, looking at various forms of power involved in the relations spheres and the ways it shapes social life.

In the second part of this chapter, I use technology as an example to explore the ways that powers use various dispositifs to accelerate the process of subjectification and in different directions. The process is not different from the one that Agamben discusses under the term of 'oikonomia' (management and administration of household). Therefore, I look at the management of household or administration of consents and social norms by exploring the ways everyday life is administrated/managed.

In relation to 'oikonomia,' Agamben believes that the process of subjectification can be accelerated and even redirected towards a different 'good.' Such acceleration is managed and exercised by various powers. In a similar way, Foucault believed, that the exercise of power is a way to modifying 'others' action;

The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Which is to say, of course, that something called power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist. Power exists only when it is put into action, even if, of course, it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures.
(Foucault, 1982:788)

8.1 Power relations

One of the key terms in managing my research and building a research dispositif, was dealing with relations networks, or power relations. The fieldwork narratives, such as, stepping into fieldwork (chapter five 5), meeting with Dr. Wang Li (chapter seven), all were difficulties and issues related to power relations. However, this was not about traditional relations in China, rather it was about meeting traditional powers with emerging global powers with all their contradictions that cannot be fully explored in this thesis.

Here I want to explore the relations between the different structures of power and understanding 'others,' especially when it comes to understand my Chinese friends and research informants. For learning about power dispositifs in China and its differences from power dispositifs elsewhere, it would be helpful to explore the history of power in China.

Wang, Q. (2006) argues that due to having a vast territory and abundant resources, China had unique conditions for sustainable development of agriculture. The original model of Chinese civilisation, which is the trinity of agricultural farming, annexation, and fusion, is different from that of the West that effected the formation of state and power differently in China.

The state formed in this way, was not, and should not, be the Western-style state based on private ownership and representing different interests, but was, and should only be, the state that was constituted on the basis of the common ownership of consanguineous and quasi-consanguineous groups, in which family and nation shared a similar structure. The function of state was naturally not to protect and develop individual private ownership, but to protect and develop common ownership of consanguineous and quasi-consanguineous groups, in which political power and production resources (land) are commonly owned and shared according to the ranking ethics. (Wang and Wang, 2006:506–507)

Therefore, the function of the state in China and the structure of power were different from the one in the West, especially in Europe. To Wang, Q. (2006), in old Chinese societies, there was no difference between the structure of imperial power and clan or family power. In fact, clan power was the foundation of imperial power. Although the small farmer family was 'the basic cell' of society in the distribution of land and taxation and compulsory services, it was not the basic organisation in Chinese society. The basic organisation of Chinese society was the clan, where the individuals and family were merged and lost their individual identity into a clan. Any basic relations of power, such as, husband-wife, or father-son, had no role in clan relationships. So, managing the family (qijia, 齐家), is in fact, managing the clan (qizu, 齐族). Chinese society consisted of three levels of powers; imperial power, gentry, and clan powers, in a pyramid structure of a patriarchal autocracy. Wang, Q. (2006)

Bing believes that the state in China and the state in Western societies were different, in which family and state shared a similar structure of power. He also noted that, *Analysis reveals that the king is the revered one in society; and the ancestor, the revered one in the family.* (Wang and Wang, 2006:509)

Power also, is reflected in Confucianism, as a resource and engine for relations networks in China, which is rooted in Confucius education. According to Qian Mu, the traditional Chinese government was in fact, a 'government of the scholarly elite, and they all received Confucius education and abided by the Confucius principal in governing a nation. Such education in selecting government continued until the beginning of the twentieth century, which was officially retired, however, unofficially, the Confucius education is still the dynamic of Chinese culture.

Perhaps the vehicle that carried the traditional form of power to today – in sense of managing household – is the relations network. Foucault mentioned, 'Power relations are rooted in the system of social networks' (Foucault, 1982:793). As it has been discussed in chapter seven, there are differences between relations networks in Western countries and the ones in China, not only now, but also in ancient times.

The Western state is maintained by contract, just like China is maintained by ethics and morals. With this understanding, we should also understand that the Western-style autonomy in China did not exist before modern times. Or we may say, Chinese-style village rule and Western-style autonomy are two totally different concepts. (Wang and Wang, 2006:514)

Agamben discusses managing the household in light of *oikonomia*, in relation to Christianity. In this sense, there are differences between managing the household in China, and that in the West, was based mainly on ancient Romans and the church. In China, it is called *qijia*, 'managing family,' or in its ancient form, 'qizu,' meaning 'managing clan.' (Wang and Wang, 2006:509).

From my experiences, which are reflected in the narratives of this paper, the ties between relations networks and certain types of powers were visible. One could be 'power of associations' by individuals within a relation networks. When Qing Tang tried to build a relation with Dr. Li (see Annex A, Narrative 26), he was consciously aware of the value of such an addition to his connections. Also, when Mrs. Leung tried her best to demonstrate her ability in managing local government related meetings (my meetings arranged by local government), or her interest in collecting business cards, she was interested in power of associations.

Another form of power in the relations network was 'power for protection,' protection against uncertainty of the future. Where relations spheres is above the contract and law. Without access to such power, individual's lives may not be easy to manage.

In a paper entitled 'The subject and power,' Foucault, M. (1982) argued that to understand what 'power relations' are about, we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations. Such resistance or anti-authority struggles that are not specific to a certain country or political system, revolve around the question; Who are we? The objective of these struggles is not to attack an institution of power, rather a form of a power, applies itself to immediate everyday life, which categorise the individual, attack him or his identity, and make them subjects that are subject to someone else's control and dependency.

As much as power in relations network do not belong to any individual and more, it is in its collective form, its exercises on individuals and their identity. While in less developed areas in China, places like Siyang, there is minimum resistance against such power. In larger cities, and between the new generations, there is a growing struggle. It is not difficult to see that this growth is in line with fast growing individualistic life structure during the recent years.

Foucault, M. (1982) believed that the modern Western state has integrated in a new political shape and old power technique, which originated

in Christian institutions (pastoral power), however, around the eighteenth century, a new organisation of individualising pastoral power took place.

I don't think we should consider the modern state as an entity which was developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence, but on the contrary, as a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form and submitted to a set of very specific pattern.

In a way, we can see the state as a modern matrix of individualisation or a new form of pastoral power. (Foucault, 1982:783)

Foucault's argument also seemed valid for the structure of power in modern times in China. On one hand, there is the inherited traditional type of power, which is operating within and by relations networks, and from the other, the new to China, global, individualistic power, challenging to take over (Foucault, 1982:784). The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between individuals or collectively, but rather, it is a way in which certain actions modify others. In this sense, to my understanding, there is a duality of subjectification in Chinese society in result of the exercising of two different types of powers.

8.2 Manufacturing obedience and consent

Part of managing my research and creating my research dispositifs, was an awareness of the dispositifs used for manufacturing consent, how my research dispositifs were subject to power, to what extent I was able to exercise my own power as a member of the community, and as a researcher in the community. How to understand the ways of seeing and behaviour of others are shaped and re-shaped by the influence of the 'power' dispositifs.

In light of the narrative at the beginning of this chapter, my focus is not

the problem with technology, instead, to use technology as an example to study the way that power (or global power) is using public dispositifs to control people around the globe. The power exercised only on free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. That means, individuals or collective subjects, are faced with various possibilities in which there are several ways of behaving, and acting (Foucault, 1982:790). Then, various dispositifs, which are free and available to use, are subjected to power by for example, elites to prevent their free use by people. The way people are captured and subjected by those dispositifs influences how their actions are modified and consents are manufactured. This was something well known by the early pioneers of the public relations industry such as Lippmann, W. (1922) who coined the term the 'manufacture of consent'.

Recalling Agamben's definition of dispositifs, '*dispositifs are not a mere accident. Rather they are rooted in the process of humanisation, what made humans separate from animals.*' The process divided him/her from his/her action, similar to oikonomia, which separate God as a being from his action in ancient Greek terms.

This division separates the living being from itself and from its immediate relationship with its environment – that is, with Jakob von Uexkull and then Heidegger name the circle of receptors-disinhibitors. The break or interruption of this relationship produces in living beings both boredom – that is, the capacity to suspend this immediate relationship with their dis-inhibitors – and the Open, which is the possibility of knowing being as such, by constructing a world. But, along with these possibilities, we must also immediately consider the dispositifs that crowd the Open with instruments, objects, gadgets, odds and ends, and various technologies. Through these dispositifs, man attempts to nullify the animalistic behaviours that are now separated from him, and to enjoy the Open as such, to enjoy being insofar as it is being. At the root of each dispositif lies an

all-too-human desire for happiness. The capture and subjectification of this desire in a separate sphere constitute the specific power of the dispositif. (Agamben et al., 2009:17)

This proces, both produces a new set of norms in the society, as well as to secure full control on others actions and ways of thinking. Dispositifs that crowd the open, as Agamben says, to protect him and his immediate needs, are sacred. They are not any longer considered as open to use, rather they serve elites, or states, to secure their power.

The term sacred in Roman law, are the objects that belong to God. Such objects were removed from free use by man, they cannot be traded or sold and they cannot be traded or used for the enjoyment of others. The process removes objects, including things, buildings, or humans from man's sphere, and is called sacrifice. Agamben et al. (2009:19) remarks that the dispositif that activates and regulates separation, is sacrifice through a series of minute rituals that vary from culture to culture. Thus, sacrifice always sanctions the passage of something from the profane, a Roman word for free to use by man, to sacred. He later argues that capitalism and other modern forms of power seem to generalise a push to the extreme, the processes of separation that define religion.

Here I will extend this notion of 'sacrifice' to the separations that take place between the powers that individuals employ in everyday life and the application of power to manage the distribution of the sensible, and thus, manage the ways of seeing of people. Then, any dispositif which is removed and separated from free to use, in some way, involves managing the ways of seeing.

Then, my ways of seeing and behaving was being managed, and in order to be accepted I needed to submit to and become subjectified in ways that made me visible as part of the 'household' in terms of 'face', and building and managing relations.

Today, not only public pedagogy is captured by the technology dispositif in general, and the Internet in particular, but also, schooling is not outside this

invasion. New terms and norms are introduced and learned to shape our view of the world. Google, Baidu (the Chinese search engine), is shipped with every mobile phone, with every computer, and in every education, as a centre for knowledge and a resource for translation of unknown objects. The online language translations, without any challenges, are implemented in everyday life. The problem is not only in terms of accuracy and capability of interpretation of a given text (section 7.1), but also in the way it is accepted as valid. In many occasions, while I was talking to my Chinese friends, they were searching for something in their mobile phones. Was it a search for the meaning of a word, or an understanding of a concept, or perhaps, for the accuracy of an argument? As soon as I noticed such action, which was nearly with everyone and everywhere, I had tried to expand the conversation, or explained it in different ways. However, how could I know what was the 'command' of internet regarding their relation and understanding with me? Was my intention, argument, accuracy, or trust recognised? Did Google or Baidu confirm my suitability for their 'relations network' membership?

