

**Interpreting English Language and Literacy in China: EFL
Practitioner Perspectives**

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Signed: _____

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ABSTRACT

English as a foreign language has been studied as a compulsory subject by all senior high school students in China since the early 1980s. However, little research has delved into how English foreign language literacy (L2 literacy) is understood by teachers and students nor how it has been enacted in classrooms. This study aims to add to the research in this area by building an understanding of senior high school English teachers' perceptions of L2 literacy and presenting a picture of their teaching practices. This study also gave voice to students who shared their experiences and perceptions of how foreign language teaching was enacted in their classrooms.

A phenomenological case study design was utilised. Drawn from interviews and classroom observations with six English teachers as well as focus-group interviews with students in two case schools, the data provided a comprehensive perspective of current L2 literacy teaching and learning in both school contexts. The picture was enriched by an analysis of the curriculum documentation and the textbooks.

This study aimed to answer the questions regarding Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions of L2 literacy and their teaching practice. The collected data however indicated that in attempting to answer the questions it actually raised more questions that I have been unable to answer. The teacher participants' perspectives of L2 literacy differed from the prevailing views or practice on literacy and L2 literacy in western literature (e.g. Luke & Freebody, 2000; Kress, 2003; Gee, 2008; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), in spite of official curriculum documentation having some parallels with western perspectives. The traditional Chinese beliefs and practices with respect to literacy development continue to shape the teachers' perceptions and practices of English teaching and learning. Moreover, the findings of this study identified tensions between what were expected of students' L2 literacy development and what actually occurred in the classroom due to the social, cultural and historical contexts in China.

Given my background as a school EFL teacher in China and the experience of conducting academic study in Australia, this study was not only about the investigation of the teachers in case study schools but also a reflection of myself. Based on the findings of the study and my self-reflection, a number of recommendations were provided for EFL teachers, schools, policy makers as well as those who have an intention to study in a country where English is the medium of instruction and socialization.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES AND DIAGRAMS	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Reasons for the study	3
1.3 Background for the study	4
1.3.1 Change in policies	5
1.3.2 Change in technologies	6
1.4 Research methodology	7
1.5 Research questions	8
1.5 Significance of the study	9
1.6 Structure of this thesis	10
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Literacy and L2 literacy	11
2.2.1 Literacy in the 21st century	12
2.2.2 Redefining literacy	14
2.2.3 Literacy teaching and a multiliteracies approach	15
2.2.4 Implications for EFL literacy education	17
2.2.5 English literacy research in China	18
2.3 Language and culture	21
2.3.1 The relationship between language and culture	21
2.3.2 Culture and language teaching	22
2.3.3 Culture learning in EFL classrooms in China	25
2.3.4 Authentic texts	28
2.4 Curriculum and syllabus	33

2.4.1 Defining curriculum	33
2.4.2 The outcomes-based model of curriculum	35
2.4.3 Definitions of syllabus and types of syllabus	37
2.5 Conclusion	38
CHAPTER 3 ENGLISH CURRICULUM AND THE TEXTBOOKS FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL.....	39
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (NECS)....	39
3.2.1 Curriculum policy.....	39
3.2.2 Language and literacy	46
3.2.3 Cultural component in NECS	47
3.2.4 Suggestions on selection of texts in NECS.....	52
3.3 <i>New Senior English for China (NSEFC)</i>	53
3.3.1 Introduction of <i>NSEFC</i>	53
3.3.2 Linguistic aspect in <i>NSEFC</i>	54
3.3.3 Social and cultural aspects in <i>NSEFC</i>	55
3.3.4 <i>NSEFC</i> and authentic texts	59
3.4 Conclusion	61
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	62
4.1 Introduction	62
4.2 A phenomenological case study	62
4.2.1 Qualitative methodology.....	62
4.2.2 Phenomenological study	64
4.2.3 Case study	66
4.3 Data collection procedures.....	69
4.3.1 Selecting research sites	69
4.3.2 Recruiting Participants	70
4.3.3 Data collection.....	72
4.3.3.1 Semi-structured interview	73
4.3.3.2 Class observation	74
4.3.3.3 Focus groups	75
4.3.4 Data analysis	77

4.4 Trustworthiness	78
4.5 Limitations of this research design.....	80
4.6 Conclusion.....	81
CHAPTER 5 EFL TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES OF L2 LITERACY AND THEIR PRACTICES IN THE YING SCHOOL.....	83
5.1 School context.....	83
5.2 Introducing Guo.....	86
5.2.1 Personal context.....	86
5.2.2 Literacy and L2 literacy	87
5.2.3 The teaching and learning of culture	90
5.2.4 The use of authentic texts	91
5.3 Introducing Ren	92
5.3.1 Personal context.....	92
5.3.2 Literacy and L2 literacy	93
5.3.3 The teaching and learning of culture	97
5.3.4 The use of authentic texts	98
5.4 Introducing Long	98
5.4.1 Personal context.....	98
5.4.2 Literacy and L2 literacy	100
5.4.3 The use of authentic texts	103
5.5 Students’ perspectives and experiences of English learning	104
CHAPTER 6 EFL TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES OF L2 LITERACY AND THEIR PRACTICE IN THE YAN SCHOOL.....	107
6.1 School context.....	107
6.2 Introducing Yi.....	108
6.2.1 Personal context.....	108
6.2.2 Literacy and L2 literacy	109
6.2.3 The teaching and learning of culture	111
6.2.4 The use of authentic texts	112
6.3 Introducing Jian.....	113

6.3.1 Personal Context.....	113
6.3.2 Literacy and L2 literacy	114
6.3.3 The teaching and learning of culture.....	116
6.3.4 The use of authentic texts	117
6.4 Introducing Bai	118
6.4.1 Personal context.....	118
6.4.2 Literacy and L2 literacy	119
6.4.3 The teaching and learning of culture.....	121
6.4.4 The use of authentic texts	121
6.5 Students' perspectives and experiences of English learning	123
CHAPTER 7 The Findings.....	126
7.1 Introduction	126
7.2 Teaching and learning of the target culture and Chinese culture.....	126
7.3 The use of multimodal texts and paper-based texts.....	128
7.4 Employment of textbooks and authentic texts	129
7.5 The required government curriculum and high-stake exams	131
7.6 The Research Questions.....	133
<i>How do EFL teachers in Chinese senior high schools perceive English L2 literacy in the contemporary context?.....</i>	<i>133</i>
Reading literary texts.....	134
Instilling knowledge	135
Moral education	136
<i>To what extent do these perceptions of English L2 literacy impact the structuring and enacting of the EFL teachers' teaching practice in the classroom?</i>	<i>137</i>
<i>How do these EFL teachers help their learners to explore the linguistic, cultural and social aspects of English language texts in their learning of English as a foreign language?.....</i>	<i>138</i>
<i>What opportunities do these EFL teachers provide for their students to access a variety of authentic texts?</i>	<i>141</i>
7.7 Conclusion	143

CHAPTER 8 SOME FINAL WORDS	145
REFERENCES	153
APPENDICES	171
Appendix A: A page of content of Student’s Textbook (Modules 2 and 6)	171
Appendix B: A page of reading passage in Student’s Textbook (Module 6)	172
Appendix C: The cover of the textbook Module 6	174
Appendix D: Information Letter for School Principal, Teacher Participants and Student Participants	175
Appendix E: Teacher and Student Consent Form	181
Appendix F: Interview Protocol	183
Appendix G: Class Observation Guide	184
Appendix H: Focus Group Interview Protocol	185
Appendix I: The Templates for Keeping Note of Interviews and Class Observation	186
Appendix J: Sample Pages of the exercise book used in the Ying School	187
Appendix K: A supplementary text used by Long: Our Family Creed: The Things That Make Life Most Worth Living	190
Appendix L: Sample Pages of Handout for Senior 1 of the Yan School	192
.....	193

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1:	The Analysis of Culture Content in Module 1-5 of NSEFC	26
Table 3.1:	The Structure of NECS	41
Table 3.2:	The Course Structure of NECS	44
Table 3.3:	Outcomes description concerning culture in the arching statements in NECS	50
Table 3.4:	Description of cultural awareness outcomes in NECS	51
Table 4.1:	The Main Characteristics of a Qualitative Research	64
Table 4.2:	The Advantages and Disadvantages of Three Types of Case Studies	68
Table 4.3:	Brief Information about six teacher Participants	72

LIST OF FIGURES AND DIAGRAMS

Figure 3.1:	Senior High School Course Structure Based on NECS	55
Diagram 5.1:	The Layout of Classrooms at the Ying School	86

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL English as a foreign language

ELF English as Lingua Franca

ELT English language teaching

ESL English as Second Language

MOE Ministry of Education

NECS National English Curriculum Standards

NSEFC New Senior English For China

OBE Outcome-based Education

PMET Provincial Matriculation English Test

PPT PowerPoint

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

As a Chinese postgraduate student in Australia, I became aware that significant changes have taken place in the way that how language is interpreted in the western scholarly community. Traditionally, language has been viewed as code which comprises the rules and vocabulary of the language (Kramsch, 1994), but this understanding has gradually been replaced by the perspective of interpreting language as social practice (Kramsch, 1994; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Johnson, 2009). According to Johnson (2009), “language is a means of transforming experience into cultural knowledge and understanding. . . . The language of the individual develops in relation to its functions within the sociocultural activity in which the individual participates.” (p.44) This language as social practice perspective together with the extensive application of multimedia technologies has challenged the more traditional definition of literacy. Being literate has gone beyond the sense of reading and writing in print form, and instead, it incorporates multiple views, such as being capable of interpreting and creating meaning in particular social settings and time via spoken texts, print and multimedia (Luke & Freebody, 2000; Tarone, Bigelow & Hansen, 2009).

Changes in defining literacy also have had a significant impact on ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) literacy education (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009b). With language being conceptualized as social practice, second/foreign language teaching has shifted from focusing on grammar and vocabulary toward helping learners develop the capacity to interpret and generate meanings that are appropriate within particular social and cultural contexts (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007). Nowhere is this more obvious than in China.

China has been experiencing reformations in foreign language education due to the dramatic changes in its educational, social, economic, and technological arenas. In the context of this study in senior middle school English education, the issuing and the implementation of the *New English Curriculum Standards for Senior Middle Schools* (NECS) by the Ministry of Education is of particular significance. According to NECS,

the ultimate objective of English language teaching is to enable students “to communicate effectively and appropriately in English”¹ (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2003, p.1). In order to achieve this objective, it is suggested that students should achieve the desired outcomes in five outcome areas, respectively linguistic knowledge, language skills, affection and attitudes, learning strategies, and cultural awareness (MOE, 2003). In comparison to previous syllabi² which only focused on learning linguistic knowledge and developing language skills, NECS suggests a broadened interpretation of English literacy.

It is this broadened expectation on students’ English literacy development, together with the new interpretation of language and literacy in western academic and educational fields that triggered this study. This phenomenological case study of EFL teacher perspectives of English language and literacy teaching was conducted in two senior high schools: the Ying School³ (a key school⁴) and the Yan School (a regular school) in Lu City of Shandong Province, one of the provinces where NECS was piloted in 2004. The study aims to explore how EFL teachers make sense of foreign language literacy (L2 literacy) in the Chinese context and how their perceptions impact the structuring and the enacting of teaching practices in the classroom. Six EFL teachers were interviewed and their classes were observed. In addition, two groups of students from the two senior high schools were interviewed in focus groups about their English learning experiences, thus providing the students’ perspectives on L2 literacy. This study also seeks to explore and understand whether the official texts reflect the changes in the curriculum. Furthermore, whether the changes that occurred have affected what the teachers think and do will be examined as well. But first of all, why this research was carried out will be discussed as follows.

1 In this dissertation, unless stated, all translation from Chinese to English is done by the researcher.

2 The term syllabus, instead of curriculum, was always used in previous official guideline documents in China before the issue of the NECS in 2003.

3 The Ying School, the Yan School and the Lu City are the pseudonyms given to preserve the anonymity of the study sites.

4 The practice of ‘the key school’ system dates back to the 1950s. Selected schools were designated the term ‘key’ by national or local educational departments to show the emphasis laid on them (*China Daily*, 2006). This practice was ended in 1997 (SEC, 1997) and replaced by constructing demonstration senior middle schools, which is the continuation of the key school policy (Wu, 2009). That is to say, the key schools no longer officially exist, but reference to the concept continues to be common place. Admission to the key schools is based on students’ academic performance in Senior Middle School Entrance Examinations.

1.2 Reasons for the study

The motivation to undertake this study was generated from my curiosity and passion about literacy, especially L2 literacy in this information era. By looking into the current research on literacy and L2 literacy in the western academic community, my knowledge of language and literacy, influenced by my own experience of learning and teaching English in China, has been challenged.

During my school years, I was a good student in my English teachers' eyes as I listened to the teachers attentively in class, finished the homework on time, and most importantly, achieved good results in exams. But admittedly, I hardly had any opportunity to communicate in English either in or out of classrooms. Even after I entered the university, listening to lectures and doing some memorizing work before exams still dominated my English learning. Although we had an oral English lesson with a native English-speaking teacher once a week, this was not sufficient to develop our understanding of daily use of the English language.