Today, media and the internet is the biggest capturer of our desires. Perhaps there was not any time in human history before than man became weaker and defenceless to his own desires. Maybe, the internet nowadays, is used in the same way as it was at that time. Despite many attempts, Christianity may fail to dominate China as in past centuries, but elites could expand its internet religion through the country.

What about the half a window open to truth, to outside view, to capture only a small portion of sunshine, what about censorship, filtering, limitation to access the information, and false imaginations?

All the act of censorship, or control of the man into a direction different from the correct use of dispositifs, that means, their original desired function, would consider such a violation to open and be free to use, and China is not on this road alone.

Do individuals really have a determining role in choosing ways of using ICT? Aren't their choices mainly based on their cultural preferences? (Browning, 2008). There is no need to use a global word processing software, operating

systems, changing local needs or manipulating cultures. To the leading globalisation industry, it is not different from the concept that 'everyone should eat a McDonald's burger regardless of their diet! Some authors such as Akrish (1992), Feenberg (1995) and Flonagin, Florinda & Metezger (2000) argue, that a technical artefact, like computers and its software packages or even the internet, carry a DNA-like 'technical code' that causes users to act in a certain way that designers built-in for their own values, choices, and assumptions, into the thing they design. Perhaps dispositifs are the codes that can be linked together in various ways to function as a control mechanism for the 20th century neo-slavery.

9 Conclusion: What has been learnt and what are the issues that remain problematic?

My experiences of exploring the question I raised in chapter one - Can we learn about 'others' by reading a book about another culture - reveals that knowing about others involves going there and living with people, participating in their everyday activities, sharing their understanding of the world, eating their food, and sharing their problems. In short, if I want to enter the life of a community and learn or reflect the community's ways of doing things as a researcher, then ethnographic methods need to be employed.

Entering into another community is not free from difficulties and issues. I faced issues and problems in fieldwork which are difficult to solve without knowing key dispositifs operating in peoples' lives. I have found this focus on and development of the concept of the 'dispositif' applied to fieldwork practice to be a way of gaining insights and thus making an original contribution to knowledge about the process of fieldwork. Such dispositifs, although common to all societies, may be used differently in different contexts and circumstances. Consequently, it is not possible to enter another cultural group with our ways of seeing and doing things. There must be a detachment from the dispositifs that shaped our own behaviours. For this purpose, I needed a method to handle the issues and crises, including ethics, to engage in research in Chinese communities. Being with people in common places and trying to make sense of their way of doing things, I needed to use appropriate methods for face-to-face encounters. This led me to explore language as having a central role to understand those key dispositifs. Then, the appropriate methods for collecting data, including interview and observation, enabled me to gain insight into the ways of seeing. However, the process of becoming an insider, involves more than interviewing and observing. It involves 'being there' and 'acting' as an insider. There are also ethical issues with using certain methods that need to

be considered. Those ethics, relevant to Chinese communities, may not be the same as in another place and culture. For instance, a black notebook I used to record interview notes, or the lack of appropriate understanding of the value of 'face' and hierarchy, which influenced by identity, can result in failure. Then, analytical methods to draw identity boundaries, such as, polythetic and monothetic, would be appropriate.

If you want to enter into lives of 'others,' be seen like an insider, and become visible as an ordinary member of the community, there are steps to take as I discussed in the previous chapters. One of the steps is discovering the dispositifs that operate in world of 'others' and the way that dispositifs are networked together. Thus, the way they are used and the way they capture our behaviours, become different. Then, the task for the researcher, is to recognise how dispositifs are formed in an 'other' community, how power is organised differently, and how to see the key elements that constitute the aesthetic world of 'others.' What is not always visible until we enter another cultural group, is the multiple layers of our identity. Consequently, one of the common issues in this process for a researcher, is the question of identity. My 'identity-in-question' expresses me as a researcher trying to integrate myself into groups and communities I met. However, it is not easy to deal with identity-in-question in the world of others. With each identity clash, some part of their world becomes more visible. My fieldwork experiences show how difficult it is to engage with the identity-in-question and create an identity that is visible to others as an insider. As a researcher, your identity is always in question. Until that moment of being visible, it is difficult to say how they see you, or what kind of identity you are given. For some groups, my 'real' identity (as I saw it) was not important, rather, they preferred to give me a virtual identity to satisfy their own purpose and interest. With others, as I have discussed in chapter six, the question: Who is Amir, was a crucial identity question for becoming an insider.

Identity-in-question, and pattern of thinking and language, are involved in coming to understand the aesthetics of communication, and are steps for building trust relations through which one becomes visible for others as an

insider. With resources available to me at that time, and with my concept of power, I attempted to build trust relations. At first, I took a wrong step. I faced problems when I attempted to create my relations network from powerful and influential people. Then, I turned to questions of how power is organised in the world of others, however, not all elements in relations networks are visible. Drawing out (or educating) relations in Chinese communities involves exploring 仁 (ren) as an aesthetic of relations which can explain those invisible ties. As to Confucius, human (仁, ren) is someone who influences others toward ethical actions with the example of his excellence, it is playing a governing role for the harmony between related dispositifs. That is, the dispositifs such as face, gift, power, and communication, come together to form an aesthetic of relations. On some occasions, I failed to adhere to the situation concerning 'face' and 'relations' appropriately. The mistakes I made contributed to my learning of role of 'face' in creating a harmony between hierarchy and relations. This is similar to the term 'oikonomia' as a governing or managing of household. Because powers operate in different cultures in different ways, the way dispositifs are captured by elites are not necessary the same, however, power is power, and the purpose of removing various dispositifs, particularly from people's spheres (open), is not different. When these dispositifs are hijacked by power to shape behaviours, create obedience, and manage consents, the issue is raised of how the legitimate practices of the multitude are to be managed.

Thus, this thesis has discussed and contributed insights into the significance for ethnographic researchers coming to understand the key dispositifs through which members of communities come to see their worlds and legitimate their activities and manage their lives.

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Appendices

Appendix A-1

Narratives

Narrative 1:

When I was in a hotel restaurant in Guiyang city, on a balcony overhanging the lobby, I was given a seat and I ordered a beer with some light food. I suddenly realised I had to call someone as a matter of urgency. I went over to the restaurant reception desk and asked if I could use the phone. A member of the staff said something in Chinese to me. The tone used sounded a little cold, so I said, 'OK,' and that I was going down to the lobby to use the phone there, pointing towards the lobby and using sign language. The staff member became more serious and sounded a little harsh, so I thought maybe there had been a problem with my order or the payment for the food. Soon, quite a few waiters were surrounding me, speaking in Chinese with the same tone, and trying to tell me something.

I was convinced I might have done something wrong according to Chinese culture. I began to feel I was losing my temper and was puzzled as to why they could not understand a simple thing like this and why they were using this tone of conversation. Eventually, I gave my electronic translator to a member of staff to communicate with me in order to end the hassle! After reading the translated text, I felt embarrassed! It said; 'We apologise that the phone in the restaurant is one way. We are very sorry for the inconvenience.'

Narrative 2:

Twenty years ago, when I was young, we barely could feed ourselves. Our foods were very basic stuff, like those fried noodle shaped dough. We didn't have much food varieties, and not many restaurants. We used to eat at home. During recent years with improvements of transportation, there are varieties of foods from different provinces. Now we have foods like Beijing and Sichuan foods.

I asked him, 'were you inviting your guests to restaurants before?' He said that, 'not until recently, and if we had to do it occasionally, there were not so many varieties of dishes on the table.'

Narrative 3:

One morning, a few days after arriving to Zhuzhou, I had breakfast with Qing Tang while talking about various things. Then, Qing Tang stopped eating and asked me, 'Tonight we all are (the four teachers I was working with then) in Mr. Wu's house. You can join us for dinner too. Mr. Wu's mother will cook for us.' I was very happy for the invitation and accepted it immediately.

Wu was a calligraphy teacher and doing most of the administration work for the department, such as room organisations, timetables, and stationary. His mother left her husband alone at their countryside house in a small town near to Changsha in order to look after her son. Wu was given a room in the middle of a residential block behind the tennis courts of Teacher's College. Single floor accommodations of eight individual residences are sitting next to each other like terrace houses in Manchester. To get there, one should cross

the tennis court, then go through a garden, which was always full of mud because of a water tap in front of each residence. With about a 4 x 7 meter front room and a small kitchen separated with an old door, reminded me of very poor countryside houses. The front door was a rough wooden door, with a large window next to it. Inside, behind the window, there was a double bed, a small round dining table, and a very old television (TV). The room was separated by a short wooden bookcase to make a small study room for Wu at the back. The kitchen was dark and very old with the back door usually left open to the small field behind the school. October nights were a little chilly, but, I was wondering how they warmed up this place in winter with this many gaps around the doors.

These residents were not the only type of residents in Teachers college. In fact, staff residences were based on hierarchy of their employment level and qualifications. A few months later, when I went to pick Nick up, the English teacher from his residence, I noticed that he is living in a nice apartment flat on one of the university's main roads, where higher senior managers are living.

When Qing Tang and I arrived there, Tim, the computer teacher, and another, Xiao Wang, a computer teacher too, were sitting around the table and soon after, another teacher with his girlfriend arrived. Wu's mother was a mid-age woman in her late fifties. But she looked so much older. During the day, her time was spent mainly on cleaning, shopping, and dinner preparation.

The dinner was four dishes of various foods mainly fresh vegetable, red chilli's with a trace of meat in one. No need to mention that rice is always the main part of dinner in the Hunan province. Despite my resistance, Wu's mother was looking after me, continuously filling up my bowl as an important guest. This

was not the only reason for me to feel embarrassed, I was also the only one sweating because of eating hot food. I had a bunch of napkins in front of me. During dinner, we were talking about my research, teaching, and teaching conditions. Often I had to stop the conversation and with a very basic Chinese 'Bu ... Bu. Bu. Xie Xie' (No. No... Thank you) to stop Wu's mother from filling up my bowl with more food. Still, I couldn't say 'it's enough. I am full' in Chinese. Everyone was laughing at her insisting on giving me more food and my Chinese communication.

After dinner, everyone just left table one by one. I tried to help her in collecting the table items, but Wu did not let me and Qing Tang suggested I to go to the office where I could access the internet. On the way, he asked me:

J: Why you don't eat dinner in Mr Wu's house every night? It is better than eating in restaurants.

Me: No. I don't want to give anyone troubles. Don't be worried, I will be fine. I can always find reasonable food.

J: No. No. They will be very happy. Like others, you can pay 20 Yuen (£1.30) per week to her, and this can help her with daily living costs.

Although I was a little surprised, I thought the dinner had been only a colleagues gathering, rather than a paid dinner for such a low cost. I tried to hide my surprise, but at the same time I was interested in being a bit closer inside their life and to know more about them.

Me: 'Ah ... Maybe you are right, but I can pay even more. I love their food and their company'

J: No. I'm sure 20 Yuen is enough.

I didn't insist further as I thought it may imply a pity feeling on them. And also I didn't want to change the balance between the guests.

Me: Are you eating every night there?

J: No. you know I am living in my apartment and most of the times I cook by myself.

After that night, I went there nearly three to four nights per week for dinner. With initially a little, shy and feeling embarrassed of paying so little for that much trouble. However, that nightly gathering, later gained me an insider status privilege. One day before going to Wu's house, I was shopping in a supermarket, noticed a fish tank full of healthy, live fish, and decided to buy two big size fish for Wu's mother. I thought I may offend her with paying more, but certainly, I can give a gift. It was already 5 p.m., but, the weather still was a little hot, and I did not want to walk to the dinner table with a bag of fish in my hand. Therefore, I went directly to Wu's house and gave the bag of fish to his mother. By the time, I took the gift for her I did not know that taking or sending food as a gift is a very usual way of returning favour or showing the appreciation. I was not concerned of sending a right or wrong message. I guess I acted upon my understanding from other cultures.

However, at dinner, I noticed she cooked both fish for the dinner. Which seemed too much food for a usual dinner and perhaps I transferred a wrong message. I thought that probably the type of gift was not wrong but maybe it was about who gave the gift.

For the last few weeks, I was running an English corner session with a few students in Wu's office starting at 9 p.m., usually after dinner we walked to his office together. I wanted to talk to Wu and ask for his opinion and apologies for any possible misunderstanding, but, I was unsure it was something only in my mind or real. After dinner, Wen Fang walked with me toward his office as other days. Before I started to talk, to share my concern about the gift, on the darkness of the road leading

to the office building, Wen Fang took a letter from his pocket and told me I wrote some information about Chinese culture for you. I thought you might be interested to know about it. I thanked him for his help. Later, when I read the note, I was surprised, as it was more a letter than a cultural note. In that letter, Wu showed his disappointment of my gift, as he did not deserve it. He wrote:

'Thank you for your gift at first! I hope you do not buy any present for us next time, OK?'

In the rest of the letter, he gave examples of gift giving culture in China and expressed his feeling, as he knew in China, some people liked to receive a present, but he was not like them. He argued that he did not do much for me and did not deserve my gift.

Narrative 4:

- 6. Meeting with Ms. Zheng, was exciting for me. Maybe because it was my first fieldwork interview. Ms. Zheng was a middle school teacher in Shenzhen. We met when she was with a group of her colleagues during my preparatory visit to China. Since then, we were communicating through email and we were usually discussing different aspects of teaching in general. She loved teaching as a profession. I found her full of initiative for personal development.*
- 7. That day we met in a park opposite to my hotel by her suggestion. Perhaps she wanted to make it easy for me.*
- 8. At the beginning, I explained about my research intention, the subject, and the reasons of engagement in such research in China. I told her that my interest was having some general information about the education system in China and socio-cultural factors influencing teaching and*

learning.

9. *We talked about various aspects of education in China, such as number of students in a classroom, subjects, and national exams. Often, I asked questions and she replied to me with examples of her own teaching practices. When it came to students study style, she said she was trying hard to get student interaction with the lessons, but it was difficult. She blamed herself, as she might not be a good teacher. I assured her that it was not her fault. Perhaps many other factors avoid student engagement with the subjects.*
10. *When we moved the discussion to students' progress, she stated her student's progresses are not bad, but she could do better. She said: 'By some reasons, I cannot improve students' grades. I know I have to do better.' She continued, 'I'm sure with the experiences you have, I can learn many things from you to improve my skills.'*

Narrative 5:

When I had a meeting with Dr. Zheng Bo, a lecturer in Wuhan University, I tried to create an informal atmosphere. I started with a friendly conversation about our mutual friend who had introduced me to him. Then, I gave him good background information about myself and my purpose of staying in China, which seemed a reasonable start. He was very excited about my research subject and told me about his experience and understanding about socio-cultural factors shaping students' learning in China with historical and cultural references.

However, as soon as I took my black notebook out from my bag and told him I needed to take some notes because I may not be able to remember the important points he was talking about, his face changed. He became uncomfortable and was not willing to talk any longer!

I realised that I must have done something wrong. I might have turned the informal meeting to a more formal situation! Therefore, I put my notebook back in my bag and changed the conversation back to return to the relaxed atmosphere of our meeting. However, the damage was already done. In an obvious way, he was not interested in continuing with our conversation and I had to change the subject.

Narrative 6:

One day, Tong Wu, one of my informants, mentioned that in China, you do not know what people may come up with or what kind of damages they could cause to you. You have to protect yourself and not to trust others. There are many strange stories around with very damaging consequences. I agreed with her opinion and added, that this is not only in China, it exists everywhere and we have to be careful.

Narrative 7:

Bo Young was one of my informants during my fieldwork. He was a young man who has completed his normal university work in Zhuzhou's Teacher College and graduated in 2005 from sport and health coaching. Eight months before I met him, he had started his first job in a recreation centre in Shenzhen city as a health advisor. Later he became one of my most important contacts.

One day, Ms. Leung (my research helper and translator) told me that Bo Young is scared of me!

With a smile, I asked the reason and was interested to know how she came to know about that?

- *'Nothing. He was asking many strange questions about you*

- with fear, like, 'Who is Amir?' 'What is he really doing here? 'Who pays for his research?!, ' she replied.*
- *'Then how do you know he is scared of me?' I asked.*
 - *'He wanted to know if you are a British agent or something like that. He was scared he will be in trouble with helping you,' she said.*

Narrative 8:

I was born in a middle class Azeri Turkish family in Tehran, the capital of Iran on 1st February 1961. My father was the 10th Child in his family. When he was 12, after the socialist movement in Azerbaijan in 1937, the family was forced to leave their comfortable life in Azerbaijan, and my father had to live in various countries such as Iraq, Germany, Turkey, and finally settled in Zurich (Switzerland). My mother was young and a school leaver at the age of 15 in order to get married, and move to Zurich, where a year later my elder sister was born. My grandparents, who I had the joy of growing-up under their attention, were not be able to communicate in Farsi (Iranian official language). For a very understandable reason of the time, my mother did not want my sisters and me to talk in the Turkish language (the Turkish accent was not considered as a respectful accent). She had enough bitter memories of being bullied in her school for having the same accent. Consequently, I developed a semi-mixed language and perceptiveness through my childhood. During that period, Tehran was under fast Westernisation (maybe modernisation rather than Westernisation). Separated from my grandparents, at age of eight, we moved to the Christian area of Tehran.

By that time, the majority of my friends were Christians (Armenians), and I was influenced by Armenian Christian Culture, while at the same time, I learned about conflict

between traditional Islamic culture and Christianity. This period lasted until the age of 14, but its influence stays forever. After that, I was moved to a Jewish high school, and then college. In there, my time as a teenager was spent in a modern mixed Jewish school, which by that time there were only two mixed schools in Tehran. Both belonged to the Jewish community. Although this period of my life was rich in education and influenced by analysing Plato, Bertrand Russell, Marks, Angles, and Freud, but at the same time, this period of my life never allowed me have a chance to be settled in Iran because of my non-religious belief. In addition, being graduated from a Jewish high school, became an inevitable barrier to having a future in Iran. After the 1979 revolution, my parents were waiting for me to join them in Hamburg, Germany, but my attempt to get a medical excuse (I had stomach ulcer) from the national service and obtain a passport failed and I had to join the Iranian Army in early 1980 during the Iran/Iraq war. After receiving initial training, I was trained as an anti-aircraft gunner and sent to a Kurdish area, on the northern border of Iraq. Being a witness to lost lives and carrying dead bodies were most significant of this period of my life. It was the period of my political activities too and spending my time in villages with Kurdish people who were fighting for their independency. Consequently, I developed an interest in Kurdish culture and their life during the 22 months of my stay. Also, with help of my friend in Azerbaijan, through letters I learned how to read and write in Azeri, as well as, studying Turkish literature.

Six months prior to the end of my national service, based on my interest in poetry and literature, I was elected to document the army activities and missions in the area as a book. Being a volunteer in writing the documentary book, about the six months of military activities in the region freed me from

any other duties except interviews and writing for the last four months of my national service, which increased my chance in getting out alive from the war. Applying for a passport and leaving the country as soon as I had a chance was my first mission which held me another year in the country. I married in 1983, and moved to Ankara (Turkey) with my wife and started my degree course in an English language based university in 1984. To continue my higher education in England, I settled in Manchester in 1990. With developing my academic skills as a teacher, and being introduced to aspects of Chinese culture after teaching Chinese students in Manchester from 2001, I became interested in their culture. In result of a number of business trips to China on behalf of the College I was working for, I learned how little I know about the Chinese I met.

The question of 'who am I?' and the thought of cultural ambiguity occupied my mind from the very early stages of my life. Although I did not develop any Turkish accent during my childhood, I never could get away from being bullied in school because of being born into a Turkish family. Also, for the rest of life, anywhere I lived, carrying an alien accent and cultural ambiguity was the result of my multicultural background.

Narrative 9:

It did not much surprise me when I heard that Bo Young thought I was a British Agent! Like many other Chinese, perhaps one of the main reasons I encouraged him to meet me was improving his English language. When I saw him first, he came toward me and tried to communicate in very basic and broken English. Meeting him over a period and talking about various things, and at the same time, using my electronic translator was helping him to improve his spoken English. Later, I decided to offer him an English Lesson every evening and this

arrangement continued for a period of one month during my stay in Shenzhen. About six months later, he was my major contact and helped me by supporting my creation of my research network. In my next trip, I rented and shared a small apartment with him to reduce the cost of the hotel and for him to have accommodations in town.

Eventually I managed to earn a little bit of his trust, but not as much as satisfying his concern about my identity yet. On one of many occasions and one of many between serious and joke conversations, he asked me?

Bo: *Is anyone paying you for this research?*

Me: *No, I pay all myself.*

Bo: *You, rich man, how much is a ticket from Manchester to China?*

Me: *About £400-£600, around 15000 RMB.*

Bo: *For me it takes about eight months to earn this money.*

Me: *For me it is not easy either, I use my credit cards.*

Bo: *And you are not working?!*

Narrative 10:

In one of my trips to Hong Kong, I had been invited by my friend, Lu Jie (盧杰), to his flat for dinner. My Emirates flight landed in Hong Kong Airport in early morning. I was thinking, How familiar everything is here. Signs leading me to passport control, custom officers with white uniforms and white gloves, exchange office at the left corner of waiting hall, and the Chinese restaurant in the middle of arrival hall with a McDonalds next to it.