After graduating from university, I became an English teacher at a senior high school. At that time the Syllabus issued in 1993 was still in use. Five years later, in 2003, NECS was released. Compared with the 1993 Syllabus and all the previous ones, significant changes were made in NECS. However, such changes did not take place in the classroom as expected. My colleague and I were not aware of the differences between NECS and the 1993 Syllabus because there was no change in the exam system. Our confusion with the situation was echoed by a participant in this study. Jian, a high school English teacher, mentioned in an interview that *“If there is no radical change in the examination-oriented educational system, it is hard to expect any revolutionary change in teaching practices”*. In spite of the fact that we had this new curriculum, we as teachers continued to do exactly what we had always been doing because we needed to prepare our students for a high-stake exam – the Provincial Matriculation English Test (PMET). The PMET drove us to teach particular knowledge and skills using the textbooks, the content of which would be tested in the exam. Our textbooks were written by Chinese language experts, published by authoritative publishers in China such as People's Education Press or Provincial Education Press, and assigned by the local educational department to be used by all schools. However, we did not teach everything in the textbooks but only focused on the knowledge and skills that were

associated with the high-stake exam. Therefore, no matter what changes had occurred in curriculum, it was still the examination that decided our pedagogy. We unconsciously took the textbooks as the authority and failed to look at them critically or use them creatively. Although occasionally I played English songs or movies for my students, I did this for entertainment and relaxation rather than utilizing them as texts to teach English. I have to admit that I provided few opportunities for my students to be exposed to authentic and multimodal texts in class and I rarely referred to the social and cultural contexts of English texts either. Honestly, I did not realize the significance of involving cultural learning in English class because my own experience in this was very limited and there was little professional development on this aspect offered to our EFL teachers, although cultural teaching and learning was actually suggested in NECS. Neither did I realize the necessity of developing the students' ability to make meaning from a variety of English texts accessed through different media until I encountered the new definitions of literacy when I embarked on my doctoral study journey in Australia. Based on my new understandings of language and literacy, and always reflecting on my past experience, I became interested in the topic of teaching English literacy in China. I am especially concerned about EFL teachers' perspectives and teaching practice of English literacy because they have a direct and profound impact on students' English literacy development. The examination of this is the aim of this study. To develop a better understanding of the teaching and learning of English literacy in China, it is essential to review the social and contextual background of English education in China, and this will be discussed in the following section.

1.3 Background for the study

The last few decades have witnessed an increasing demand of using English in the ever-globalised and competitive society in China (Feng, 2012). This has resulted in China having the largest number of English learners in the world (Wang & Gao, 2008) because it is a compulsory course from primary school to tertiary level. In big cities, children start learning English even earlier, from 3 or 4 years old when they are still in kindergarten. It is estimated that the number of English learners in China exceeds 300 million, which is about a quarter of the country's 1.3 billion population (Honna, 2006; Dai, 2007). English is becoming increasingly essential for such matters as business, information, international travel and study, the Internet, entertainment and research, and

this has brought great changes in every aspect of Chinese people's lives. English proficiency, as noted by Ruan and Leung (2012), has become "an important criterion for a person's education and career advancement" (p. X). Take studying abroad as an example, a continuously increasing number of Chinese students have gone abroad for further study over the past two decades and this number has made up the largest group of international students in the world (Henze & Zhu, 2012). The United States, the United Kingdom and Australia have been the top three most popular destinations for Chinese students (Department of Education and Training, 2015). To be granted university entry, in addition to meeting academic criteria, students need to take recognized English language proficiency tests to prove they "have sufficient English academic language skills to cope with the study requirements of their intended courses" and to achieve academic success (Oliver, Vanderford & Grote, 2012, p.542). Also, as stated by Oliver, Dooley and Rochecoste (2012), acquiring the necessary English language skills ensures graduate with a quality degree after study program.

Therefore, with the increasing demand for learning and better use of English, English education has undergone many changes which can be reflected from the changes in policies and in the way people communicate and access information. These policy changes reflect the changes that are occurring across China.

1.3.1 Change in policies

As noted by Feng (2012), "while the needs for English reflect the perceived importance attached to it and priorities and the desire of the society and individuals, policies mirror the ideology and visions of the government" (p.366). The social demand for improved international communication and the Chinese individual's demand for pursuing a better education and career has made English teaching and learning gain increasing attention in China. The emphasis placed on English literacy education in China⁵ can be illustrated from national policy decisions in China in the last two decades. Since the 1990s, official curricular have attempted to reduce the domineering impact of examinations in China (Han & Yang, 2001). At the turn of the 20th century, the Ministry of Education expanded English education by issuing a mandate on the compulsory provision of English in primary schooling (Hu, 2005a; Wang, 2008). With the aim of

5 In this dissertation, it is referred to as English Foreign Language [EFL] literacy.

improving the quality of formal English language education (Hu, 2002a; 2005a; Hu & McKay, 2012), the Chinese Ministry of Education developed and implemented a series of English curriculum standards or requirements for schools at all levels. In 2001, *the National English Curriculum Standards for Full-time Compulsory Education and Senior High Schools (Trial version)* was issued. A separate curriculum document the *New English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (NECS)* was published in April 2003 and has been officially implemented since 2004 (Wang, 2006; Wang & Lam, 2009).

In comparison to previous syllabi, NECS is more flexible and suggests some autonomy at the provincial level. Taking individuals' interests and differences as well as the demands for national development into consideration, NECS promotes a more flexible course system. The flexibility of NECS makes it possible for schools in different regions to make their own decisions on the courses set and the selection of learning materials, based on their students' levels and demands, rather than implementing a uniform curriculum within the whole country (MOE, 2003). To supplement the curriculum and syllabus development, learning materials such as textbooks have been produced by local education departments, national publishers and through international collaboration with overseas publishers.

Changes have also occurred to the high-stake college entrance examination which is expected to be compatible with the implementation of the new curriculum. The nationally centralized exam has been replaced by provincial-based exams, allowing each province to monitor its own exams (Wang & Chen, 2012). Hu (2005a) argues that all these policy changes have resulted in a shift in EFL teaching and learning to become more "innovative, learner-centred and communicatively-oriented" (p.15) because it is more aligned with international developments in second language education (Adamson & Morris, 1997; Hu, 2002a, 2005a). However, whether this shift is borne out at the case study sites and has changed teachers' pedagogy will be investigated in this research.

1.3.2 Change in technologies

The rapid development of modern technologies has also brought great changes in English education in China. A number of potential benefits have been identified in providing "technology-rich" English instruction in China, for example, enriching

teaching content, breaking the teacher-centred teaching pattern to a more student-centred focus, motivating students' interests, increasing learner autonomy, facilitating students' communication capacity and providing individualized learning (Li & Ni, 2012; Li, 2008, Xu, 2010). As a result of these perceived benefits to language learning, NECS clearly outlines the suggestions for EFL teachers to utilise modern educational technology to help students' English learning (Li & Ni, 2012; Zhang, H. L., 2009). Additionally, most of the younger generation in China have been born into and are living in this technology-rich society, and these digital natives (Prensky, 2001, 2010) are more able to access and deliver information by digital and multiple means than their predecessors. Accordingly, it is essential for EFL teachers to take advantage of the benefits of modern technology to help students develop their English literacy. The term multiliteracies, which arises frequently in the literature associated with literacy development, reflects the impact of the contexts and technology on literacy development. Multiliteracies, as suggested by the New London Group (1996), refer to the variability of meaning-making in different cultural, social or professional contexts and also the multiple modes of meaning-making with written-linguistic modes of meaning interfacing with visual, audio, gestural and spatial patterns of meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2006). As this term was new to me, my interest was aroused in learning more about it. I did some research on the literature in China related to multiliteracies and I found out that the studies and works on multiliteracies, especially for English teaching and learning, were limited. Thus, it is significant to look at Chinese EFL teachers' L2 literacy teaching from a multiliteracies perspective. In the following section, the theoretical framework of this study, the methodological approach as well as the research methods employed in this study will be briefly introduced.

1.4 Research methodology

This is a qualitative study as it allowed me to use rich descriptive details to shed light on the phenomenon being investigated. The particular phenomenon that I dealt with is English as a foreign language literacy (L2 literacy) teaching and learning in two case study schools. This study attempts to identify, understand and describe L2 literacy teaching and learning from individual EFL teachers' perspectives and their lived experiences. Lived experience in this study means the experience perceived in the process of English learning and teaching by the participants in the contextual settings.

Accordingly, phenomenology was used as a methodological framework for this study. “Doing phenomenology” means capturing “rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings” (Kensit, 2000, p.104), understanding the world from the subjects’ point of view and unfolding the meaning of people’s ‘experiences’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 2). Case study was used as a way to encapsulate what the teachers and students said and did in the contextual settings. Interview, class observations, focus groups interview were employed as the research method to collect rich and descriptive data for examining and understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Data analysis was informed by Hycner’s (1999) explication process in a phenomenological study to allow the essence to emerge from the data. The official documents, that is, the currently used English curriculum, and the textbooks were also analysed to set the scene for the readers to understand the context of this study. By examining the data in a phenomenological case study, this research seeks to find the answers to the research questions as described in the following section.

1.5 Research questions

This research inquiry was informed by a multiliteracies perspective which highlights two major points. The first concern is that language cannot be understood separately from the social and cultural context in which it is used. The second is that information transmitted by language can be accessed through various media and obtained through different sensory modes (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005). Therefore, with respect to English literacy development, in addition to linguistic knowledge, social and cultural knowledge of those involved in the communication, as well as the skills to use the digital technology to access and deliver information must be included. In teaching and learning practice, authentic texts, which embody rich social and cultural information (Mishan, 2005; Kramsch, A’Ness & Lam, 2000; Shrum & Glisan, 2000; Gonzalez; 1990), can benefit students in their English literacy development.

The focus of this study is individual teacher’s perceptions of what constitutes English literacy teaching and their teaching practice in their school settings. On attempting to reveal the EFL teachers’ perspectives and practice of L2 literacy in the two case study schools, this study has the following questions:

- (1) How do EFL teachers in Chinese senior middle schools perceive English L2 literacy in the contemporary context?

- (2) To what extent do these perceptions of English L2 literacy impact the structuring and enacting of the EFL teachers' teaching practice in the classroom?
- (3) How do these EFL teachers help their learners to explore the linguistic, cultural and social aspects of English language texts in their learning of English as a foreign language?
- (4) What opportunities do these EFL teachers provide for their learners to access a variety of authentic texts?

Through the exploration of EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of L2 literacy teaching, this study aims to make significant contributions as presented in the following section.

1.5 Significance of the study

Traditionally, conceptual studies and non-empirical research have played an important role in language policy and curriculum development in China, which in turn have a significant impact on the performances of language teachers and students. However, empirical research is still in its initial stages in China and there is a pressing need to promote high quality research in this field (Gao, Liao, & Li, 2014). Furthermore, among the limited empirical studies based in China, few of them are concerned with primary and secondary schools. Given this situation, this phenomenological study of English L2 literacy from the secondary school teachers' perceptions and practices can contribute to the empirical research in China and add to the growing understandings in this field. In addition, students were provided with the opportunity to talk about their experiences and expectations in L2 literacy development, which presented a view of the students' perceptions that was not previously included in research in China.

Moreover, an expectation of this study is to draw the attention of Chinese policy-makers, teachers, and students, especially those who intend to study abroad, to the culture differences in the way people in a different country live, think and understand the world. In recent years, there are an increasing number of Chinese people choosing to study abroad, especially in English-speaking countries, in tertiary and even secondary schools. According to my experience as a researcher and also as a second language speaker in a country where I had to learn how to interact socially and cope with cultural differences,

I offer some recommendations that might help others who will go through the similar journey.

1.6 Structure of this thesis

There are eight chapters in this dissertation. The opening chapter introduces the background of the study and the researcher, discusses the reasons for choosing this project and the significance of this research, and articulates the research questions. Chapter Two is a review of the literature related to this study. The focus is on the current definitions of literacy in western educational circles and its impact on L2 literacy education. In addition, as official curriculum and syllabus documents play a significant part in understanding teaching and learning in social context, a discussion about their roles is presented in this chapter. The third chapter discusses English language literacy education at senior high school level from the perspective of the currently used curriculum – NECS and the textbooks which were being used at the case schools – *New Senior English For China (NSEFC)*, while Chapter Four presents the research methodology employed in the study. The theoretical framework, research methods, the procedure of data collection and analysis, as well as the limitations of doing this study are discussed in this chapter. Chapter Five and Chapter Six focus on examining teachers' perceptions on English L2 literacy and their teaching practice in the two case study schools. Chapter Seven starts with the discussion of the findings of this empirical study and then makes an attempt to answer the research questions, based on the evidence provided by the data. The final chapter is a reflection on my own journey from being an EFL teacher in China to an academic researcher in Australia and highlights how my own experience has impacted on this study. Finally, recommendations are provided for Chinese people who have an intention to study in a country where English is the medium of instruction and socialisation and the chapter ends with a discussion on the limitations of this study as well as identifying areas for further research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a selective review of the literature in the critical fields that pertain to my dissertation, including literacy and L2/foreign language literacy, language and culture, curriculum and syllabus design, aiming to explain the theoretical underpinnings for this study and to outline the significance of doing this research. Although I am aware of the considerable field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), in this research my focus was English L2 literacy rather than language acquisition and so discussion of SLA will not be included. The first section reviews the evolving western view of literacy and how this impacts literacy education, with a focus on teaching and learning L2 literacy. The literature on English literacy in China is also reviewed to identify the limitations of this body of research. The section that follows focuses on a discussion of culture, whose relationship with language is, according to Emmitt, Komesaroff and Pollock (2006), “one important factor to keep in mind when thinking about language and literacy” (p.14). A review of the debates about the use of authentic texts in the foreign language classroom is also included. The last section presents a brief review of the literature on curriculum and syllabus design, with a focus on the definitions of curriculum and a more recent model of the curriculum – the outcomes-based model, as well as the definitions and design of syllabi. This will help with understanding the curriculum, currently used textbooks, and EFL teachers’ classroom practice in the Chinese case study schools when further discussion on these aspects is provided in the following chapters.

2.2 Literacy and L2 literacy

The traditional understanding of literacy is concerned with an individuals’ ability to communicate in written and oral forms (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009a) and the skills of coding and decoding texts (Kern and Schultz, 2005). However, viewing language as social practice rather than code (Kramsch, 1994; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Johnson, 2009), as well as the technological advances in society generally, and China more specifically, prompts us to broaden our view of literacy and L2 literacy. It is imperative to redefine literacy and expand its definition to address the social and cultural aspects

of the language and the multiple ways in which people interpret and create meanings. It is particularly significant for educators because the perception of literacy and L2 literacy provides the basis for teaching expectations and thus impacts teaching practice. Educators who fail to account for a new definition of literacy, which also includes a broader interpretation of what counts as texts, may risk condemning students to an education in which the consequences are that they have difficulty in coping with life in this globalized and modernized world.