I was not sure it was because of some similarity with the

whole atmosphere to England from the colours to the signs, from peoples behaviours to the breakfast menu with white tea, or because I was here many times before. Not only with every trip to China, I buy my ticket to Hong Kong and then cross the border, but I also had to have a short visit to Hong Kong after a 30-day stay in China. I usually apply for a multiple tourist visa from the Chinese Embassy in Manchester, which is between one month to one year, but with a maximum stay of 30 days. As Shenzhen city is on the Chinese mainland, it is just a road crossing away from Hong Kong, and this never troubled me. In fact, I enjoyed every time I travelled by train to Hong Kong to a different station and spending a whole afternoon to learn about people and the town.

That morning, I thought it was too early to call Lu Jie. Taking the fast train from the airport to 'KowLung' station took about 30 minutes. There, I could leave my luggage in a locker. After a few hours walking in nearby streets, I called my friend and his happy and welcoming excited voice asked me to go to a shopping centre nearby and wait for him. Shortly after, his son met me and directed me to their flat on the 18th floor in a super luxurious apartment building complex. We passed through a huge reception hall, a large swimming pool and entertainment centre behind glass walls, an internet café and finally a five-star hotel-style lift. Surprisingly, their flat was small in comparison to the one I had visited in mainland China. Lu Jie had studied at Oxford University. Most of his family members are living in London. His wife and son are living in Manchester and he visits them once or twice a year, especially at Christmas time.

After dinner while his wife was busy with washing dishes in a 1 X 3 meter kitchen, I was talking to Lu Jie. After talking for a short while about him, I asked myself:

'As a Chinese, how do you see yourself after your country

returned back to China?’

He started: ‘There are different views about this and (...).’

I interrupted him: ‘No, no, I mean after 100 years of being under the British (...), how much do you see yourself as a Chinese? I’ve noticed that even your diet is slightly adapted to the English?’

He started to think for a short while playing with a piece of paper on the table and with a little bit of hesitation, he said, ‘I feel myself definitely 70-80 percent Chinese.’

The tone of voice and the use of words definitely showed his attempt to protect and retain his Chinese identity. Also, I felt he is not very comfortable with the subject or his further comments, but cruelly, I continued:

‘Are you happy that your country is joining China?’

‘Yes... emm ... We are the same ... We are Chinese,’ he said. Then after a short breath, he continued, ‘I remember the time that there were signs on the pubs entry (...) No Dog. No Chinese.’ He stopped and glared at the paper, as he was busy with an important reading.

I noticed that was the time to change the conversation and release him from either embarrassment. With an enthusiastic voice, I said:

‘You should come to Shenzhen while I am staying in Shenzhen. I can show you everywhere. I am pretty familiar with the whole town.’

Immediately his wife, from the kitchen said, ‘He doesn’t let us travel to the main land. He thinks it is not safe.’

‘But I am traveling there more than two years and have never faced any problem. To me it seemed very safe,’ I replied.

Lu Jie said, ‘For you maybe, but we are Chinese. The only place I travel to most of the time is Shanghai. Shanghai is

different, Shanghai is like Hong Kong.'

Then he started to talk about his projects and the ones in Shanghai. Lu Jie is an interior designer for modern and international buildings, such as, five star hotels and exhibition centres. The plans and photos were so impressive that at the beginning, I doubted they were his work!

I asked him: 'Why Shanghai, why are you not concentrating in Hong Kong?'

He replied, 'The Hong Kong market is too small for my project, I need to expand it. Shanghai is different from the whole of China, both politically and economically. Also, because I am from Hong Kong, I have an advantage and (...).' He was looking for the right word. I helped him, 'privilege?' I said. He rushed, 'Yes. Privilege.'

We talked a little while about Hong Kong and living in Hong Kong. He mentioned that he has a friend in Shanghai running a small school and maybe I would be interested to meet him.

After some time, I left them and went toward main land China.

One year later, in Manchester, Lu Jie's wife called me and asked for my advice and help in having a business address in England for Lu Jie. She said:

These days China is growing very fast and they don't see people from Hong Kong as before. In Shanghai, he wanted to introduce himself as a British Chinese to have a better face.

Narrative 11:

When I arrived to Beijing after spending 26 hours in a train in the winter of 2007, I texted her and informed her of my

arrival to Beijing. She gave me direction for her place in the university. Finally, I found her in the middle of a large hall behind a laptop on a small desk. The hall was full of other things and some people, but for some reason, my mind deleted everything else from the scene, without any record. After some short introduction about my thesis title only and our mutual friend in Manchester, I explained my experiences of teaching Chinese for some years and that I wanted to know more about the social and cultural factors in shaping their learning styles.

She immediately started to talk in a way which made me feel I'm her student.

- Ah, yes the important thing is your methodology ... Which methods ...?

I found her talking about writing a Ph.D. thesis rather than sharing any knowledge regarding Chinese study style. Despite my few attempts to change the channel of the conversation, I did not get anything more than how to write the methodology chapter.

To my understanding, perhaps she did not want to discuss the education system in China, for the reasons I discuss further in chapter three. She pretended, in an obvious way, that I was there to learn how to write my thesis.

However, the significant part of our conversation was when she asked me,

'You are not really British? Where are you from then?' Dr. Shi asked, with a strict and disappointed voice.

Although I did not introduce my ethnic background and did not think, it could be necessary. However, as I was introduced to her as someone coming from England, she was probably expecting someone more British than I am and probably used her experiences in England to identify a non-native British accent.

Dr. Shi had completed her Ph.D. in Chinese education in England the year before. She returned to Beijing holding a British Ph.D., consequently was given a job at Beijing University. Her qualification was not considered only a Ph.D., but a Western institute issued Ph.D., which in China, means it is a double qualification. Perhaps she paid a fortune for it, something that minorities in China are unable to do. In this manner, perhaps the way she saw people was not only based on what they do, but who they are.

Narrative 12:

For a long time I was looking for an opportunity to expand my experiences of relations in the workplace in Chinese society by working in China, as well as to ease my research expenses. While I was accompanying my friend and his wife to a job exhibition in Shenzhen, they found me a job opportunity to stay longer in Shenzhen. The job was offered by ZTE Company when they talked about me with the company presenter at the desk. Although initially for me it was fun and interesting, it later it turned into a question of identity.

They took me to the desk, and wanted to know about my experiences with e-learning developments and explained their need for their product-training centre, an e-learning site for overseas customers. I gave my details, we shook hands and I left.

After few months, one day when I was in Wuhan city working with teachers in Wuhan University, someone called me and referred to their interest in interviewing me as soon as possible. A week later, I was at a large conference table with an interview panel of five people communicating in fairly understandable English. At the end of the meeting and on the

way to the elevator, their leader accompanied me and showed their interest in having me on their team.

After some time, they asked me to attend a technical interview, which had an excellent outcome. I waited for them to give me a starting day, however, I did not hear from them for nearly six months. One day, I received an email giving their apology about the delay and explaining the changes in the department. A new head of department had been appointed and she wanted to meet me. Fortunately, I was planning to go to China for follow up fieldwork and could place in the schedule that meeting too.

After arriving, I was guided by the same group leader. He was very excited and happy to see me. He guided me to the head of the department office.

The new head of the department started asking me about my qualifications, experiences, and my Ph.D., however, toward the end of the interview,

- *'Your name is Amir. Are you Moslem?' she asked.*
- *'I was born into a Moslem family,' I replied.*
- *'What do you mean by I was born into a Moslem family, (...)?' She raised her voice and with a little harsh voice continued:
'Can you say I am not Christian if you are born into a Christian family?'*
- *'I see religion as personal belief,' I replied.*

She did not continue the argument and after couple of questions, said, 'I am sorry, I think you are over-qualified for this position. Thank you for attending the interview.'

Narrative 13:

Sometimes students are asking me questions, which I

don't know myself... you know what I mean, my grammar is terrible. They know more than me (...).

Narrativ 14:

'You know, Amir! Zhuzhou is not the best place in China.'

One night I decided to invite him for a drink and introduced him to my Chinese friends. Despite his negative way of seeing Zhuzhou, I thought I could encourage him to see China and the Chinese through my eyes! Although he accepted with hesitation at the beginning, by the end of night he told me,

'During one year of my stay in China, this was my best night.'

He was happy all the night, making jokes with the Chinese and was enjoying their company.

Narrative 15:

During my stay in Zhuzhou I ran an 'English Corner' with about five students from two different classes in the Teachers college. It was undertaken as voluntary work in order to know more about students' life and education. We used to get together after I finished dinner at Wen Fang's house about 9 o'clock in the evening. We talked about various subjects related to their education rather than just the English language. We talked about their lessons, how they can improve their English language as a second language, their future and sometimes about education and life in China. Mostly, it was about everything but the English language itself. One of the students was Mr. Chan's sister. Mr. Chan was a computer teacher. Because he could speak in English, even though not very fluently, it attracted my interest and I wanted him to join the research group. He accepted happily, and from time to time, we

shared ideas during the dinner at Wen Fang's house.

One afternoon, at the end of an 'English Corner' session, one of the students asked me,

Our English teacher Sam said you are not even British, is this true? Her eyes were looking at me for an answer. And probably asking, 'please say it's not true!'

Later, I found that students raised a question to him that 'Why don't we understand your accent as good as we understand Amir's?' Without any knowledge about my background and my experience of teaching Chinese students for seven years, which provided insights into their weak points in the English language, he suggested this was because I am not British; consequently, my English speaking was easier to understand. While I tried hard to hide my surprise, I said to the students,

He is right I am not a British native. I have lived the longest part of my life in England, however, I was born in Iran and have a Turkish background.'

I was worried that I might disappoint my students with the answer, but to my surprise, I saw a glance of trust in some of them. However, after that night, two of the five students were not the only people who were disappointed by my ethnic identity. Mr. Chan never showed any interest in working with me and he refused to join the dinner invitation I made on later visits to Zhuzhou.

Narrative 16:

I was in a very small town in a cold winter. Chinese students in the school puts layers of clothes on, something I was not used to. As my habit, I kept my apartment warm, however, they were reluctant to turn on the heaters at school and neither at their homes. Even sometimes, they left the doors open. Most of the time, I was frustrated and felt the whole my

body shivering. In response to 'Why don't you turn the heaters on,' they used to say, 'You must put more clothes on.' I realised that in terms of the weather, for them, there was a different understanding from inside and outside. To me, inside was a warm room, isolated from the weather conditions, noise, people, having security, and privacy, however, to them, inside concept were less physical isolations, rather it was rooted in the perspective of relations, and trust. After a month of struggling with the cold, I gave up the challenge and put more clothes on.

Narrative 17:

I think I do not understand!