2.2.1 Literacy in the 21st century

The 21st century has witnessed great changes in the way people live and work as the result of the rapid development of society, economy, science and technology. The changes not only make it possible for people to communicate by different means, but also make it easier for people from different countries to communicate in a more timely fashion. As a result, there is a need to refine and expand the traditional way of defining literacy as being able to read and write in “page-bound, official, standard forms of the national language” (New London Group, 2000, p.9) to include the changes occurring to people’s communication methods, such as email and social media networks.

Advanced technologies have complicated the definition of literacy in the sense that it allows now for new means of communication as the result of the use of digital media. The new landscape of communication and representation (Kress, 2000) has drawn attention to other semiotic resources beyond language that include the visual, audio, spatial, and gestural modes of meaning. For example, social media networks like email, Facebook, and WeChat become the conduit for the distribution of photographs, videos, music as well as words among increasing numbers of users. Thus, based on the understanding of the nature of language which can be defined as a system of signs to construct meaning (New London Group, 1996, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; O’Toole, 1994), the definition of literacy needs to be expanded to encompass more than just the decoding and encoding of printed words, or the expression of meaning in symbolic form (Eisner, 2002; Hobbs, 2005). As indicated by Healy (2003), “It is not that print has become unimportant or the book redundant; indeed print remains one essential medium for learning to read and write. However, the privileged status of print as the almost exclusive basis of literacy has diminished.” (p.154)

With the global economy becoming increasingly integrated, there is an urgent requirement for better and timely communication among countries. English, as a contact language (Firth, 1996; Jenkins, 2007) is used to communicate among people from different countries, and it shortens the distance between people in the global context. People who share neither a common native tongue nor a common culture can communicate in English as a foreign language (Firth, 1996; House, 1999). Being frequently used in international settings such as conferences, business meetings, and political gatherings, English has become the new lingua franca in the world (Firth, 1996; House, 1999; Seidlhofer, 2002; Jenkins, 2007). However, as noted by Cope and Kalantzis (2000), “Gone are the days when learning a single, standard version of the language was sufficient ... When the proximity of cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the key facts of our time, the very nature of language learning has changed” (p.6). So the traditional view which limited literacy to “formalized, mono-lingual, mono-cultural, and rule-governed forms of language” (New London Group, 2000, p.9) has been challenged. This then has challenged EFL teachers and students as English varies in the way it is used by people in different social and cultural contexts.

In addition to language, effective communication involves more than language itself (Kramsch, 1993). As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out, people “speak not only their own individual voice, but through them speak also their established knowledge of their community and society” (cited in Kramsch, 1993, p.238). A considerable number of scholars within the disciplines of applied linguistics and second language acquisition have redefined language in the past two decades (e.g., Johnson, 2009; Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009; Green & Campbell, 2003; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Gee, 1996, 2008; Kramsch, 1994), and a sociocultural perspective of language has gradually prevailed. Traditionally language has been defined as “a system of signs and symbols used by a group of human beings to construct meanings” (Anstey & Bull, 2004, p.5). That is, language has been viewed as code, comprising words and a series of rules that connect words together. Based on such a narrow, fixed and finite understanding of language, language teachers have made acquiring grammar and vocabulary the primary goal of language learning, but ignored “the complexities involved in using language for communication” (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p.15). From a sociocultural perspective, language is viewed not simply as a body of linguistic knowledge but as a social practice in which to participate (Kramsch, 1994). Gee (2003) contends that the activities of

“decoding” are ingrained in social practices, and “knowing about a social practice always involves recognizing various distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, knowing, and using various objects and technologies that constitute the social practice” (p.15). Again, citing Gee (2008), literacy practices are “almost always fully integrated with, interwoven into and part of, the very texture of wider practices that involve talk, interaction, values and beliefs” (p.45). Johnson (2009) believes that “the language used to describe an activity gains its meaning not from some underlying representation encoded in the words themselves but in concrete communicative activity in specific sociocultural contexts” (p.44). Thus, it is imperative for children of the 21st century, as argued by Ewing (2006), to be able to “understand how texts function in different cultural contexts to communicate specific ideas or values” (p.16). As literacy is an act of interpreting and understanding or creating meaning (Kinder, 2004), this language as social practice perspective, which situates meanings in specific social and cultural activities that individuals engage in, has a significant influence on how literacy should be defined.

2.2.2 Redefining literacy

Given the impact of social, economic and technological changes on literacy and literacy practices over the past two decades, many scholars in the west have contributed to a reconceptualization of literacy by challenging traditional literacy models and theorising literacy as a social and cultural practice (e.g., Anstey, 2002a, 2002b; Freebody & Luke, 2003; Kress, 2003; 2010; Luke, 2001; Street, 2003a; Bull & Anstey, 2010; Burnett, Davies, Merchant & Rowsell, 2014). For example, Luke and Freebody (2000) define literacy as “the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communication technologies via spoken, print, and multimedia” (p.9). In Kern’s (2000) words, literacy means “dynamic, culturally and historically situated practices of using and interpreting diverse written and spoken texts to fulfil particular social purposes” (p.6). Lankshear and Knobel (2003) define literacies as “socially recognized” ways of communicating “through the medium of encoded texts” (p.4). Being literate, as Davies (2012) suggests, “involves an understanding of how to decode”, and it also “involves being aware of the social and cultural contexts that surround various texts” (p.20). In summary, the expanded definitions of literacy not only address the multiple ways in which people experience the meaning-making and

meaning-creating endeavour of communication in contemporary society, but also take account of “the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts” (Kern, 2000, p.16).

2.2.3 Literacy teaching and a multiliteracies approach

In light of the evolved perspective of literacy, the traditional understanding of teaching literacy through focusing on reading and writing in print form has been challenged. Reading and writing are no longer just about understanding and creating the written words but also about negotiating a wide range of complex electronic and visual texts with which we interact in our daily lives (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Much more complex skills and knowledge, rather than the simple ability of encoding and decoding of print texts, should be involved in literacy education. Consequently, we have the emergence of some new terminologies like “digital literacy” (e.g., Gilster, 1997; Carrington, 2005; Hammer, 2007; Burn, 2009; Black, 2009; Bulfin & Koutsogiannis, 2012; Gee, 2012; Nowell, 2014), “visual literacy” (Snyder, 1999; Unsworth, 2001), “information literacy” (Bruce, 2004; Marlow Riedling, 2007), and “information technology (IT) literacy” (Cesarini, 2005). The academic work in these areas and the new terminologies have enriched perspectives on what it is to be a literate citizen who is expected to be capable of functioning effectively in digital environments. The younger generation, being “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001, 2010), are more able to assess and deliver information by digital and multiple means in their daily life than their predecessors. Moreover, as argued by Johnson and Oliver (2013), “prolonged and supported use of web-based application improves a range of cognitive and literacy skills and is associated with enhanced motivation, employability and school achievement” (p.1276). Hence, educators can no longer ignore the expanded text experience that students embody in everyday practices and need to develop appropriate pedagogies for the new forms of communication associated with information and multimedia technologies (New London Group, 2000).

In addition to “the innovative and productive potentials of literacy practices in electronic environments” (Mills, 2010, p.247), diversified cultural and linguistic features are also highlighted in modern literacy discourse. In this case, a new approach to literacy teaching was proposed and termed ‘multiliteracies’ by the New London Group in 1996 to take cultural differences into account and view language and other

modes of meaning as dynamic and constantly remade in changing contexts (New London Group, 1996, 2000). Cope and Kalantzis (2009b) argue that,

Literacy teaching is not about skills and competence; it is aimed at creating a kind of person, an active designer of meaning, with a sensibility open to differences, change and innovation. The logic of multiliteracies is one that recognizes that meaning making is an active, transformative process, and a pedagogy based on that recognition is more likely to open up viable life courses for a world of change and diversity. (p.175)

Anstey and Bull (2006) note that the concept of multiliteracies focuses on “how literacy and literate practices have been influenced by local and global, social, cultural, and technological change” (p.55). In response to these changes, according to Cope and Kalantzis (2000), “effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community and national boundaries” (p.16). Kalantzis and Cope (2001) point out two related changes highlighted by multiliteracies research: one engages with the multimodal meaning-making resources (e.g. linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial patterns of meaning) influenced by modern information and multimedia technologies; the other is the cultural and linguistic diversity, that is, the multiplicity of social and cultural influences on how literacy is constructed and used, and multiple Englishes (e.g. Australian English, New Zealand English, Indian English or even Chinese English). Anstey and Bull (2004), being engaged in the study of literacy in Australia, define the ‘multi’ in multiliteracies as “the multiple knowledges and understandings that will be needed to engage in the literacies of current and future societies”, and they claim that multiliteracies pedagogy can help to equip future citizens with “knowledge and understanding about multimedia and technology, semiotic systems, social and cultural diversity and critical literacy” (p.78). Also Unsworth (2001) suggests, “to become effective participants in emerging multiliteracies, students need to understand how the resources of language, image and digital rhetoric can be deployed independently and interactively to construct different kinds of meaning” (p.8). Therefore, a multiliteracies approach to communication can assist individuals understand how different symbol systems work separately and together to make meanings in different social and cultural contexts. However, it must be noted that not all multiliteracies projects are effective (Zammit, 2011), but the stories of success (e.g. Ajayi, 2011; Giampapa, 2010; Walters, 2010; Burke & Hardware, 2015) far outnumber the stories of failure.

With the knowledge of technological, social, cultural and global elements of being literate underpinning this thesis, the goal of this research is to look into how EFL teachers in this study perceive literacy and L2 literacy to see whether a multiliteracies perspective is reflected in their interpretations and practices. The recognition that students need to connect to the real world provides the basis for teachers' understanding of literacy and L2 literacy, and thus impacts their teaching practice.

2.2.4 Implications for EFL literacy education

There is no doubt that the fluidity of literacy's definitions has had and will continue to have a significant impact on literacy education. Such influence has also extended to ESL and EFL literacy education. As Liddicoat (2004) states, foreign language literacy, in addition to national literacy, has become an indispensable part of literacy education. From the perspective of multiliteracies, the language cannot be understood separately from the social and cultural context where it is used, and the information transmitted by language may be accessed through various media and obtained through different sensory modes (New London Group, 1996; 2000). Therefore, in addition to grammar and vocabulary knowledge, L2 literacy teaching and learning must include cultural, textual, and contextual knowledge of those involved in the communication, as well as the skills to use digital technology to access and deliver information. Authentic learning opportunities such as problem solving, analytic and evaluative learning tasks as well as critical thinking could also be involved in the learning process (Muspratt, Luke, & Freebody, 1997).

This broadened conceptual understanding has triggered an increasing number of studies of multiliteracies in ESL or EFL education. Considering the dramatically changing social and technological contexts of communication and learning, the New London Group developed a pedagogy of multiliteracies. This pedagogy is based on the recognition of meaning making as an active, transformative process, and is more likely to "open up viable life courses for a world of change and diversity" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009b, p.175). For example, Spiliotopoulos (2005) suggests that online forums have the potential for improving ESL learners' multiliteracies skills. More recently, Allen and Paesani (2010), in response to calls for curricular change in foreign language departments in the USA, explored the feasibility of a multiliteracies approach in introductory-level courses of foreign language in universities. They concluded that a

pedagogy of multiliteracies represents a means of keeping the introductory foreign language curriculum relevant to students. Lee, Ardeshiri and Cummins (2016) introduced a computer-assisted multiliteracies programme in a Korean middle school as an alternative approach to EFL instruction to enhance the students' learning motivation and overcome a number of educational limitations in most EFL settings. With respect to the outcomes of implementing a multiliteracies approach in foreign language teaching, the above studies provide encouraging evidence of students' linguistic development by using a multiliteracies approach. Allen and Paesani (2010) also note that "even learners with extremely limited foreign language capabilities are able to engage with culturally rich textural content and that such engagement, in turn, facilitates linguistic development" (p.132).

However, despite the benefits of multiple literacies, Valdés (2004) points out that most L2 educators "still embrace a technocratic notion of literacy and emphasize the development of decontextualized skills" (p.79), which is a long way from a multiliteracies perspective. Therefore, Lotherington and Jenson (2011) note that "a broader socially constructed multimodal perspective" of literacy must be "woven into classroom learning if teachers are to meaningfully engage L2 learners in communication as it exists in the social world" (p.228).

Given the identification of the benefits of a multiliteracies approach on foreign language teaching and learning in western academia, there is a need to examine whether a multiliteracies perspective has been established in Chinese EFL teachers' minds and whether their English classes are reflective of such a perspective. Before this, a review of current practices in English literacy in China is needed.

2.2.5 English literacy research in China

Compared with the growing body of work carried out in western educational settings, most of published papers on EFL literacy in China are about theoretical reviews and propositions rather than about empirical research conducted in school settings. The limited amount of research that exists has focused on students' English literacy development at the tertiary level, while the study of English literacy at primary and secondary school level, especially from the perspectives and practice of EFL teachers, is missing in this body of research.

Scholars in China, in increasing numbers, have noticed the changes in the way Chinese people interact with non-traditional reading and writing texts due to the influence of global, social and technological changes. They have started to focus on western countries' research on literacy and multiliteracies and are increasingly concerned with students' English L2 literacy development in China. Some scholars and educators have produced overviews of the achievements made in literacy research in western countries and put forward some implications to highlight the English language teaching reforms in China (e.g., Hu, 2007; Zhu, 2008; Wang, 2010; Ge & Luo, 2010; Zeng, 2012). It is an accepted perspective among these scholars that the mono-modal literacy focus on reading and writing is far from adequate in the present-day multimedia setting of China and students need to be nurtured to adapt to an ever-changing society in this information era. The work of these scholars are examined below.