In China, from time to time, I am getting agitated by misunderstanding. I cannot explain it exactly. I cannot even describe it for myself. Why is it, when I tell someone something, she/he does not understand it as what I said? At the first glance, it seemed a matter of trust, but surely, it is not. At this stage, they trust me. Instead, it seems a kind of diffusion in transferring the meaning, although I speak in easy and clear English with informants. Something similar to telling someone, 'Oh. I'm so thirsty (...) then they are telling me 'really? I know you must be hungry.'

Narrative 18:

50. My flight was to Hong Kong. My colleague Ms. Leung had arranged an official pick up from Hong Kong Airport by a black seven-seated car from the Shenzhen government office. I was not used to this luxury nor was I expecting it, however, for the sake of my research, I considered that the most powerful advantage that not many other individuals or researchers could have. I knew that the powerful link I made through my

preparatory fieldwork visits would open many doors for me and possibly eased unknown difficulties through my fieldwork.

51. Except for a few words, such as 'OK,' 'Please,' the driver was speaking all the time in Chinese, thus I had no clue as to what he was talking about. The way he was talking to me seemed to me, either to show that he was pretending that I understood him, or he broke the silence, either out of respect, or to create a welcoming atmosphere. I was thinking that perhaps he might be experiencing great pressure and stress by looking at my blank face listening to him.

52. After leaving the area that was crammed with concrete tower blocks over an uneven ground, we travelled along a long and quite bridge over the beautiful sea surrounded by miles of green mountains. When crossing the Hong Kong border we did not need to leave the car, and within seconds, we arrived at the Chinese mainland custom building. I remembered from the previous trip that all passengers had to go on foot toward the custom building and through long queues, through passport and security check. I wanted to leave the car and walk toward the passport control office, but the driver said something in Chinese, which sounded in disagreement. He drove through the way that was only for drivers. At the control kiosk, he asked for my passport and gave it through his window to the immigration officer. I entered Shenzhen without leaving the car.

I did not realise that the issue of 'power' and its impact on fieldwork and the research relationship is something that will become a key methodological question. Perhaps, at that time, I was caught up in the moment and the excitement of the new.

53. It was a warm night of 20 October. Closed windows and coolness of air condition did not let me feel the weather of Shenzhen at that time of the year. The dark was slowly taking over the busy tropical roads with the palm trees alongside.

54. *We arrived in front of a luxurious hotel Where Ms. Leung was waiting in the hotel lobby for me. Ms. Leung was my colleague in Manchester back some years ago. She was born to a family with a well academic background. Her father was a music lecturer, graduated from Oxford University. During her childhood, she trained as a pianist under harsh discipline by her father. She told me.*

55. *'When all the other children of my age were playing in the street, I had to watch them through a little window during my piano lesson's break. Since I left the university, I never touched the piano again.'*

56. *Her mother was a housewife looking after her husband and their two daughters. She never talked about their living condition during childhood, until one day when I complained that people in Shenzhen city seem to have a very materialistic approach to every aspect of life, she said,*

57. *'What do you know about Chinese people and where they are coming from? During my childhood, we could barely feed ourselves. In my parent's time, if a man wanted to marry, he had to have two things, a bike, and a job (...).'*

I began to realise that biography and getting to know the lives of people were important dimension to doing fieldwork. Otherwise, my assumption only could draw on my understanding of my own world.

58. *At the age of sixteen, she was sent to a boarding school like many other Chinese students. Shortly after that, her father separated from her and later married another woman. By the age of 18, she earned enough money from tuning and giving piano lessons to give to her mother. She bought a house with it. Her life was difficult and she had little money.*

59. *She left her hometown to go to the land of opportunity for young people, Shenzhen city in 1992. Her first job was in*

Shenzhen government office (town hall). Ms. Leung spoke very pompous, could speak both Cantonese and Mandarin. She was highly organised, punctual, demanding, and strict. She never recognised a mistake. Nor have I ever seen her make one. In 1999, she moved to England to work for a project organised by the Chinese tourism department to deal with a visit to the UK by Chinese pensioners.

60. After six years, she decided to return to China. China was not the same as it was when she left years ago. At the beginning, it even felt unfamiliar. She had to learn a new emerging style of living. In England, she was very traditional and followed traditional Japanese or Chinese fashion. However, after returning to China, she became more westernised and followed the latest Western fashions and Western look.

There must be issues of globalisation to explore which impacts self-presentation, status and identity.

61. The driver helped me with my luggage and handed it to the porter coming toward us. I thanked the driver and walked toward a long reception desk with three girls in uniform behind it.

62. As soon as Ms. Leung noticed me, she welcomed me with a very wide smile and a voice that had everyone's attention. I was surprised by her very official and loud welcome. It was as if they were waiting for a special guest.

63. 'Hello Mr Amir (...), welcome to Shenzhen (...).'

64. After exchanging some casual and polite dialogue, she mentioned that this hotel is mainly for government people and she booked a room here with the help of one of her friends in government, which had a much cheaper rate. Then we walked toward the hotel reception desk together.

65. It was a very large lobby with a marble stoned floor and very high ceiling. On my right, there was a café in Western-style and

next to it, a shop full of luxurious Chinese goods, a big globe, and some dragons made of Jade stone, carpets, etc. To my left, there were some clothing shops. The reception desk was nearly 10 meters long with three girls behind the counter standing at equal distances from each other, watching us walking toward them and giving each other smiles. It was not difficult to guess that I was the only foreigner in this hotel. Behind the reception desk on the wall, there were three round clocks showing 'Beijing', 'New York' and 'London' times. These were not correct, at least for London. The porter was carrying my luggage on a golden, red trolley similar to five star hotels everywhere. In fact, 'Jing Ming Da' hotel was only a three star hotel. However, it was very different from other three star hotels.

66. The room was beyond my expectation. A very large room on the ninth floor, with sliding windows, long curtains and a king size bed. The carpet and bedding seemed new. The room smelt very fresh. Through the window, I could see the small canal on the other side of the road, a nearby hill coloured green, and some out of reach building lost in the pollution that covered the city.

67. Ms. Leung had connections with some friends who were working in Shenzhen government offices and arranged official meetings to visit some schools based on my request. First, I wanted to know some schools and learn about the current education system in China and possibly to make initial links and trust relations.

68. From my previous trips to China, I had experienced jet lag: feeling sleepy in the middle of the day and having sleeping problems at night was expected for the first few days.

69. However, to Ms. Leung, there was nothing worse than wasting time. The following morning at eight, Ms. Leung called my room phone and with a very official voice, which was unusual, even

for her,

70. *'Good Morning, Mr Amir. I am in the lobby and waiting for you. Are you ready?'*

71. *I could not open my eyes yet, but considering her initiative to help me, and my research without any expectation for a return, pushed me out of the bed and within minutes, I was ready. However, her organised style and strict approach to my plans was making me nervous. I did not want to seem to be inadequate for my own research! I rushed to the lobby wearing a black suit and white shirt.*

72. *In fact, working with Ms. Leung reminded me of my national service in Iran. Although she had a very gentle, aristocrat voice, there was always a seriousness and strict expectation in it. She had an extremely organised and task oriented personality. For her, no excuses could explain the mistakes of others. When she asked me, 'Are you ready?' I could hear it, as you'd better be ready! In fact, I was expecting the first day of my stay in China to start with a nice Chinese breakfast after which she would ask me about my preferences about visiting schools and then she would schedule them to take place over the next few days. Perhaps walking around the city, while traveling to a school, I could get to know more about Shenzhen. However, I was wrong. She had already scheduled my visits.*

73. *'How are you today?' Before I got a chance to reply, she said, 'We are late,' and nodded in the direction of the car waiting outside the hotel and suggested that, if I am ready, I should go. The car was a black Mercedes. By the time, I got closer to the car; the driver got out and approached us. Ms. Leung, with a very sharp look, prohibited me from touching the car handle! The car door was opened by the driver and with a weak voice, he said, 'Ni Hao' (Hello). I guess I could not hide my surprise on my face from all those ceremonies. 'Thank you!' I said. We were*

sitting in the back seat. A white phone was between us. The car was very similar to the one used for political guests.

74. *Ms. Leung ended the silence after a little while and spoke in Chinese with the driver. Then she turned to me and said,*

75. *'We are going to visit a school in Fuchian first. They are waiting for us at nine. After that, we will visit another school in (...) at 11:00. We will have a lunch at 12:30, and then we go to the Shenzhen Government building to meet the education minister. He is a very busy man and cannot see us for more than 15 minutes. At 3 o'clock, we visit the third school, which is a little bit far and is in... Ah one more thing, I didn't mention anything about your Ph.D. I told them about your position in England as a senior lecturer. Once the doors have been opened for you, it will help with your research too.'*

76. *I wanted to say 'Wow, wow. Slow down. Let's talk about all of this first,' but I noticed it was completely out of the question to do so. Instead, I decided to make myself ready for the first visit and try to comprehend the situation. 'Anyway, I could meet some important people who could be good for access to fieldwork,' I thought.*

77. *When we arrived at the first school, two people were waiting at the top of the stairs in front of very wide doors. Ms. Leung asked me for the papers I was holding, as it is not good for me to hold anything. As I was expected, I waited for the driver to open the door for me and we walked toward the building. I was welcomed by the school principal, deputy principal, and two teachers, who were introduced to me around a very large dark oak meeting table. The meeting started with introducing themselves and exchanging business cards that were offered with both hands, then the head master started to give me some statistics about the school,*

78. *'Our school has over 6000 students and (...).'*

79. *At the end, to respond to their presentation, as well as my interests, I asked some questions regarding the students, teachers, and lessons. The principal, instead of directly answering my questions, asked someone to show me around.*
80. *The school had 6500 students, with six dormitory buildings, six American teachers, and each class was equipped with computers, projector, and interactive whiteboards. Walking next to each classroom, I could see through the wide windows, the extremely quiet classes with a teacher pointing on a wall size screen with a laser pen. Next, we saw the computer room, dance room, playgrounds, and the huge student dining room. At the end, we had exchanged some information about each country and further education in England. During all this time, Ms. Leung acted as my guide and translator. I should admit that her translation during my research in China was one of the best. It does not mean I understood her translation, but from the replies, I could guess that my words were translated in the closest form. Her translation was, precise and slow, with a very clear voice. To me, it sounded as if she was reading a poem. Later I learned, that her talking style was recognised as highly intellectual and represented higher classes in China.*
81. *Soon after, we arrived at the second school. A team of six people, including an American teacher, the head of English language studies, and a photographer were waiting for us in a large meeting room. It was perhaps not as big as the first one but it was luxurious. My initial feeling was that, there must be a misunderstanding, either about who I am, or why I am here. However, my later conversation with the American teacher gave me first-hand information about the school and English language curriculum. The principal of the college was, as in the first school, more interested in giving me statistics about his school and showing me around.*