The first Chinese scholar to introduce the term multiliteracies in China was Hu Zhuanglin (2017) and he suggested that the concept of multiliteracies should carry two levels of meaning: cultural literacy, and technological literacy, that is, multimodal literacy. Zhu (2008) reviewed the literature related to multiliteracies in western academic areas and made some recommendations on adopting a multiliteracies perspective in curriculum and textbook development, teacher education, and students' English language development. Similarly, Ge and Luo (2010) also discussed the evolution of literacy in western literature and introduced New London Group's (1996) multiliteracies pedagogy. Ge and Luo (2010) talked about the implications of multiliteracies pedagogy for English teaching and learning in China, one of which is the shift from completely depending on traditional textbooks to exposing students to some authentic materials with the help of modern multimedia technology.

Within the relatively few studies and works on multiliteracies, multimodality, as an inherent aspect of multiliteracies pedagogy (Burke & Hardware, 2015), has captured considerable attention in Chinese academic circles in the recent decade. As Thibault (2000) suggests, the use of multimodality refers to the diverse ways in which a range of semiotic systems (i.e. linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, gestural, etc.) are "both co-deployed and co-contextualized in the making of a text-specific meaning" (pp. 312), or "the combination of different semiotic modes...in a communicative artefact or event" (van Leeuwen 2005, p. 281). Hence, multimodality makes provisions for learners with different learning styles, abilities and cultures. However, there are distinct differences

between multiliteracies pedagogy and multimodality. Multiliteracies pedagogy simultaneously accounts for the use of multimodalities in communication and linguistic diversity while multimodality considers how individuals make meaning with different kinds of modes (Rowell & Walsh, 2011). Therefore, according to Burke and Hardware (2015), multiliteracies is the pedagogy that afford us the tools for promoting multimodality. With the extensive application of technology in school education in China, growing research related to multimodality has been carried out in the recent decade.

According to the search results from CNKI ⁶ (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), Li Zhanzi (2003) was probably the first Chinese scholar to introduce multimodality to Chinese readers. She provides a detailed review of the analytical framework for analysing visual images from a social semiotic perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). After her pioneering work, several scholars have noticed the significance of the theory and become involved in research related to multimodality. For instance, by analysing the distinction between multimodal semiotics and multimedia semiotics, Hu (2007) argues that multimodal semiotics are based on the view that all texts inherently possess the nature of multimodality. Derived from systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1973; 1985), Zhang Delu (2009) proposes a synthetic theoretical framework for multimodal discourse analysis. In addition to these conceptual studies on multimodality, there are empirical studies with a focus on university English classrooms. For example, by comparing two cases of college English classroom teaching, Zhang and Wang (2010) found that the main mode of discourse in classroom teaching is oral language, while other modes mainly complement and highlight it. With respect to students' multimodality, the use of PowerPoint (PPT) dominates the research to examine how different modes of communication are used in classroom. For example, Wei (2009) analysed 30 Chinese non-English Major freshmen's PPT presentations and found that the freshmen were inclined to use direct perceptive multimodal texts in their PPT presentations to make

⁶ China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), launched in 1988, is an electronic platform created to provide significant Chinese knowledge-based information resources. CNKI is developed with the support of the Chinese Academic Journals (CAJ), the newspaper database known as China Core Newspapers (CCND), the China Proceedings of Conferences (CPCD) offering access to articles from conference, as well as China Doctoral/Master's Dissertations (CDMD). As a result, CNKI is the most authoritative, comprehensive, and largest source of China-based information resources in China, reflecting the latest developments in Chinese politics, economics, humanities and social science, science and technology.

meaning, like language and images, rather than using other semiotic modes to express meaning. Zhang (2011) also did a study on multimodal literacy education in China by investigating PPT presentations made by non-English major postgraduate students. He concluded that the use of different modes of communication was constrained by defining reading as reading only printed-based signs rather than recognizing visual and auditory signs as information media. Song (2012) researched multimodality in college students' PPT presentation and he revealed that the learners in his study were not familiar with multimodality and, therefore, they could not make best and full use of technological means to create meaning. Although increasing attention has been paid to the necessity and importance of using multimodal texts in EFL classroom in China, only a very limited number of studies, especially empirical studies, have been done in China, and the focus has been at a university level. Given that there has been very little research in reference to English language teaching and learning at primary and secondary school in mainland China, it is significant to do this qualitative study on L2 literacy teaching and learning by examining EFL teachers' perspectives and practice at the senior high school level.

In addition to the ability of making meaning from multimodal texts, in light of the current definition of literacy, language cannot be understood separately from the cultural and social contexts where it is used. Thus, there is a need to have a close look at what is meant by culture for foreign language literacy development and how culture should be involved in a foreign language classroom.

2.3 Language and culture

2.3.1 The relationship between language and culture

It is increasingly recognized that language and culture cannot be separated (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999; Hinkel, 1999). Language is a part of culture. Language is used to pass on culture, but "its use is also determined by the culture" (Emmitt, Komesaroff & Pollock, 2006, p.14). So "culture has always been an integral component of language teaching" (Kramsch, 2006, p.11). From the perspective of seeing language as social practice, Kramsch (1993) puts culture at the very core of language teaching and indicates that cultural awareness "enables language proficiency" and is also "the outcome of reflection on language proficiency" (p.8).

Doyé (1996) addresses the relationship between language and culture by suggesting the idea of culture-bound language,

The very nature of language forbids the separation of language from culture. If language is considered as a system of signs, and signs are characterized by the fact that they are units of form and meaning, it is impossible to learn a language by simply acquiring the forms without their content. And as the content of a language is always culture-bound, any reasonable foreign-language teaching cannot but include the study of a culture from which the language stems (p.105).

Speaking of second or foreign language teaching, Hinkel (1999) emphasizes that it cannot be separated from teaching the culture of its speakers” (p.132). Byram (1997) expresses a similar opinion concerning foreign language teaching by stating “communication has to be understood as more than the exchange of information and sending of messages” because “even the exchange of information is dependent upon understanding how what one says or writes will be perceived and interpreted in another cultural context” (p.3). Further Byram (2008) specifies the competencies that are needed for the purpose of communication in real life. Learners of a foreign language need “both linguistic competence in order to produce grammatically correct and meaningful speech and also the ability to speak appropriately, to choose the language that suits the occasion, the topic and the person with whom one is speaking” (Byram, 2008, p.79). The ability to speak appropriately cannot be developed without cultural learning being involved.

2.3.2 Culture and language teaching

With respect to the cultural components of language education, Liddicoat (2004) identifies four broad perspectives on what counts as appropriate culture for language learners, including high culture, area studies, culture as societal norms, and culture as practice. Each perspective is “located with reference to the separation or integration of language and culture” (Liddicoat, 2004, pp. 298-300):

- High culture: Cultural competence is viewed as control of an established canon of literature.
- Area studies: Cultural competence is viewed as a body of knowledge about the country (e.g. history, geography, and institutions of the target language country). Area knowledge is seen as background for understanding language and society.

- Culture as societal norms: Cultural competence becomes knowing about what people from a given cultural group are likely to do and understanding the cultural values placed upon certain ways of acting or upon certain beliefs.
- Culture as practice: Cultural competence is seen as the ability to interact in the target culture in informed ways. Learners need to develop an intercultural position which can form a basis for ongoing development of intercultural communicative skills.

According to Liddicoat's (2004) 'culture as practice' perspective, "cultural knowledge is not a case of knowing information about the culture; it is about knowing how to engage with it" (p.301). It is significant because what is addressed are the ways in which learners practise cultural learning rather than focusing on cultural awareness and understanding.

Furthermore, in contemporary society, the development of information technology, especially the wide use of the internet, and the increasing number of social and economic international activities ensure that sooner or later individuals will encounter members of other cultural groups. Therefore, as argued by Kramsch (1998a), "one aspect of a more general ability to mediate between several languages and cultures is to acquire another person's language and understand someone else's culture while retaining one's own" (p.81).

Terms like intercultural and cross-cultural have been coined and most frequently used to refer to "communication between people who don't share the same nationality, social or ethnic origin, gender, age, occupation, or sexual preference" (Kramsch, 1998a, p.81). Some scholars use the term 'cross-cultural' to mean comparing and contrasting two cultures' ways of communicating (Stewart & Bennet, 1991; Hu & Grove, 1991), while 'intercultural' is normally used to discuss the encounter between individuals from different countries (Scollon, R. & Scollon, W.S., 2001). Austin (1998) argues that "all intercultural communication involves cross-cultural communication, but not all cross-cultural communication involves intercultural communication", and therefore, "understanding cross-cultural communication may prepare learners for building strategies for intercultural communication that are situationally, personally, and also culturally appropriate" (p.327). Ashwill and Oanh (2009) view intercultural competence "as a skill set that enables someone to function effectively in a cross-cultural setting" (p.143). Hence, as suggested by Crozet and Liddicoat (2000), the aim

of teaching a language is intercultural communicative competence, which they define as the ability to use language “in culturally appropriate ways” (p.3). Meyer (1991) refers to intercultural communicative competence in foreign language as an essential ability of a person to “behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures” (p.137). Furthermore, it has been noted that intercultural communicative competence takes into account what happens when people with a different culture communicate in a foreign language either with a native speaker of that language or with another foreign speaker in the lingua franca situation (Byram, 2008).

Byram’s (2000) definition of intercultural communicative competence provides a more detailed description of what is expected of this necessary skill for those who are living within this rapidly changing landscape. Intercultural competence, according to him, is the ability “to see relationships between different cultures – both internal and external to a society – and to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people” (p.10). It also encompasses the ability to have “a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures . . . rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural” (Byram, 2000, p.10). Byram and Zarate (1997) propose a model of intercultural communicative competence. They assert that, apart from communicative linguistic competence, intercultural communicative competence contains knowledge about culture and society, attitudes to culture and society, and non-linguistic skills as well as political awareness and a critical cultural awareness. Their model of intercultural communicative competence has been endorsed as a European education goal for language teaching and learning since the publication of their works in 1997, which reflects its influential role in language education.

While Byram concentrates mainly on the identification of the competencies which constitutes intercultural communicative competence, Kramsch (1998b) focuses largely on the experience of the student as an ‘intercultural speaker’, who is aware of the cultural implications of language choices and who can adapt her language to meet contextual demands, and the ways in which intercultural communicative competence might be developed. Instead of presenting dichotomous notions in language teaching as ‘target’ versus ‘local’ cultures, Kramsch (1993) suggests that participants may create a “third place” or “third culture” (p.236) in the foreign language classroom that presents

a way of thinking beyond the usual dichotomies. Language learners “can start using the foreign language not merely as imperfect native speakers, but as speakers in their own right” (Kramsch, 1993, p.28). Gray (2010) contends that “such an approach involves what might be termed the right to behave and to sound foreign and a move away from the native speaker as the model for learners to approximate” (p.33). In recent years, Kramsch (2011) redefines the notion of third place as “symbolic competence” and argues that instead of replacing the notion of communicative competence, the development of symbolic competence includes “a systematic reflexive component that encompasses some subjective and aesthetic as well as historical and ideological dimensions that communicative language teaching has largely left unexploited” (p.355). This is important because proper and effective communication can be impossible without the involvement of these dimensions.

2.3.3 Culture learning in EFL classrooms in China

Different from western perspective of culture, many Chinese scholars and educators espouse a view of identifying culture as source culture (learner’s own culture), target culture (cultures of the countries where English is used as a first language), and international target culture (including cultures in English-speaking countries or in other countries where English is used as an international language instead of a first or second language) in EFL class (Zhang, G. & Zhang, H., 2007; Liu, 2011; Huang, 2003; Xiao, 2004). In addition, a number of the studies focus on textbook content rather than on what happens in class.

Zhang, G. and Zhang, H. (2007), for example, analysed 70 reading passages from Modules 1-5 of *New Senior English for China (NSEFC)* and identified five types of cultures (see Table 2.1), based on Cortazzi and Jin’s (1999) categories. They conclude that the allocation of different cultures in Modules 1-5 of *NSEFC* is rational, properly conforming to the guidance of NECS with respect to developing students’ own cultural identity as well as their cross-cultural communicative competence, and this textbook series appropriately reflects the features of teaching and learning English in the context of English being globalized. They think that *NSEFC* is well designed although cultures of the countries where English is spoken as the first language only accounts for 35.7%, reflecting a perspective of separating culture from language. Besides, instead of giving a clear definition of what culture exactly is, the authors used the broad and perhaps ill-

defined concept provided by NECS, which suggests the authors' acceptance of the perspective reflected in NECS rather than viewing it critically.

Table 2.1 *The Analysis of Culture Content in Modules 1-5 of NSEFC by Zhang, G. and Zhang, H. (2007)*

Category		The number of texts	Percentage
Source culture	national culture	11	15.7%
Target cultures	cultures of the countries where English is spoken as the first language	25	35.7%
International cultures	all the other countries' cultures except source culture and target culture	11	15.7%
Comparative cultures	the comparison between cultures of at least two countries	6	8%
Other cultures	the humanistic or scientific knowledge in a broad sense without clear indication of certain nation, such as natural environment and science	17	24.3

Gong (2011) also did an analysis on the cultural content of *NSEFC* Modules 1 – 8, from which he found that considerable attention was paid to the introduction of famous people and their contributions, geography, literature, arts, history and science, while little was mentioned about the political and economic situation of Western countries, their social customs and ways of life. A comparison between Chinese culture and Western culture is also ignored. However, what is reflected from Gong's (2011) work is a dichotomy view of culture, which divides culture into Eastern culture and Western culture. This is a political view rather than a literacy based view of culture, and therefore it is not helpful in understanding the cultures of different English speaking countries. In addition to analysing textbooks, Gong (2011) also surveyed teachers and students in

three schools in China to understand their perspectives on cultural teaching and learning with the use of *NSEFC*. Gong (2011) had different responses from teachers and students. Teachers of the three schools all agreed that *NSEFC* could help to increase students' cross-cultural awareness and therefore develop their ability to communicate with English speakers, while the students held absolutely opposite opinions and they considered *NSEFC* to be of little help in overcoming communicative obstacles resulting from different cultures. Such findings demonstrate that an ambiguous understanding of culture is prevalent among teachers and they have not critiqued what culture should be taught in class when the textbooks are not appropriate to develop students' cultural awareness.