82. *What I observed in both schools were spotless, perfect, and ultra-modern teaching environments, extremely professional and excellent management.*
83. *As the education minister was busy that day, Ms. Leung arranged a meeting in the afternoon with Mr. Hong, director of the 'student exchange program' for Shenzhen city. We went to a luxury hotel, which, that day, was the venue for an international conference in education. Mr. Hong gave the opening speech for the conference. We arrived when Mr. Hong's speech had started, so we went to the café at the rear of the hotel that had very comfortable red sofas. There was a 5-6 meter high glass wall at the side, with water running over the glass window. It separated the café from a garden with nicely arranged tropical plants.*
84. *I was thinking about the two meetings we had in the morning and trying to reach a conclusion about the difficulties I was experiencing in separating the formality from practicality of doing my research. Meeting China's officials, the luxury places, and my new identity as an important visitor was a little bit unexpected for me, as well as unnecessary, not because I found it uncomfortable, but maybe because I was not sure if they could contribute to developing my research dispositif.*
85. *I tried to be grateful, considering that perhaps it was easier to visit a prime minister of England than the education officials of Shenzhen. It was only two years ago when I had been invited to No. 10 for a dinner reception and a meeting with Tony Blair and his wife. I was chosen among a number of other educators in Northwest England by my institution. While in a calm and confident voice, I talked to Cherrie and Tony Blair, inside me was a feeling of excitement mixed with a bitter pleasure thinking of the achievements I had made despite the difficult life I had had. Perhaps my calm voice and the comfortable feeling*

were due to lack of the importance of having luxuries in my life. Even when I was invited to a dinner party together with the head of Panasonic and Sony co-operations six years prior to this. I was there because of my achievements, which usually results with luxury dinner receptions and meeting important people. For me all were success stories. However, in China those luxuries were not about achievements, they were about power of relations. Besides, the only support I had from England, was a letter from my supervisor for building a possible collaboration link between an educational institution in China and the one in England for the purpose of my research. Having friends, holding powerful relations in China positioned me between them, or gave me chance to meet important people.

86. While I was busy with my thoughts and calculations, Ms. Leung was nervously making calls and her voice was tense in her conversations in Chinese. Between her calls she said, 'He can't see us,' and continued to make another call, which made her face a little bit more relaxed.

87. 'His secretary agreed to meet us here. They're coming after the opening speech,' she said.

88. She transferred her stress to me. I started to feel that, that was a meeting, which must happen. That is why I am here, to meet the director of student exchange of Shenzhen city. It seemed that time had stopped. We looked at our watches and exchanged short conversations about the morning visits and the upcoming meeting.

89. Ms. Leung said, 'He is a very important person in Shenzhen's department of Education.'

90. I said, (...) 'I know. You told me this before. Do you think he is going to meet us?'

91. Ms. Leung replied, 'A few minutes ago, my friend talked to his secretary and asked them to meet us. They are above them.'

They have to accept it.'

92. *I asked, 'Who is above them? Who has to accept it?'*

93. *Ms. Leung answered, 'You know my friend's office. It is Shenzhen city government.'*

94. *I said, 'But don't be worried if they don't. You have done your best.'*

95. *She did not seem to hear me and started sending a text message.*

96. *Those days, with every opportunity, upon my questions, Ms. Leung gave me information about people working in government, their talking style, their car registration (which were usually different from others), and their appearances. People in higher positions in government had access to government cars with a driver. Others usually used a very ordinary car to avoid being tagged as subject to financial corruptions.*

97. *Ms. Leung herself was not someone influential, but had some strong relations in government. Her style and fashion was a combination of Japanese, with a touch of Western fashion, elegant and smart. One could think that she is very wealthy. At the same time, her style of communication in Chinese language and her body language was in harmony with her looks. Her accent was north Mandarin and she was very fluent in the Cantonese language. She was talking, very slow, calm, and caring, but highly authoritatively. Yet her style was not the style of a person in government, rather it was of a newly born bourgeois.*

98. *A few minutes later, a group of people in black suits came out from the rear door of the conference hall, which opened onto the rear of the café. We stood up and waited for the crowd walking toward the café. A man at his sixties with a woman dressed very elegantly in front of the crowd walked toward us.*

Ms. Leung whispered, 'They're coming.'

Narrative 19:

9. *Every night after they left me at the hotel doors, my second life – an alternative to a precursor - started. I changed and took a walk to the downtown area with its alley ways between the BBQ stands on the corners of streets, with assorted little wooden sticks of shredded beef, a little fish, a slice of squid, pieces of tofu. There were crowds of people who came from work, people were sitting on little plastic stools on the corners of roads, groups of three to five, would talk loudly, laugh, and drink large bottles of beer. The men had half-lifted their shirts to absorb the cool weather and women wore clean dresses and shiny shoes and had fake Louis Vuitton (LV) handbags. I did this despite Ms. Leung's prohibiting me from going out at night by myself. She did not feel China was safe, especially for foreigners. However, I felt even safer amongst the common people.*
10. *In one of my random city excursions, I ended up on a very narrow road in a highly populated area covered with tall apartment buildings and full of children, old people, and bikes. Due to my presence in such a hidden part of the town at that time of night, the road unexpectedly became quiet. In the darkness, there was a heavy atmosphere of staring eyes. To assess the situation, I forced myself to stop at a BBQ stand to look at the foods. A few rough-looking men were standing in front of me and inspecting my every movement with a look of seriousness on their faces. I felt I must be in the wrong place at the wrong time. My legs were not sure whether to continue to walk even deeper into the alley roads or to return along the already long distance I came from. In the quietness of the street, with a uncertain voice and in broken Chinese:*
11. *'Zhe ge. yi ge.'* (This one.., one please...), I said and pointed to

something that I guessed must be a Chicken piece opened between two wooden sticks in a shape of a flying bat.

12. *Immediately everyone started to laugh and began pointing to show me to each other while saying something in Chinese. The BBQ person kept asking me something and I could only raise my shoulders to show my inability to communicate with him in Chinese. One of the rough men kept asking me:*
13. *'Ni cong na li lai (where are you from?).' I did not understand whether it was a comment or a question. The man who was losing his patience continued with something like:*
14. *'Ting bu dong? ... Bu dong ma?'*
15. *I just replied, 'Bu dong,' as I guessed it must be something like 'Don't understand, or don't have.'*
16. *He laughed and touched my shoulder. The street returned to normal, people still stared at me holding a BBQ chicken in my hand, but were smiling. It was the most delicious spicy chicken I ever had.*

Narrative 20:

8. *I was teaching Bo Young English on a daily basis for few weeks. After some weeks working with him, I managed to awaken his memories of the English vocabulary that he had previously studied. One day while I was teaching him, I mentioned to him that I wanted to travel to his home province, Hunan. He said that he could introduce me to his teachers in Zhuzhou who could look after me on arrival. That was the moment, which I had been waiting for, for many months.*
9. *Bo Young was a Cantonese student in Zhuzhou's Teachers College for three years studying 'coaching.' Soon after completing his study, he moved to the economically booming city of Shenzhen in order to find his dream of being rich. His parents were living in the countryside near to Shenzhen. His*

first job was as a health trainer in a health centre in Shenzhen, where I met him for the first time. Being witness to his enthusiasm in learning English encouraged me to offer him a one hour teaching after finishing my swimming every day. His progress was very slow and the pronunciation of English sounds was very difficult for him. Those teaching sessions became the grounds for a long lasting friendship. We made the first trip to Zhuzhou together and he introduced me to his teachers. Then, I had a chance to ask them for their participation in my research and we arranged dates and exchanged contacts.

10. I had offered him the full cost of his trip if he wanted to be my companion on the trip to Zhuzhou. By then he had a friend from Zhuozhou, who was visiting Shenzhen at that time. I offered to pay her cost of travel too and asked Bo Young to arrange train tickets for three of us.

11. Bo Young insisted on booking a train bed for me and a seat for themselves, but I didn't want to differentiate between them and myself from the beginning. In addition, I was not prepared to sleep during my first experience of train travel to Zhuzhou. I asked him to buy the cheapest possible ticket. Certainly, not because it was beyond my budget, but I would rather see how this many people typically spent their time traveling long distances. After 12 hours sitting on a hard seat in the train from Shenzhen, we arrived at Zhuzhou on a cold and early morning of October.

Narrative 21:

12. Qing Tang and Mr. Wu were waiting for me outside the train station. We had some breakfast together and had a walk toward the college. Qing Tang explained to me the reason why he could not keep his promise to find a reasonable accommodation (flat) for the duration of my stay. He said no one wanted to rent for

such a short period. He mentioned that we could find it together now and took me to various local inns. Based on the places he took me, I had some idea about his own financial circumstances. However, the places he was suggesting had minimum facilities and levels of hygiene. They were places that even I have not had to experience in my life before! The rent difference for somewhere cleaner and safer, could be only few pounds more a day. My financial circumstances allowed me to spend a few pounds more for such luxury, but I found it difficult to pursue my preferences as I thought it could be interpreted differently and create a separation between poor anonymous Chinese teachers and me as a rich Western researcher. I was trying everything possible to reduce any spaces between us and to be closer to their living condition to understand them better. I ended up in a little dusty room on the third floor of a very busy, small road, full of local shops, cafés, and had a daily vegetable market alongside the road. There was no separate shower room, only a shower above a traditional Chinese style toilet. However, it was five minute walk to the Teachers College.

13. The room had one bed without any cover or duvet. There was a fan in the room with about half an inch of permanent dust on it. Even running the fan did not remove the dust. I had a toilet on the floor with a shower above it. The room was part of a six-room inn located on the third floor of an old building and run by a woman and her sister. The second floor was an internet bar, and I never knew what was on the ground floor. The street awoke at six in the morning and was extremely busy until midnight. I could hear the outside noise as if I was sleeping in the middle of the road. Every time after locking my room door with a skeleton key, which had no tooth, I gave the key to that woman sitting behind a little desk near her own room.

Qing Tang, at Zhuzhou's Teachers College, was an English teacher, and he was the main contact for my fieldwork in Zhuzhou. Qing Tang, together with Mr. Wu, a calligraphy teacher, helped me with my research. They promised access to classrooms, students, and teachers, however, they both knew something that I had no idea about. There was a Foreign Relations Department in every educational organization as a control, policed for any foreign access to the organization, in addition their other duties. One year later, in one of the follow-up visits during a conversation with Qing Tang, he was sure, by that time, that informing that department would not be necessary, however, Wu insisted on doing it officially and made a request formally to the Foreign Relations Department for a research permit! Eventually, the department, on condition that they could manage it by themselves, approved my research in Zhuzhou Teachers College, which is part of Hunan University. Long after starting my research, I noticed how difficult it was to obtain such permits as I failed to do so from some other universities.

Narrative 22:

- 3. I was with my Chinese colleague, Xiao Wu, on the way to a restaurant. I used to arrange most of my meetings during a lunch or dinner for three main purposes. First, it had to be outside of informants working hours. Secondly, having meetings over dinner was more common in Chinese culture. Finally, because it is an informal atmosphere, which was more relaxed for informants. She was a teacher in high school, and as usual, we had our meetings during her lunch break.*
- 4. That day we were waiting at the traffic light on our way to the restaurant, when a man was crossing the road in the opposite direction of ours. By the time he reached us, he said something*

to my colleague in Chinese. I thought he was someone who knew her, however, her face became red and upset. I realised that something really bothered her. I asked her, 'What happened?' What had he said? Initially, she insisted that it did not matter and tried to smile, but eventually she repeated the man's words, and the unpleasant innuendo, 'I bet you did a good job!'

Narrative 23:

One day I found Ben, The English teacher from London, frustrated with his lessons that morning. He said a student approached him that morning with a dictionary. She asked his opinion for the meaning of a word. He told her another word, which is more common in English. The student was not happy, and she insisted on using the same word she found in the dictionary.

Narrative 24:

SMS 1:

Early one evening, one of my female colleagues sent me an SMS message to see whether I was in Shenzhen or not. I replied, 'I arrived yesterday.' She replied to me, 'I am free tonight and can play with you.'

Narrative 25:

One day prior departing Shenzhen to Zhuzhou, I went to dinner with Bo Young. I was running late and had very little time to eat. After having a table in a restaurant, I had to go and buy something. I asked Bo Young to tell the waitress that if she

can bring food in 15 minutes, we stay, otherwise, we have to go. 'OK. OK. I understand. You go.' I came back after ten minutes and we were waiting there for another 20 minutes and still we didn't have our food. I asked Bo Young, 'Did you tell her what I said?' Bo Young became quiet for a little while, and then told me, 'Why you get angry. If you are late, this is not her problem.'

Narrative 26:

I was introduced to Dr. Wang Li by Professor Wei in Wuhan University. Dr. Wang Li had previously undertaken research on teacher and student relationships. When I called her and introduced myself, she was happy to meet me. From the telephone conversation I had with her, I realised that she may not be comfortable with a conversation in English, so I asked one of my colleagues from Zhuzhou College to join me as a translator. Dr, Wang Li was the Deputy Director of the Development department of Hunan University, which also controlled Zhuzhou College. She was very happy to meet me and share her doctoral research in Chinese classes.

I asked about her lessons and a possible observation of her classes. She was very happy and said, 'You can observe my lesson tomorrow, but it is in Chinese.' I told her that I am interested in students' interactions in the lesson and that it is alright with me.

During the conversation, I noticed translations were taking much longer than the English version of my conversation. Eventually, Dr. Wang Li was more involved in conversation with my translator than me! I noticed that their conversation was diverging from the purpose of the meeting and tried to get the control back again. By the end of the meeting, I noticed Dr. Wang Li's interest in working with me was no longer the same as at the beginning of the meeting! At the end, in response to

arranging a time for observation of her lesson, she said she would contact me and let me know.

I said goodbye to Dr. Wang, shook hands, and we left her office. Qing Tang, my translator, told me that he left his pen in Dr. Wang's office and while I was in the corridor waiting for him, he continued the conversation with Dr. Wang for another 5-10 minutes. Later, he did not talk about his last conversation with Dr. Wang.

After leaving the meeting, I felt my plans were invaded. It was clear to me that the meeting was unsuccessful because of the conversation between my translator and Dr. Wang Li, however, I did not understand the reasons behind it until long after that! That evening I was with my translator for dinner and afterwards in my 'English corner' meeting with students, I saw the translator sending several messages. With the knowledge I had about him, that was unusual for him. Inside me, something was saying that he was sending messages to Dr. Wang Li. Although I felt uncomfortable with this possibility, I could not say anything. Finally, shortly after another message alert, very calmly and without emotion in his voice he said, 'You cannot join Dr. Li's class tomorrow.' I thought he meant a problem of travel or something that I was not aware of it. 'Why?' I asked. He said, 'I don't know. She sent me a text message.'

Narrative 27:

In another example, I was introduced to a professor in Beijing University through a third party. He was involved in research about using ICT in education. There could not be a better opportunity for me to expand my background knowledge to the Chinese use of ICT in education. I had already been in the ICT field for many years with a vast amount of development in business and educational organisations, as well as, being

involved with research in my university. Our mutual friend, a professor in Beijing and Shanghai Universities, arranged a meeting with him. He also asked two of his research students to pick me up from the train station and to act as interpreters. Early in the morning, I arrived at the Beijing train station and expected to meet the two students. On my arrival, a girl was waiting for me in the Beijing Railway Station. She apologised for the absence of the other student. After a short conversation, we left the train station to go to Beijing University. In Dr. Wu's office, I was introduced by the student to him. His English was good enough to communicate with me and there were no need for an interpreter. Nevertheless, the student preferred to stay there and to listen to us. The professor sometimes engaged the student in translation to make sure of his accuracy in English. He looked very excited and asked questions about my research and background. We talked about half an hour. He showed me his research and his work in ICT and I told him about my background. At the end of meeting, he gave me his business card and asked me to send him some of my work. He said he would be delighted to meet up again to talk about possible research work together. I said I appreciated his time for the meeting and promised to be in contact with him. In return, he promised to send me some of his research works before we met again. A few days after that meeting, when I was in Shenzhen, I sent him some of my work, however, I received no reply to my email. After that, I sent him many emails and SMS messages, which were all unanswered. I could not understand what could have gone wrong.

Narrative 28:

During the early weeks that my wife joined me in Siyang, from time-to-time, we were invited to various dinner gatherings

with school teachers and managers. My wife was teaching in the same school, so usually, both of us were invited. The dinner invitations were usually on a regular basis, about four or five times a month. Although she was very flexible with the type of foods, sometimes very unfamiliar, such as, heads, legs, etc., and the level of hygiene of some places, there were times that she did not feel prepared for such flexibility. From other hand, the dinner invitations usually came by a phone call with only few hours' notice. At the beginning, my wife needed longer notice for being prepared mentally for a dinner party. One day, our manager called us to learn where we were. When he realised that we were not far from him, he asked us to go and join them in a coffee shop. By that time, we did not know who the other people were. We went to that coffee shop within a short time and found him accompanying the head of the school and a few other headmasters, playing cards. They welcomed us and asked us to join them. The head of the school asked our manager to tell us we would go for dinner after they finished their game, however, my wife, who was not expecting such a short notice protested the idea with whispering:

'Tell them that our son is going to call us from England and we can't join them for dinner.'

I did so, however, after leaving the coffee shop, I told my wife about my worry for refusing the dinner invitation. She was a little bit confused and complained that people cannot expect us to always be prepared without giving a reasonable time in advance.

The result of refusing that dinner invitation was to be ignored for four months. There were no dinner invitations and no telephone calls.

Narrative 29:

When in a School in Siyang, I was asked to run weekly sessions for English teachers. Knowing about my research and my background as an educator, they were looking for an opportunity to encourage and improve English teachers oral English, as well as, to build up their knowledge about England and their formal education. To me, it was an opportunity to expand my research knowledge in this small town. We used a classroom for the weekly sessions with about 20 English teachers, three managers, and the head of the English language department. The seating plan (in hierarchy order), reminded me TV shows where officials are invited. The head of the department was sitting in the middle of the first row, and next to her, her managers (officially or unofficially), and the teachers behind them. To avoid turning it into a lecture, and to make a relaxed atmosphere, I used a mixture of talk, videos, and presentations. After three sessions, I found I was talking all the time. Despite trying hard to get them engaged in a conversation, there was no response, except from the managers. With my experiences of 'face' (面子, mianzi), I could understand the reasons for their silence, but I was unsure about how to break it. After some sessions of watching video clips, I asked them to move the seats from a traditional classroom format to a large circle so that we could chat about the film. They accepted, and we made a little circle with desks, where everyone could see each other. I started with;

'I don't know many of you yet. How about we introduce ourselves with saying our name, teaching classes, and hobbies.'

I managed to break the ice, or mianzi. After introducing themselves, I asked them questions in relation to the movie, and I won their engagement. With a feeling of achievement, I worked hard to plan the next session even better, however, I

was too busy to see that the head of the department and the managers were not happy and that there was coldness in their conversations after that session. The morning of the next session, I was on my way to the school when one of the teachers called me;

'Hello Amir. You don't need to come today; the teachers are having a meeting.'

Moreover, the session after that one was cancelled too. I was not sure if I had done something wrong or it just a coincident. I didn't want to give up, and also I was very curious to learn if I made any mistake, Through the messaging system that I used to send them messages regarding the topic of next sessions, I sent them a message about a listening activity for the next session;

'(...) we will watch the Ground Hog Day movie, as it has repetitive conversations throughout the film, as well as, contains many idioms. You may find the story interesting. The attached is the transcript of conversations only for the film. It may help you to have a look at it before the next session.'

The next session, everyone attended and we watched the movie. This time I did not change the sitting layout. From time-to-time, I stopped the film and explained the idioms, and some cultural points unfamiliar to them or the technical words used in the film. Each session was only forty minutes. At the end of that session, I gave them the website address to watch the rest of it at home, which would prepare them for discussion of the movie during the next session.

At the beginning of the next session, I asked them if they watched the movie at home, however, no one answered except the head of the department, who confirmed that she watched it and found it very interesting. I asked further questions about the movie, no one spoke, not even one word. I had to play the

movie from where we stopped in last session and just let them to watch.

The next day, a few of teachers separately came to me and told me they had watched the full movie and enjoyed it. They commented about different parts of it and wanted to discuss it further.

Narrative 30:

In one of my research trips to the Hunan province of China, I was desperate to make some amendments to a text document written in MS Word (a Microsoft office application) and email it to my supervisor in Manchester. My laptop was infected by virus when it was connected to the hotel network in Shenzhen and was out of operation. All available computers in Internet bars had no Microsoft office installed and to increase security they did not contain Java to run my online shared documents in 'Google Docs.'