However, some writers and educators in China are starting to realize the problems that can be associated with cultural teaching and learning in English education. For example, Chen (2011) indicates that English teaching in China separates language and culture which goes against the objective of NECS to develop students' cross-cultural awareness and communicative competence. Also, Huang (2003) points out that generally most EFL teachers in China fail to recognize the importance and necessity of learning culture in English class and only regard culture as an adjunct to English teaching and learning. Accordingly, he notes that culture is not discussed in a planned and systematic way in class by teachers consciously or actively.

It is also important to understand that there is no Chinese equivalent to the term 'intercultural'. One translated term '跨文化' *kuawenhua* is the only one used to refer to cross-cultural or intercultural without explicit distinction. Thus, if there is no clear definition of the term being used, it becomes difficult to tell what authors exactly mean by '跨文化' – intercultural or cross-cultural. Given this, it is doubtful whether educators are aware of the necessity of intercultural communicative competence in this globalized world and whether they can take on the responsibility for cultivating such intercultural individuals.

When learning about the target language culture, authentic texts are increasingly acknowledged to be beneficial for language learners' L2 literacy development because they present real language and integrate culture. In the following section, definitions of texts, authentic texts as well as arguments for and against the use of authentic texts in

language learning will be reviewed, which is essential to explore the teachers' understanding associated with these terms in this study.

2.3.4 Authentic texts

2.3.4.1 What is a text?

In this information age it is a narrow and very conventional point of view to merely view text as “meaningful units of written or print language” (Anstey & Bull, 2006, p.100; Lankshear, 1997). With the widespread of new technology and new media, a variety of new modes of presentation forms of texts are produced and they are not all print based. These include videos, online games, mobile messages and webpages, to name a few. Therefore, as Anstey and Bull (2006) indicate, “the notion of text as only print might be seen as necessary but not sufficient” (p.100).

Street (2003b) emphasizes that theoretical perspectives on texts have shifted from language as the major focus of communicative practices to include a range of visual, gestural, oral and written modalities (also Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001). Wray (2001) defines texts in the widest sense “as coherent and meaningful forms of communication created through units of spoken or written (or non-verbal) language” (p.12). Ajayi (2008) refers to text as “different genres” and makes it more specific by naming a number: “reports, newspapers, pictures, songs, manuals, textbooks, narratives, procedures, legal documents, spoken or written words, and the different text types associated with electronic multimedia” (p. 209).

Furthermore, distilled from the body of work on multiliteracies and social-cultural views of literacy (e.g. Cope & Kalantzis, 1997, 2003, 2015; Durrant & Green, 2000; Freebody & Luke, 2003; Hagood, 2000; Unsworth, 2002; Zammit & Downes, 2002), Anstey and Bull (2006, p.24) provide a comprehensive summary of what a text is, and they argue that these understandings should be used as outcomes of a literacy program which is focused on developing multiliteracies.

- A text may be paper, electronic, or live.
- A text may comprise one or more semiotic systems.
- Texts are consciously constructed.
- Meanings are actively constructed.

- A text may have several possible meanings.
- A text may be multimodal, interactive, linear, and nonlinear.

Based on the above understandings about text, Anstey and Bull (2006) suggest that one of the principles for developing a multiliteracies curriculum is to include “opportunities to learn about, interpret, and produce texts that use individual and combined semiotic systems (linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial, and gestural), and opportunities to learn about, interpret, and produce paper, electronic, and live texts” (p.57). This study will follow Anstey and Bull’s suggestion to look at whether the teachers provide opportunities for their students to engage with different English texts to develop their multiliteracies.

In addition to texts’ being multimodal and being presented through different media, authentic texts, which are considered to embody rich social and cultural information, are valued for learners’ foreign language learning (e.g., Gilmore, 2007; Shrum & Glisan, 2000; Gonzalez, 1990).

2.3.4.2 What is an authentic Text?

The discussion on using authentic texts to learn a language is not new. Henry Sweet, who taught and wrote at the end of the nineteenth century, made regular use of authentic texts in his books and was well aware of their potential advantages over contrived materials:

The great advantage of natural, idiomatic texts over artificial ‘methods’ or ‘series’ is that they do justice to every feature of the language . . . The artificial systems tend to cause incessant repetition of certain grammatical constructions, certain elements of the vocabulary, certain combinations of words to the almost total exclusion of others which are equally, or perhaps even more, essential (Sweet, 1899, p.177).

Since the 1970s, it has been realized that communicative competence involves much more than knowledge of language structures, and accordingly “contextualised communication began to take precedence over form” (Gilmore, 2007, p.97). Authentic texts, associated with the communicative approach, were therefore valued once again for “the idea that they were communicating rather than the linguistic forms they illustrated” (Gilmore, 2007, p.97). Over the years, what it means to be authentic, as well as the role of authenticity in an EFL classroom, has been discussed and debated by a number of researchers.

Defining authentic texts

There is a considerable range of meanings associated with literature being considered authentic, and researchers define the term authentic text in different ways. Some researchers address in definitions the exposure to real language and its use to communicate in its own community while others relate to the social and cultural aspects reflected from authentic texts when defining the term, both of which are provided in this section.

The following definitions reflect the primacy of communication. If interaction is to have communicative purpose and be meaningful, the input and context had to be real or authentic (Mishan, 2005).

- Authentic texts are the texts which are real and produced by native speakers for communicative purposes but not initially designed for language learners (Nunan, 1988; Jordan, 1997, Harmer, 2001).
- The term authentic ... refers to the way language is used in non-pedagogic, natural communication. (Kramersch, 1993, p.177)
- “A text is usually regarded as authentic if it is not written for teaching purposes, but for a real-life communicative purpose.” (Lee, 1995, p.324).

There are some definitions as follows which reflect “the new sensitivity afforded the social and cultural aspects of learning a language” and thus the spotlight falls “on the cultural community within which this communication take place” (Mishan, 2005, p.12).

For example,

- Authentic is the term to be used for describing oral and written language samples that are the reflection of language forms which are used naturally and appropriately based on cultural and situational context (Rogers & Medley, 1988).
- Authentic texts are those being used “by native speakers in culturally authentic contexts of use” (Kramersch, A’Ness & Lam, 2000, p.78)

The above definitions explicitly indicate that cultural and contextual aspects ought to be embedded in authentic texts, and authentic texts are a vehicle to develop foreign language competency and understanding. In this study, the term authentic text is used to refer to the English text which is produced for communicative purpose in real life

and reflects how English is used in social and cultural contexts of the English-speaking societies.

Pros and Cons

Proponents of authentic texts in the L2 classroom assert that language presented in the classroom should be authentic, not produced for instructional purposes, and they give the reasons for employing authentic texts in the classroom.

Shrum and Glisan (2000) argue that authentic texts “provide an effective means for presenting real language, integrating culture, and heightening comprehension” (p.133). Swaffar (1981) contends that “the sooner the students are exposed to authentic language, the more rapidly they will learn that comprehension is not a function of understanding every word” (p.188; cited in Vahid baghban & Pandian, 2011). Gonzalez (1990) notes that authentic texts expose students to a variety of vocabulary, structures, language style, cultural information and cultural value systems, and offer students the opportunity to deal with real life language and situations. Guariento and Morley (2001) believe that authentic texts can give the learners the feeling that they are learning the real language, and it can be extremely motivating to extract real information from a real text in a different language. Hence, they claim that the less authentic materials are used, the less preparation learners will have made for the real world. Burns and Seidlhofer (2002) point out that “authentic texts can introduce students to a full range of transactional and interpersonal speech” (p.226).

Mishan (2005) introduces the concept of 3C by which she means culture, currency, and challenge to explain the advantages of authentic materials. She states that authentic materials can represent the target language culture, and can inform learners of the “language in current use” (p.44). Thus, she asserts that authentic materials are more challenging than artificial materials.

More explicitly, Berardo (2006, p.64) has summarized the main advantages of using authentic texts in the classroom including:

- having a positive effect on learner motivation.
- giving authentic cultural information.
- exposing students to real language.
- relating more closely to learners’ needs.
- supporting a more creative approach to teaching.

In addition, from Hutton's (2001) point of view, authentic texts provide both educators and students with an opportunity to develop critical literacy skills. "In a society where we are constantly bombarded by competing and conflicting messages, it is imperative that we teach students the skills of critical analysis" (Hutton, 2001, p.5).

However, despite the fact that using authentic texts has a number of benefits, it is inevitable that some problems arise when using them. Richards (2001) points out that authentic texts may contain difficult language, unnecessary vocabulary items and complicated structure, which may impose a burden for the teachers. Martinez (2002) notes that some of the authentic texts can be too culturally biased and many structures are too mixed, causing lower level students to have a hard time decoding the texts. In Harmer's (2001) opinion, when an authentic text is not chosen carefully the results "can be extremely de-motivating students . . . since they will not understand it" (p.205). Rivers (1981) also notes that authentic texts should be selected carefully according to readers' reading ability levels, otherwise their reading processes are disrupted by frequently referencing outside sources such as dictionaries. This disruption not only slows down the learner's reading process, but it may also have a negative effect, possibly damaging the students' language confidence (Rivers, 1981).

Regardless of the arguments against authentic texts, there have been overwhelming voices insisting that English taught in the classroom should be authentic so that it can benefit students' learning (Kilickaya, 2004; Berardo, 2006; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Bell, 2005; Haley & Austin, 2004; Hwang, 2005; Su, 2007). However, in China the opportunity of using authentic texts in the EFL classroom is very limited because authentic texts, which may not give the rules, patterns, or structures that students need to pass an exam, may be thought to be a distraction to students or even as an obstacle to their success on an examination (Tao, 2009). Also, according to a survey conducted by Yi (2006) on 30 teachers' perspectives of using authentic texts, only 13.3% teachers had an idea about what were authentic materials and only 6% of teachers thought that they should use authentic materials in their classes for listening training. As for textbooks, 63% of them thought that the texts in the textbooks were authentic.

Considering that authentic texts can benefit students in developing their ability to appreciate the social and culture aspects of English language, as indicated in the literature, this study will review what NECS suggests about using authentic texts in

English teaching and learning and whether or not the language used in the currently used textbooks is authentic.

Given that this study is focused on English literacy teaching in senior high schools in China, NECS, which provides guidelines for teachers to teach English in class, needs to be examined to explore its impact on teachers' perceptions and practice of L2 literacy. For this reason, literature related to curriculum, the differences between curriculum and syllabus, as well as an outcomes-based model of curriculum is to be reviewed in the following section.

2.4 Curriculum and syllabus

This section provides a brief review of the literature regarding curriculum and syllabus because both of them play significant but different roles in relation to language teaching at schools. The focus is on the definitions and diversities of curriculum and syllabus, the outcomes-based model of curriculum, and Ellis and Shintani's (2014) three types of linguistic syllabus. Compared to the extent of academic and educational literature that both discusses and differentiates curriculum and syllabus in western countries, the two terms are confusing in China. As argued by both Cheng and Gong (2005) and Gu (2012), both curriculum and syllabus function similarly as an authoritative guide or plan for a school subject. Actually, the term 'curriculum' has only emerged in China since 2003 when the latest official document, NECS, was enacted and it replaced the term 'syllabus' used previously (Cheng & Gong, 2005). Therefore, compared to western academic traditions, the term curriculum is rather new in China and, therefore, the understanding of curriculum is very limited. Because of this, there is a need to provide more detail around these two terms. The following sections discuss these terms to provide the basis for understanding the currently used curriculum and syllabus which have a significant impact on teaching L2 literacy in China.

2.4.1 Defining curriculum

Curriculum is a term that has been defined variously by different writers at different times in different contexts (Smith & Lovat, 2003; Marsh, 2008; Kelly, 2009; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; Portelli, 1987).

Some scholars define curriculum as a plan or a program. For example, Saylor, Alexander and Lewis (1981) define curriculum as “a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities for persons to be educated” (p.10). Pratt (1980) views curriculum as “an organized set of formal education and/or training intentions” (p.4). Curriculum is also viewed as an educational program that involve purpose, design, implementation and assessment (Wiles & Bondi, 2002; Denise, 2002). However, such definitions, known as the intended curriculum (Lynch, 1997), are based on the assumption that what is planned is to be achieved but excludes the unplanned learning which actually happens (Marsh, 2008).

Not satisfied with constraining the definition of curriculum to plans or programs, some scholars suggest that what is experienced during the learning process should be included as a part of curriculum. Caswell and Campbell (1935), being early exponents of this view, assert that “curriculum is all of the experiences children have under the guidance of teachers” (p.69, cited in Ornstein and Hunkins, 2009, p.10). Eisner (2002) describes the curriculum as a “pre-planned series of educational hurdles and an entire range of experiences a child has within the school” (p.26). Also, Marsh and Willis (2003) claim that curriculum is the “experiences in the classroom that are planned and enacted” (p.4). Rogder (1989, p.26) provides a definition with more detail:

Curriculum is all those activities in which children engage under the auspices of the school. This includes not only what pupils learn, but how they learn, and how teachers help them learn, using what supporting materials, styles and methods of assessment, and in what kind of facilities.

Furthermore, Luke, Woods and Weir (2013) extend the definition of curriculum by including the learning experiences occurring outside of the classroom as well as those in the classroom. They also stated that curriculum is the sum total of resources that are brought together by teachers, students and community, “including intellectual and scientific, cognitive and linguistic, textbook and adjunct resources and materials, official or unofficial” (Luke, Woods & Weir, 2013, p.10). Grundy (1998) proposes two different but complementary ways of thinking about the curriculum: the syllabus view and the pedagogical view of curriculum. The syllabus view takes syllabus as “the basic component of the curriculum” which “is designed by expert curriculum designers and developers, and given to those for whom it is intended, for their use” (p.29). As for the pedagogical view of curriculum, Grundy (1998) identifies four components, including teachers, students, subject-matter and milieu, and she contends that curriculum “is the

consequence of the dynamic interaction of all these four commonplaces” (p.30). Therefore, curriculum is not only about what is intended by the designers, but also involves what teachers implement in the classrooms and also what students experience in their learning process. They are identified as three levels of curriculum, namely the intended curriculum, the implemented curriculum and the attained curriculum (Lynch, 1997). Marsh and Willis (2003) name them as the planned curriculum, the enacted curriculum and the experienced curriculum. No matter how it is defined, it is the degree of overlap between the three levels that decides whether a new education reform, based on this curriculum, has an actual and real effect on students (Lynch, 2007).

So, informed by the above perspectives of viewing curriculum as a dynamic process, it is significant for this study to examine how the teachers, according to what is intended in NECS, enact their teaching practice. The aim is to see whether what is intended has been implemented or translated into real teaching practice, in particular those in relation to the expected outcomes of students’ L2 literacy development.

2.4.2 The outcomes-based model of curriculum

With regards to how a curriculum is structured, developed and evaluated, different models of curriculum are promoted within different educational paradigms. In recent decades an outcomes-based model of education has been influential and this model of curriculum will be discussed here as it has influenced NECS.

William Spady, a developer and advocate of outcomes-based education (OBE), defines OBE as a “comprehensive approach to organizing and operating an education system that is focused on and defined by the successful demonstrations of learning sought from each student” (Spady, 1994, p.1). Regarding outcomes, Spady (1994) elaborates them as “clear learning results that we want students to demonstrate at the end of significant learning experiences” and “actions and performances that embody and reflect learner competence in using content, information, ideas, and tools successfully” (p.2). Willis and Kissane (1995) also contend that “OBE involves the premise that decisions about what and how to teach should be driven by the outcomes we would like students to exhibit at the end of their educational experience” (p.2). Therefore, an outcome-based curriculum involves the clear articulation of the desired outcomes of learning.

To gain a clear understanding of this outcome-based model, there is a need to clarify two terms: objective and outcome, because these two terms have become the predominant focus of teachers and curriculum planners since the mid-1990s (Brady & Kennedy, 2007). According to King and Evans (1991), outcomes are regarded as particular types of objectives which shift the focus “from objectives derived often from content or textbook outlines to objectives based on desired changes in the learner” (p.73). Therefore, the outcome-based curriculum addresses students rather than the knowledge-based content at the centre of learning. As NECS is structured as an outcome-based model, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, it is essential and significant to provide more information about this model of curriculum, particularly its advantages and disadvantages on teaching and learning, so that a better understanding of NECS can be gained.

There are numerous advantages of outcome-based curriculum acknowledged by its proponents. The specific outcomes in knowledge, skills and understanding provide a clear direction for both teachers and learners in the learning process (Brady & Kennedy, 2007; Jessup, 1991; Nash, 1995), and such clarification of the end is assumed to “enhance practice and increase levels of achievement” (Lee, O’Neill & McKenzie, 2004, p.59). Marsh (1992) argues that a curriculum of this model assists teachers in the selection of relevant content, methods, assessment and resources and in their judgement of the quality of their teaching. Jessup (1991) notes that outcomes-based models are suited for a variety of modes of learning and teaching which are responsive to individual difference. Similarly, Willis (2000) argues for the OBE curriculum because it acknowledges that the same outcomes can be achieved through very different experiences. Although one of the criticisms is that the outcome-based model identifies the desired outcomes of learning, but does not prescribe how to achieve them (Lee, *et al.*, 2004), it is exactly the strength of OBE because there are many pedagogical options, depending on the context. As stated by Spady (1994), “what and whether students learn successfully is more important than when and how they learning something” (p.8). Additionally, at the level of implementation, the outcomes-based approach is considered to offer benefits including clarity, flexibility, comparison and portability (Ewell, 2008).

Despite many benefits it promises, the OBE is subject to criticism and cautionary use. It has been criticised as being too general, convoluted and jargon-laden to be of much

practical value (Donnelly, 2004; Dykman, 1994). Berlach and McNaught (2007) argue that OBE “presents ‘big picture’ imperatives without delineating precisely how such a big picture looks in practice” (p.4). Some critics have found outcomes schemes to be overly specifiable, observable, quantifiable and so narrow that they can be limiting rather than liberating, which may result in reductionism, reification, fractionation, serendipity, and may fail to achieve the kind of learning and education that it purports to promote in the first place (Ewell, 2008; Bagnall, 1994; Ashworth & Saxton, 1990; Hyland, 1991).

In the next chapter NECS will be examined to identify it as an outcomes-based model of curriculum. However, the problem is that Chinese teachers are used to teaching from prescribed textbooks but not used to having or even do not have the freedom to make choices themselves, although OBE accommodates different approaches and experiences. Therefore, NECS as an outcomes-based model of curriculum is like a mirage.

2.4.3 Definitions of syllabus and types of syllabus

Different from curriculum, syllabus is defined as “a map and a descriptive overview of the curriculum” and “a structured summary or outline of what should be taught and learned across the schooling years” (Luke, Woods & Weir, 2013, p.10). Ellis and Shintani (2014) define a syllabus as “a statement of teaching content in the order in which it is to be taught” (p.52). Ellis and Shintani (2014) also identify three types of linguistic syllabi: grammatical syllabus, lexical syllabus and notional syllabus, depending on the level of language and the organizational principle of the syllabus. Grammatical syllabi see grammar as central to language teaching and learning, lexical syllabi organize the content of language teaching programme around lexis, and notional syllabuses emphasize meanings for communicative purposes. Ellis and Shintani’s (2014) linguistic syllabi are very useful for mainstream language courses because they “have continued to draw on linguistic syllabi of one kind or another” (p.52).

However, in China NECS, as an outcomes-based model of curriculum, does not provide the outline or structure of what should be taught or learned at school, and Chinese teachers have been used to working with what is essentially a grammatical syllabus. Under such circumstance, Chinese teachers have used textbooks as a syllabus but focus on grammar, although the new textbook series *NSEFC* is structured as a composite

syllabus that encompasses elements of all three types of syllabi described by Ellis and Shintani (2014). Detailed information will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter, through a review of the literature associated with literacy and L2 literacy in western and Chinese academic areas, concludes that there is limited amount of empirical research on English literacy in China, especially in high school settings and from teachers' perspectives and practice. The review of language and culture discloses that Chinese scholars hold different perspectives of cultural teaching and learning in EFL classrooms from their western counterparts. Although there are some published works concerning cultural teaching and learning at school, the focus is on the content of the textbooks rather than investigating what is taught about culture and how it is taught in English classes.

The gaps identified through the review of literature lead to the research inquiry of this study. Focused on senior high school settings in China, this empirical study aims to explore the Chinese EFL teachers' perspectives and practices of English L2 literacy. The study also looks at how cultural and social aspects of English language texts are explored in English classrooms in these schools. The review of literature on authentic texts suggests the benefits of exposing language learners to authentic texts and this informs the inquiry regarding the opportunity that the EFL teachers provide for their students in class.

This chapter also reviews the literature regarding curriculum and syllabus, with the focus on an outcomes-based model of curriculum due to its influence on the curriculum documentation – NECS. This helps to provide a further understanding of NECS and the textbooks, which allows the insight into the participant teachers' teaching practice in two case study schools. In the following chapter the currently used curriculum NECS will be examined to disclose how literacy development is reflected and required in this official documentation. The chapter continues with the examination of the textbook series *NSEFC* used in the case study schools to see how the textbooks are constructed and compiled to help English learners with linguistic knowledge of the English language as well as the learning of culture.

CHAPTER 3 ENGLISH CURRICULUM AND THE TEXTBOOKS FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

3.1 Introduction

To contextualise classroom practice at senior high schools in China, this chapter examines the National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (NECS), and the textbook series *New Senior English For China (NSEFC)*. The focus is firstly on how students' English learning outcomes are described and how language and literacy are presented in the document. NECS, an outcomes-based model of curriculum, is explored through a review of its curriculum policy, the language and literacy components as well as the cultural component described in the documentation. Then, the textbook series *NSEFC* is discussed in terms of the structure and content of the textbooks to see how the linguistic, social and cultural aspects are reflected in them.

3.2 National English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (NECS)

3.2.1 Curriculum policy

At the turn of the century, China's overall education goal shifted "from the modernization orientation to the globally-compatible and future-ready orientation" (Gu, 2012, p.41). In order to meet the demand for qualified young people in the 21st century, the pursuit of quality education has become the national strategy for education in China. Quality education, according to Gu (2012), refers to "the overall development of the whole child in bringing every future citizen to his or her best potential" (p.41). In the name of improving quality and effectiveness of education, Chinese education systems have been subject to reform, starting with the issue of policy documents, such as *Decision on Deepening Educational Reform and the Full Promotion of Quality Education* in 1999 and *Decision on the Reform and Development of Basic Education* in 2001. These two documents launched the restructure of curriculum (Guan & Meng, 2007; Zhao, 2007), and then *Framework for the Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (Trial Version)* (MOE, 2001) was issued in 2001 and a trial version of the new curriculum standards for 22 compulsory subjects were released afterwards (Gu, 2012). In response to the increased demand for improved English language teaching and

learning in the context of globalization (Hu, 2005b), NECS was formally issued in 2003 by the MOE and piloted at senior high schools in 2004 (Hu, 2005c). Its introduction, according to Zheng (2011), has promoted “a paradigm shift from a traditional teacher-dominated, knowledge-based transmission mode of teaching to a more learner-centred, experience-based, problem-solving mode of teaching” (p.5).

NECS documentation consists of four sections (see Table 3.1), with the first two sections providing overarching statements of curriculum outcomes, the third part presenting detailed descriptions of each outcome area for different levels, and suggestions on implementing this curriculum in the final section.

Table 3.1 *The Structure of NECS*

<p style="text-align: center;">Part I Introduction</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The nature of the curriculum 2. The guiding principles 3. Course structure
<p style="text-align: center;">Part II Curriculum outcomes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ultimate outcomes of NECS 2. Overarching statements of outcomes for each of Levels 6-9
<p style="text-align: center;">Part III Description of five outcome areas for Levels 6-9</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language skills (Level 6, 7, 8, 9) 2. Language knowledge (Level 7, 8, 9) 3. Affection and attitudes (Level 7, 8) 4. Learning strategies (Level 7/8) 5. Cultural awareness (Level 7/8)
<p style="text-align: center;">Part IV Implementation suggestions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suggestions on teaching <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Teaching principles b. Suggestions on teaching language skills c. Types of teaching and learning activities d. Teaching cases (3 cases) 2. Suggestions on assessment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assessment principles b. Assessment methods and cases 3. The development and use of curriculum resources 4. Suggestions on compiling and using textbooks

The introductory section (Part I) of the document includes expected outcomes of foreign language education at senior high school level with the consideration of both the individual's cognitive and affective development and the demands of the Chinese society for competent persons to make contribution to China's economic and scientific development (MOE, 2003).

In addition to this broad and general statement of the society's intention for schooling, the ultimate outcomes presented in Part II specify the expectations of students' English learning at senior high school level.

Based on what students have learned in English during the compulsory schooling period, the outcomes of NECS are to make students further clarify their purposes of learning English, develop their autonomous and cooperative learning, build up effective learning strategies, and develop students' ability to communicate in English effectively and appropriately. (MOE, 2003, p.3)

General outcomes described in the above statements refer to “desired changes in the learners” rather than those “derived from content or textbook outlines” (King & Evans, 1991, p.73), which again reflects “a shift of emphasis from transmission mode of teaching to a more communicative and learner-centred approach” (Wang & Chen, 2012, p.92). In line with the focus of quality education on the overall development of the whole child, the desired outcomes in NECS consist of such areas as students' affective development, learning strategies and cultural awareness, in addition to linguistic knowledge and skills as outlined in the framework. The components of each outcome area are presented as follows:

- Language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing)
- Language knowledge (phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, functions and topics)
- Learning strategies (resourcing, communicative, meta-cognitive, cognitive)
- Affection and attitudes (motivation and interest, self-confidence and perseverance, cooperative spirit, patriotism and international perspectives)
- Cultural awareness (cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, cross-cultural communicative awareness and competence)

Each of five outcome areas are described in NECS (Part III), including statements indicating that all these learning outcomes are interrelated and outcomes in each area are essential to develop students' ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in English.

Language skills and knowledge lay the foundation of effective communication; students' affection and attitudes to learning are significant factors that impact their learning and development; learning strategies are the necessary prerequisite to improve learning effectiveness and to develop autonomous learning; cultural awareness ensures students use language appropriately. (MOE, 2003, p.3)




Learning outcomes in NECS are described in progressive levels rather than in grades, which is another prominent feature of NECS that differs from the previous curriculums. Brown (1991) indicates that structuring outcomes in levels is based on the evidence that there is considerable overlap between the achievement of high achievers at lower grades and low achievers at higher grades. In principle, this approach “enables the monitoring

of an individuals' personal growth over a period as well as their progress against an external standard or towards an agreed goal" (Willis & Kissane, 1995, p. 18).

NECS articulates English learning outcomes in the four successive Levels 6-9 as a continuation of Levels 1-5 to "achieve consistency, integration, and flexibility" (Wang & Chen, 2012, p.97) during the nine-year compulsory period of education. At graduation, senior high school students are required to have achieved Level 7, whilst Levels 8 and 9 are elective and intended for those who are willing to further develop their ability to use English effectively and appropriately (MOE, 2003). NECS provides the overarching statements of the outcomes to be achieved for Levels 6-9 respectively, and then specific descriptions of the outcomes for each of the outcome areas are provided. However, detailed descriptions are not given for all of levels. For example, outcomes descriptions for such learning areas as Learning Strategies, Affection and Attitudes, and Cultural Awareness are only available for Level 7 and Level 8 which are respectively for high school graduates and students with higher English level.