I called Mr. Wu, who always helped me with this sort of trouble. Mr. Wu was a calligraphy teacher and was dealing with the use of ICT for various applications in Zhuzhou's Teacher College. He was one of the key informants during my fieldwork. When he saw me so desperate, he suggested to me, to go to his office and use his computer, and I did so. Their computers were installed with a Chinese version of Windows and Microsoft Office. I had to rely on his help to use his computer for my task, however, after amending the document, I found there was even a greater problem with sending the document using my email account. My online Web mail was blocked. I decided to use Mr. Wu's email account, which was hosted in China, however, by that time, I found another barrier in sending the document. The Manchester Metropolitan domain name (mmu.ac.uk) was

*blocked too and he could not send any email to that destination!
Finally, I managed to send the amended document to my
supervisor in MMU after 5 hours of dedication, hard work, stress
and inconvenience.*

Appendix B-1

Names and Identities of Informants

Names and Identities of Informants:

Hong Kong / Shanghai:

Lu Jie: CK – Friend, Architect, in Hong Kong and Shanghai

Shenzhen:

Ms. Leung: Yi Jing li – Translator and facilitator in China

Bo Young: XuFu – Health and sport consultant, former student in Zhuzhou's
Teachers College

Ms. Zheng: Xiao Wu (Anne) – English / Chinese

Ben: English teacher, (Former chef in London)

Zhuzhou:

Qing Tang: Jordan – English teacher at Zouzhou College

Wen Fang: Mr. Wu – Calligraphy teacher in Zhuzhou Teachers College

Sam: Nick – English language teacher

Dr. Mei: Dr. Li – Zhuzhou University

Wuhan:

Professor Wu: Professor Weu – Professor at Wuhan University

Beijing:

Dr. Shi : Ms Ren CongCong (Beijing University)

Siyang:

Chen: Yang Hi Bo – A Civil servant in Siyang

Appendix C-1

Visited Educational Establishments

Visited Educational Establishments:

- 1- Three middle/high schools in Shenzhen
- 2- Shenzhen University
- 3- Zhuzhou Teachers College
- 4- Zhuzhou / University of Hunan
- 5- Wuhan University of Technology
- 6- Wuhan University (Police Academy and Law)
- 7- Beijing University /
- 8- Siyang primary / middle school
- 9- Lian Shui / Middle school
- 10- Shashan - private training centre

Appendix D-1

Development – Research Website

Research Website



Appendix D-1

Development – Research Website (Continued)

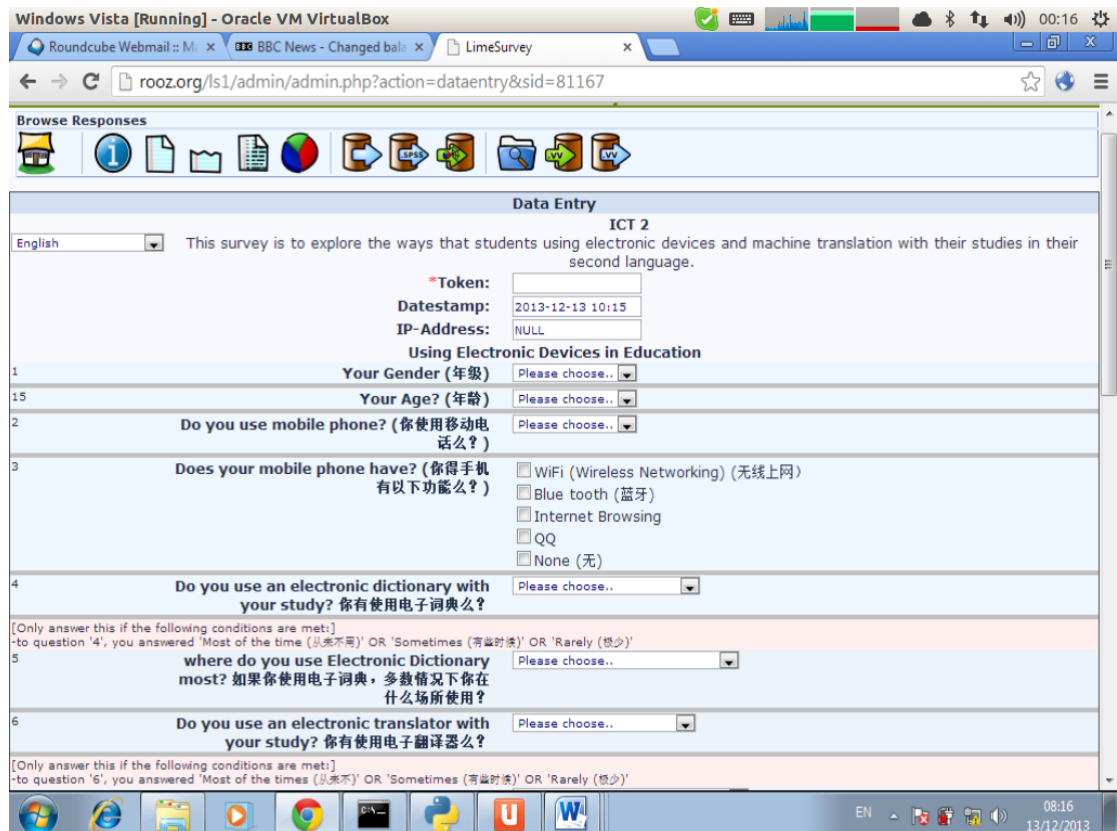
Research Website (Continued)



Appendix D-2

Development – Online Questionnaire Site

Online Questionnaire Site



Appendix D-3

Development – Development of Personal Open Portable (POP)

Development of Personal Open Portable (POP)



Note:

PUP (Portable USB Pack) project. Copyright © 2007-08 Amir Mokhtarzadeh - All rights reserved.

PUP is a free project created in 2007, having, as main objective, research and development of using portable software in education and research. The project is coordinated and directed by myself and all the information was published on www.rooz.org, and www.rooz.co.uk for free access and distribution by educators and researchers.

A short summary from the Technical and User Manual:

Some of the benefits in using POP (Portable Open Package)

- It is easy to use. Nearly same as what you do with your current ICT habits
- It comes with an extensive software packages
- You don't need to install anything in the host computer
- You can use your existing pen drive, digital camera, mobile phone or voice recorder
- All software packages you need, from Internet Browser, email, Internet Chat to Office and multimedia are available directly from POP without any installation required.
- It is free to use, and add another open source software
- Can use a native portable software or adopting a non-native one
- If you lose your device, unlike your Windows desktop computer, it will take a very short while to copy another POP from your back-up

- There is a built-in automatic back-up on exit

Appendix D-3

Development – Development of Personal Open Portable (Continued)

Development of Personal Open Portable (POP) (Continued)

- There is option to back-up part or all your work directly to a remote computer or internet host
- It is personalised to individual needs. You can customise it not only for colours and fonts (like what usually advertised!), but even for software packages and up to some extends Operating Systems.
- It is secure. You will never leave behind shadow of your work in another computer
- It works even with very old and slow computers
- You may use your Linux, mac or windows applications
- It has its own security packages, such as firewall, virus scanner and cleaner, encryption
- Your documents in your POP device can be accesses from any operating system available to you.
- You can even run most of your windows packages from Linux, or run Linux from Windows

And all are only built in a little USB device.

While in result of all of failure in access to ICT, to me the portability concept of ICT was unclear! Until only by chance I have started using range of portable version of Open Source programs such as 'Open Office' from a magazine cover disk. Then I realized the true meaning of portability and personalizing. A portable program is a piece of software that you can carry around with you on a portable device and use on any other computer. Using a USB portable launcher menu, and installed all the software I would need on move, was even more practical than carrying my laptop!!!

There are hundreds of portable software available, from office software to multimedia. Most of those software are free to download. There are also USB portable manager which it can organise/install new software for you. I have

started to collect number of portable packages and develop my own portable USB. I had my office software suit which I could maintain all my Microsoft Word documents, I had my Internet browsing software with all my favourite links within it, a password

Appendix D-3

Development – Development of Personal Open Portable (POP)

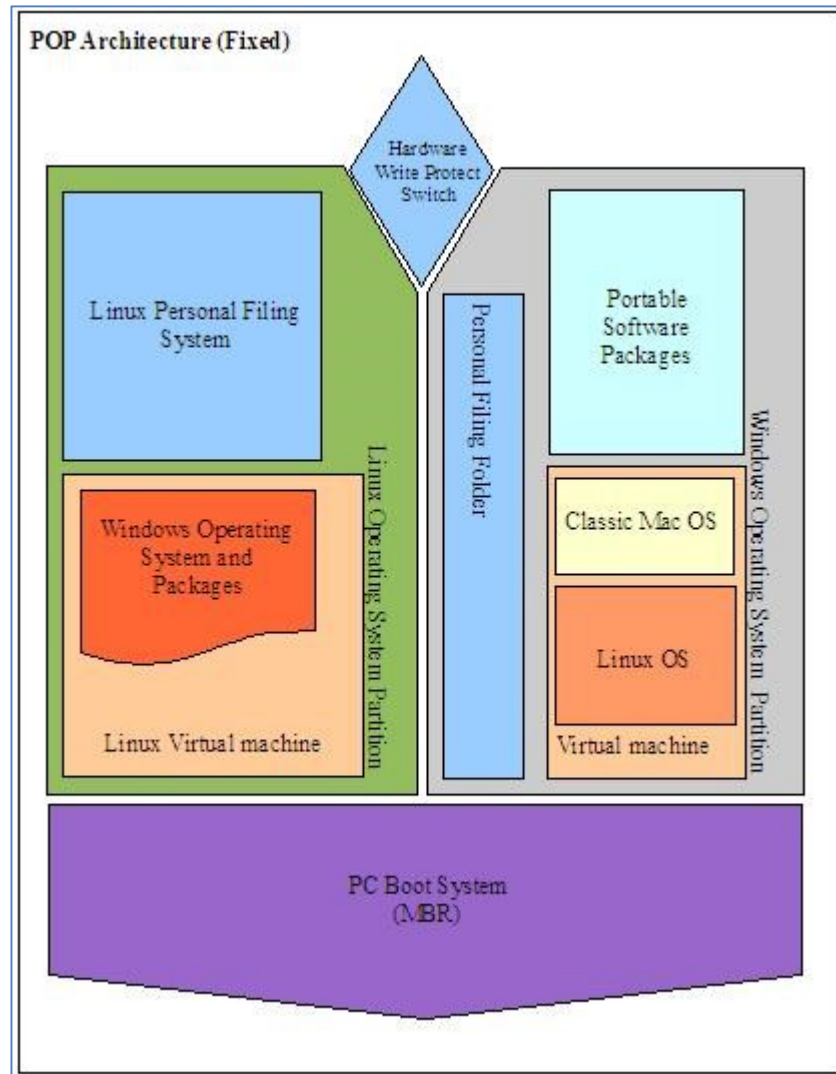
Development of Personal Open Portable (POP) (Continued)

protected and encryption software protecting my data from any unauthorised access. Even having an on-screen keyboard for computers with different language keyboards. The important was that all of my data and settings are always stored on a USB thumb drive so when I unplug the device, none of my personal data is left behind. This is mainly because I am using my own application software rather than the host computer provided one. The temporary and backup files of my documents, viewed images and videos, deleted items, Internet browser's files, histories and cookies (small piece of software saved in host computer after visiting some websites) all are stored in my Thumb Drive.

Appendix D-4

Development – POP Architecture

POP Architecture



Appendix D-5

Development – POP Operating Diagram

POP Operating Diagram