Informed by the level-based outcomes, a new course structure for senior high schools was developed and presented in NECS (See Table 3.2). Courses are divided into required modules 1-5 and optional modules 6-11 with 2 credits for each module. Completion of the required courses within 36 contact hours (45 minutes per class and 4 classes per week) is a prerequisite for receiving credits, and students must achieve 10 credits in order to reach Level 7 to graduate from senior high school. The optional courses consist of two series. Series I is a continuation of the required courses (Modules 1-5) and students are required to complete Modules 6-8 to reach Level 8 and Modules 9-11 to reach Level 9. All schools are required to guarantee the establishment of Modules 6-8, and to endeavour to actively set up Modules 9-11. Series II consists of three categories, including language knowledge and skills development, English for specific purposes and English literary appreciation with a variety of courses in each category. Schools are encouraged to offer 1-2 courses from each category, and make an active attempt to establish more courses from Series II for students to choose from (MOE, 2003, p.2).

Table 3.2 *The Course Structure suggested in NECS (MOE, 2003)*

Levels	Required courses			Optional courses					
				Series I			Series II		
	Module	Weekly lessons	Credit	Module	weekly lessons	credit			
Level 9  Level 8  Level 7  Level 6				Module 11	4	2	Language knowledge and skills (e.g. Junior course for English-Chinese translation, practical English writing, English newspaper and magazine reading etc.)	English for specific purposes (e.g. Secretarial English, Junior English for tourism, Journal English for business, etc.)	English literature, films, dramas, songs, etc.
				Module 10	4	2			
				Module 9	4	2			
				Module 8	4	2			
				Module 7	4	2			
				Module 6	4	2			
	Module 5	4	2						
	Module 4	4	2						
	Module 3	4	2						
	Module 2	4	2						
Module 1	4	2							
Compulsory Education (Level 1 – Level 5)									

Although it is highly recommended in the curriculum that schools set up the elective courses for students to take, it is not a requirement, which may limit students' options. The fact is, according to Wang and Chen (2012), almost all schools offer optional courses Modules 6-8 to prepare students for the college entrance examination but many do not offer Modules 9-11 or courses from Series II due to a lack of resources and staff.

Another reason is that, schools see little relevance between the college entrance examination and the electives (Wang & Chen, 2012). Therefore, although it seems that schools are entitled to make the decision to offer optional courses, most schools just follow what is required for taking the PMET rather than providing students with more options because this high-stake test is most valued by schools and the society.

The implementation of an outcome-based curriculum in the context of China is also problematic. As discussed in Chapter 2, a key dimension of outcomes philosophy is “common outcomes, uncommon curriculum” (Willis, 2000), because children learn in different ways at different paces. However, that is not what happens in China, instead, students are expected to achieve common outcomes by using the common curriculum/syllabus in English learning. Structured as an outcome-based curriculum framework, NECS documentation allows schools and teachers some flexibility (MOE, 2003). It suggests that teachers should be capable of developing curriculum resources to achieve the curriculum outcomes creatively (MOE, 2003), and also provides detailed statements on how to use the textbooks and how to develop other curriculum resources. However, statements such as “the textbook is the pathway to achieve curriculum outcomes” (MOE, 2003, p.15) and “English textbooks are a core part of English curriculum resources” (MOE, 2003, p.38) have resulted in the textbooks actually becoming the syllabus used in China. This is contradictory to the expectation within NECS that teachers would appreciate flexibility within curriculum content and be able to make their own decisions.

The detailed examination of the curriculum documentation also reveals that NECS incorporates a ‘big step’ rating scale, although language assessment is not the focus of this study. It means that students’ achievement is intended to be measured over long term periods. There is confusion as to the function of this ‘big step’ rating scale as opposed to the specific outcomes or descriptions to be used at programming level. While the levels on the ‘big step’ rating scale are described, the specific outcomes to be used at programming level are not clear. As a result, teachers have no document to refer to for the purpose of rating students’ performance in a short term. For example, there is no rating criteria for teachers to measure students’ achievement in their learning areas such as learning strategies and cultural awareness after a semester’s learning.

As this study is focused on English as a foreign language literacy and teaching, it is necessary to have a look at how language and literacy development is described in this

official documentation to highlight what is required and expected of L2 literacy teaching and learning.

3.2.2 Language and literacy

Based on critical examination of the curriculum documentation, this section will look into how language and literacy is presented in NECS and what is expected of students' outcomes in their English literacy development as proposed in NECS.

In NECS, the purpose of language and the significance of learning a foreign language are presented in Part I:

Language is the most important instrument for people's thinking and communication, and it is also a prerequisite for people to get involved in social activities. Language plays a significantly important role in promoting human's all-round development. With the increasing globalization of social and economic activities in contemporary society, mastering a foreign language has become an essential ability for people of different countries in the world. Therefore, learning and mastering a foreign language, especially English, is of great significance. (MOE, 2003, p.1)

According to this description, the curriculum emphasises students' all-round development as a whole person and the significant impact that learning a foreign language has on such development, suggesting a learner-centred philosophy underlying the curriculum. It can be regarded as a move forward, compared with the previous syllabi that were focused on learning language knowledge and developing language skills (Wang & Chen, 2012; Wang, 2007). The addition of a 'humanistic' goal to the longstanding 'instrumental' rationale is another significant feature of NECS (Wang, 2006).

English literacy outcomes are included in NECS documentation, although there is no specific description of English literacy components. The following paragraph is a part of the overarching statements of Level 7 intended for graduates, which demonstrates the concept of literacy described at this level.

. . . exchange information on familiar topics by asking questions and stating opinions and advice; read the simplified editions of English works suitable for senior high school students as well as English newspapers and magazines; write for practical purposes, such as notices and invitation letters; under teachers' instructions, get involved in planning, organizing and implementing language activities; broaden and employ learning resources actively, access information from multimedia, and create meaning clearly and explicitly by using the obtained information; evaluate and regulate themselves and primarily develop their own

learning strategies; understand cultural diversity and primarily develop cross-cultural communicative awareness (MOE, 2003, p.5).

This general description for Level 7 highlights that students are expected to obtain and process information in English through different media, to make meaning from written texts, and to understand different cultures. The mention of accessing information from multimedia in the curriculum reflects a developing perspective on communication due to social and scientific development. However, compared to current definitions of literacy prevalent in western literature that emphasise the ability to make meaning from a variety of text forms within the social and cultural contexts (New London Group, 2000; Anstey & Bull, 2004; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005), what is reflected from the above description is that culture is separated from making meaning rather than being regarded as an inseparable part of language. Such separation can be further identified from the examination of how cultural teaching and learning is interpreted and suggested in NECS, and this will be provided in the following section.

3.2.3 Cultural component in NECS

NECS identifies cultural awareness as one of the five outcome areas, which differs from previous syllabi where the emphasis was on learning English language as a knowledge system, almost exclusively focused on vocabulary and grammar. It is recognized in NECS that culture plays an important role in L2 literacy development.

Language has rich cultural connotations. . . . Being exposed to and learning about cultures of English-speaking countries are beneficial to better understand and use the English language, deepen the understanding and awareness of national culture, build up world view, and develop cross-cultural communicative competence. (MOE, 2003, p.12)

There is little further discussion on the relationship between language and culture other than the limited statements presented above. Thus, it remains ambiguous whether culture learning results from language learning or cultural components can be learned in Chinese, independently from the language learning. Besides, without being specifically defined, terms such as “cultural connotations”, “world view”, and “cross-cultural communicative competence” are vague in meaning.

In NECS culture is predominately focused on “knowing information about the culture” rather than “knowing how to engage with it” (Liddicoat, 2004, p.301). Such a definition of culture is problematic because there is no clear indication of what is expected of

cultural learning to support appropriate and effective communication. Moreover, in addition to a lack of explicit definitions of world view and cross-cultural communicative competence, there is no clear statement of what countries are referred to as English-speaking countries. Actually, English-speaking countries are not culturally the same but vary much. Then the term ‘cultures of the English-speaking countries’ is changed to ‘foreign cultures’ in the following statements in NECS.

Students should be helped to be exposed to a wide range of cultures of different countries to broaden their vision, and to develop their sensitivity to and discernment of the similarities and differences between Chinese and **foreign cultures** to lay a good foundation for their cross-cultural communicative competence. (MOE, 2003, p.12)

Given the ambiguous perspective of the relationship between language and culture, it is not surprising to find that NECS uses terms ‘cultures of the English-speaking countries’ and ‘foreign cultures’ interchangeably, resulting in ambiguity on culture teaching and learning. Also, the lack of clarification on how the outcomes in this area might be achieved in the classroom leaves culture teaching and learning vague and seemingly less valued.

As an outcomes-based model of curriculum, NECS presents a set of outcome statements in the form of competence-based levels (Wang, 2007). Cultural awareness, as one of the outcome areas, is referred to in the overarching statements of curriculum outcomes from Level 6 to Level 9 (MOE, 2003, pp.4-5), which can be seen in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 *Outcomes description concerning culture in the arching statements in NECS*

Level	Outcomes statements for cultural awareness
Level 6	Be able to be aware of the cultural meaning and the background of the English language when it is used for communication.
Level 7	Understand the cultural difference in communication and make a start at developing cross-cultural communicative awareness.
Level 8	Know about the cultural meaning and the background in communication and hold a respectful and tolerant attitude towards other cultures.
Level 9	Be concerned with current affairs and possess strong world awareness.

Based on the successive levels, it seems that the statements attempt to present a coherent development of cultural awareness, but, unfortunately, they seem neither to be coherent nor progressive. Another problem is that culture and background are not integrated as a single concept, but mentioned separately, adding confusion to understanding of culture. Also, the term world awareness is not explicitly articulated either, leaving the description of the outcome for Level 9 unclear.

In addition to the curriculum overarching statements, NECS documentation attempts to provide more specific information in respect of cultural awareness. The descriptions of cultural awareness for Levels 7 and 8 are presented in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 *Description of cultural awareness outcomes in NECS*

Level	Description of cultural awareness outcomes
Level 7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. understand the cultural connotation of English idioms and proverbs; 2. understand the allusions and legends frequently used in English; 3. know about famous writers, artists, scientists, politicians and their contributions; 4. have basic knowledge of the political and economic situation of the English-speaking countries; 5. know about the mass media of English-speaking countries; 6. learn about the similar and different lifestyles between the people of English-speaking countries and Chinese; 7. know about the similarities and differences between native English speakers and Chinese in such respects as behaviours and the ways of getting along with others; 8. know about main religious traditions in English speaking countries; 9. know about world culture by learning English and develop world awareness; 10. deepen the understanding of Chinese culture through comparison between Chinese and foreign cultures.
Level 8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. have basic knowledge of the relationship between the English language and the culture of English-speaking countries (e.g. the relationship between some words and expressions and their cultural background); 2. realize the attitudes towards other countries that are implied in English language when it is used (e.g. admiration or discrimination); 3. have an objective and fair understanding of the English language, people of English-speaking countries, and their culture; 4. know about the most outstanding cultural features of English-speaking countries; 5. have basic knowledge of the history of some important cultural phenomena in English-speaking countries; 6. have basic knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries that is reflected in people's common lives and their values.

By providing these descriptions, NECS intends to specify what is expected of cultural learning for different levels. However, as indicated previously, the statements, for the most part, suggest a separation of language and culture. As such, the implication is that cultural knowledge is learned independently of English learning, rather than creating

and being created by every attempt to communicate in English (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000). There are several examples of such separation. For instance, students are expected to learn about world culture in EFL classrooms (Level 7, Item 9). Culture knowledge, therefore, is seen as “information about culture” associated with high culture and area studies rather than the knowledge of “how to engage with it” (Liddicoat, 2004, p.301). This description of culture as factual information in NECS cannot provide sufficient support to achieve the ultimate outcome of developing students’ ability to communicate in English effectively and appropriately. Additionally, the formulation of outcomes remains vague as well. For example, what is meant by world culture and world awareness (Item 9 of Level 7), what are the most outstanding cultural features of English-speaking countries (Item 4 of Level 8), and what are important cultural phenomena (Item 5 of Level 8)? There are no examples available in NECS to make the terms clear and specific. Moreover, there is no mention of the pedagogical dimension of culture learning in the document. As an outcome-based model, NECS fails to discuss what might be experienced in the students’ learning process.

Another issue emerging from the above outcome descriptions is that students are expected to know more about Chinese culture through English learning (Level 7, Item 10). The inclusion of national culture, cultures of English-speaking countries and foreign cultures in English teaching and learning stands out when some suggestions are put forward on writing and compiling textbooks in NECS.

Moral education should infiltrate into English textbooks, which can benefit students’ in establishing correct outlook on life, world view and values. Language is the medium of culture. Foreign cultures have an impact on shaping students’ worldview, philosophy of life and values. Therefore, textbooks should both reflect Chinese traditional culture, and help in learning about the essence of foreign cultures. Meanwhile students’ discriminating ability should be developed. (MOE, 2003, p. 40)

The above statement reflects to some extent a fear of the influence imposed by foreign cultures. As stated by Gao (2009), China’s history of being a semi-colonial state of the West shook the national identity violently, and thus has a great impact on English language education. Gao (2009) assumed that “if China had never been invaded by the West and not fallen into a semi-colonial state, English learning in China would probably embrace the target culture of its language learning with a more open heart and mind” (p.74). This perspective might explain the persistent ambivalence in attitudes towards culture in English L2 literacy development.

As a guidance document for high school English teaching and learning, NECS also provides suggestions on how to select and use English resources, which will be presented in the following section.

3.2.4 Suggestions on selection of texts in NECS

One of the principles for developing a multiliteracies curriculum is to include “opportunities to learn about, interpret, and produce texts that use individual and combined semiotic systems (linguistic, visual, auditory, spatial, and gestural), and opportunities to learn about, interpret, and produce paper, electronic, and live texts” (Anstey & Bull, 2006, p.57). Texts in this context go beyond the units of written or print language on page and are broadened to include different modalities. This definition is used in this dissertation to refer to any form of teaching and learning materials used by teachers and students to learn English.

In the NECS documentation English curriculum resource is defined to consist of English textbooks and all the other learning materials and auxiliary facilities⁷ that can benefit students in their ability to communicate in English effectively and appropriately. With the increasing rate of technological innovation, new forms of texts have been emerging, incorporating spoken or written language, still or moving images, sound and music. Non-print forms such as films, videos, emails, and the internet infiltrate into people’s daily life. Under such circumstance, the development and utilization of curriculum resources is discussed in the last section of NECS, which is in line with contemporary multiliteracies approaches.

Teachers should make full use of modern technology to develop English teaching and learning resources, broaden students’ learning channels, and improve their ways of learning and their learning efficiency. If conditions permit, teachers should make full use of various visual and audio means, such as wall maps, videos, etc., to enrich the content and form of teaching to promote students’ learning in class. Teachers should employ computer and multimedia teaching software to explore new models of teaching to promote students’ independent learning. (MOE, 2003, p.15)

⁷ According to NECS, auxiliary facilities refers to library, language lab, and other audio and video facilities for English teaching and learning at school.

In addition, the NECS documentation also suggests that teachers should expose students to a variety of authentic texts so that students can experience how English is used in different ways in real life situations.

However, “the English textbook is the core materials for English teaching and learning at school” (MOE, 2003, p.38), which means that teachers’ teaching is still directed by textbooks and authentic teaching materials are seldom used in classroom practice (Lee, 2009). Under the guidance of the curriculum issued by the national policy-maker the Ministry of Education, textbooks are written by experts, published by authoritative publishers such as People’s Education Press, and assigned to be used as compulsory materials at school. Consequently, textbooks are regarded as being authoritative in China. English textbooks, which “provide input, suggest approaches and methodology, and guide or impose the course of learning” (Wu, 2001, p.193), thus determine both what is, and how it is to be taught.

Given that English textbooks dominate English teaching and learning at school in China, the next section will examine the structure and content of *New Senior English for China (NSEFC)*, the textbooks used by schools where this study was carried out, especially the social and cultural aspects of the English language texts and the authenticity of the texts in the textbooks.

3.3 *New Senior English for China (NSEFC)*

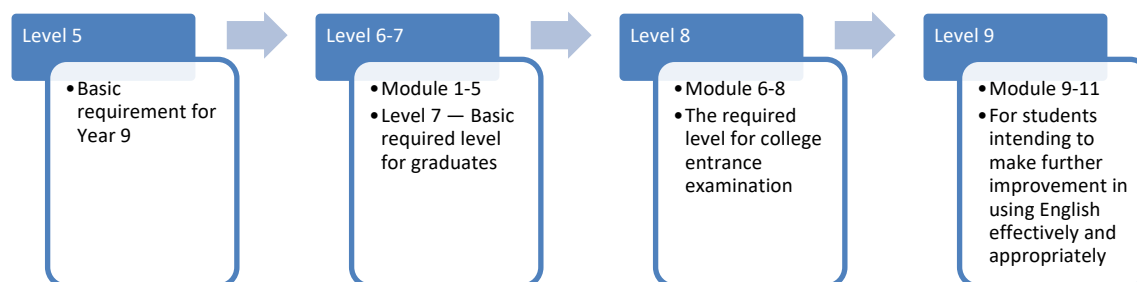
NSEFC is a series of textbooks which has been most widely used in senior middle schools in China (Liu, 2011; Gong, 2011) including the schools in Lu City where this research study was carried out. There are other textbooks and materials published in China, for example, by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press and the Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, which go considerably further than the *NSEFC* series in the directions of literacy, and linguistic and cultural development for classroom practices. However, as the *NSEFC* series was the only material used in both case study schools, the focus of this study will be on this textbook series.

3.3.1 Introduction of *NSEFC*

Compiled under the guidance of NECS, *NSEFC* is structured by modules, and each book encapsulates one module. There are 11 modules in total, of which Modules 1-5

are intended for the required level (Level 7) of the curriculum and Modules 6-11 for optional learning (see Figure 3.1). Within each module/book there are 5 units, giving a total of 55 units in the series.

Figure 3.1 Senior high school course structure based on NECS



The contents of each module/book of *NSEFC* is listed on the first page and present the structure of each unit, including topic, functional items, grammar, the titles of reading passages, and the focus of writing (See Appendix A). In accord with Ellis and Shintani’s (2014) definition of syllabus, *NSEFC* explicitly presents “teaching content in the order in which it is to be taught” (p.52) across senior high school years. The appearance of contents suggests that the textbook encompasses elements of all three types of syllabi described by Ellis and Shintani, which are grammatical syllabus, lexical syllabus and notional syllabus (2014). Specifically, functional items are available in each unit where listening and speaking is built in, which is the focus in a notional syllabus, and grammar also plays a significant part in English courses. But how the teachers use the textbooks will be examined in case study chapters.

Since *NSEFC* is structured according to the outcome areas of NECS, the following sections will examine how the textbooks present linguistic, cultural and social aspects of English and the place of authentic texts within them in order to answer the research questions.

3.3.2 Linguistic aspect in *NSEFC*

Language knowledge is one of five outcomes areas in NECS, including phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, functions and topics, and it is described as the foundation of developing students’ language skills to make effective communication (MOE, 2003).

In each unit, there is Learning about Language Section with written exercises for students to do to master useful words, expressions and structures. Although most exercises, such as, matching, blank-filling, multiple choices and completing or rewriting sentences, are more helpful for students to get credits in exams, there are some tasks which are intended to improve students' ability to use the proper structure in real life circumstances. For example, in Unit 2 of Module 2, a task in Structure Learning Section requires students to make a poster for a sport event in school sports meeting to practise future passive voice. Additionally, more detailed lexical and grammatical knowledge is presented as notes in appendix. Vocabulary list is also provided in each book with different marks to identify whether they are required in the curriculum. Phonetic symbols are available for each word in the vocabulary list to help learners with pronunciation.

Topics and functions are also categorised as language knowledge in the curriculum documentation. The contents of each textbook list the topics and functional items of each unit (see Appendix A for an example). Within the textbooks the functional items appear in the Using the Language Section where listening and speaking is built in. Students are expected to learn how to use functional items to express feelings, intentions and attitudes properly to make effective communication. For example, in Unit 2 of Module 2, students are required to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of information technology, using the reasoning expressions provided in the textbook.

Since the textbooks are structured with the inclusion of the components of language knowledge required in NECS, how teacher participants in two schools use the textbook to help students with the linguistic aspects of the English language to achieve the expected outcomes will be examined in the case study chapters. Next, we will have a close look at whether culture is included as a part of English learning in this series of textbooks.

3.3.3 Social and cultural aspects in *NSEFC*

EFT curriculum design and evaluation needs to include consideration of culture and intercultural communication, and EFL or ESL textbooks should “reflect a range of cultural contexts and include intercultural elements” to “raise learners’ awareness of intercultural issues and enable them to communicate effectively and appropriately in a

variety of communicative contexts” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p.198). However, as discussed in Section 2, it is difficult to identify what is meant by cross-cultural communicative competence without an explicit definition or interpretation of this term in the NECS documentation. Moreover, the intercultural communicative competence as described by scholars (e.g. Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000; Byram, 2000, 2008; Kramsch, 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2011) are not presented in this curriculum documentation. This section will examine how social and cultural aspects are reflected in *NSEFC* with NECS as the guideline

The ultimate objective of NECS is to develop students’ ability to communicate in English effectively and appropriately (MOE, 2003), which necessitates social and cultural aspects of the language in addition to learning linguistic knowledge. In the last section of the NECS documentation, the principles of compiling textbooks and suggestions on the use of textbooks are provided. The first principle is that the textbooks should conform to the requirement of contemporary social development.

Language materials in the English textbooks should conform to the times, not only reflecting the development of the language but also meeting the requirements of the social development on students’ language competence; not only reflecting the life and spiritual outlook of youngsters in the contemporary society but also being closely related to social development, achievement in science and technology, and students’ life experience. (MOE, 2003, p.39)

Allied to this, it is claimed at the beginning of *Teacher’s handbooks*⁸ that “the content of *NSEFC* is close to contemporary social life and has a strong sense of keeping pace with new social developments” (*Teacher’s Handbook 6*, 2007, p. I). It is also claimed that “language materials mainly come from contemporary social life” (*Teacher’s Handbook 6*, 2007, p.II). However, all these statements are vague in that it is not explicitly indicated whether it refers to China’s or any English-speaking country’s society or social life. From the perspective that language and culture cannot be separated and language should be learned within the social and cultural contexts of where it is used, according to Kramsch (2006), the social life of the countries where English is spoken as the first language should be included, but some passages in the textbooks (e.g. see the passage in Appendix B as an example) indicate that what is discussed is about Chinese social life. This reflects that English learning is separated from the social and cultural context where it is used as national or the first language.

⁸ There is a *Teacher’s Handbook* accompanying each textbook of *NSEFC*.

An examination of the content of the textbook series highlights that much of the content is not about contemporary social life. Instead, history seems to be a topic favoured by the compilers of *NSEFC*. Take Module 2 as an example. Four out of five units in this book involve historical knowledge, such as the history of the artefacts in Russia's Amber Room in Unit 1, the history of the Olympics in Unit 2 and the history of computers in Unit 3. Even in Unit 5, whose topic is music, the reading passage is about a band called the Monkees who were popular in the 1970s. In Module 6, in addition to historical knowledge about western painting, topics like poetry, healthy life, the power of nature and global warming at face value can reflect the contemporary life. However, in Unit 5 of Module 6, there is a short reading text about a cyclone which hit Darwin, Australia in 1974 and students are required to discuss and decide what to do to help the poor people of Darwin by planning a TV programme to raise money. For students born in the late 1990s, a natural disaster that occurred in 1974 is not contemporary. Therefore, much of the material can hardly appeal to Chinese students living in the 21st century. As concluded by Gong (2011), who has studied the use of *NSEFC* in a northeast city in China, although topics in *NSEFC* are diverse, they are not attractive to students.

Additionally, as claimed in the *Teacher's Handbook*, one of the features of *NSEFC* is that

The national culture and foreign cultures are interwoven together, with the cultures of English-speaking countries and non-English-speaking countries as well as Chinese culture each accounting for a certain proportion. The aim is to show that *NSEFC* takes account of the fact of the world being globalized and the expectation of the students to learn more about China's traditional culture. (*Teacher's Handbook 6*, 2007, p. II).

Firstly, this reflects an ambiguous perspective of relationship between language and culture, as mirrored in NECS. Cultures of different countries in the world, such as Russia, France, and Australia, emerge in this textbook series, which is categorised as foreign culture. A typical example of the inclusion of cultures of foreign countries, no matter what language is spoken as the first language in the countries, is that the cover of Module 6 is a picture of the Louvre Museum of Paris (see Appendix C) which is not in an English-speaking country. From a Chinese traditional perspective, the countries in the world are roughly divided into the Western and the Eastern due to the historical and political reasons.

Chinese traditional culture is also an important component in the textbooks due to the concern about the impact of foreign culture, especially western culture, on Chinese

traditional culture. This corresponds to what is required of textbooks in NECS, that is, textbooks should reflect Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, it is not hard to trace Chinese ideas, sentiments and values embedded in English texts in this series of textbooks. For example, in Unit 3 of Module 6 there is a letter written by a grandad to his grandson James about stopping smoking. The letter reads more like an article to tell students what is right and wrong and why, so that they can “establish correct outlook on life” (MOE, 2003, p.40). In China, elders are usually thought to be wise due to rich experiences in life and tend to favour moralizing, while the young people are expected to accept and follow what they are told by the elder. As an old saying goes in China, “不听老人言吃亏在眼前”, which means that if the young do not follow the elder’s advice they will suffer for it. Thus, since *NSEFC* materials mainly mirror Chinese culture, students have little opportunity to “engage in intercultural negotiation with a text portraying another culture” (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999, p.207) although it is noted in the NECS documentation that textbooks should be helpful for students to learn about the essence of foreign cultures. As students are not provided the opportunity to ascertain the similarities and differences between their own culture and another culture, it does not help to identify and confirm their own cultural identity (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999)

A review of the textbooks shows that much attention is paid to history, geography and artefacts. This is consistent with the perspective reflected in NECS, that culture learning is more about getting to know factual information associated with “high culture” and “area studies” rather than “engaging with target culture” (Liddicoat, 2004, p.301). Moreover, it is Chinese values, attitudes, and beliefs that are reflected in the content of the textbooks, as discussed previously. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether cultural learning happens in English classes in the two case schools, what aspects of culture is involved and how it is presented, so as to throw some light on teachers’ understanding and perspective on culture teaching and learning in English classes. It is significant because, for EFL teachers, helping students with their culture learning is an indispensable aspect of developing their English literacy.

As discussed in the literature, being exposed to authentic texts is a good way for language learners to learn about culture and heighten comprehension of the language in order to get prepared for the real world (Shrum & Glisan, 2000; Guariento & Morley, 2001), the following section will investigate whether authentic texts are provided in this series of textbooks.

3.3.4 NSEFC and authentic texts

Students can benefit a great deal from being exposed to authentic texts in which social and cultural information is embedded, as discussed in Section 2.3.4 of Chapter 2. However, it has long been recognised that the language presented to students in textbooks can be a poor representation of the real thing. Shrum and Glisan (2000) highlight that, “many language textbooks contain poorly motivated and illogically sequenced texts and dialogues that do not reflect real-world language or situations, although they usually contain multiple examples of the grammar being presented” (p.28). Berardo (2006, p.61) refers to non-authentic materials as being “artificial and unvaried”, concentrating on the point that is to be taught, and even including “false-text indicators” which make the texts unlike what learners may face in the real world. Su (2007) contends that textbook-based materials are far from reflecting real language use and they are teacher-centred rather than learner-centred. Given this, whether texts in *NSEFC* are authentic needs to be examined to highlight if students are being provided with the opportunity to be exposed to real life English and situations to benefit their English literacy development.

The NECS documentation provides suggestions on compiling textbooks that language used in the textbooks should be authentic, although the statements are limited.

Textbooks should be rich in content with a range of themes and language should be authentic. (MOE, 2003, p.38)

Textbooks should employ language materials that are as real, authentic and typical as possible. (MOE, 2003, p.40)

However, as argued by Orton (2009), the formidable constraints, like time and setting, teacher knowledge and examination systems, impact what textbook can present to learners, and accordingly, as Freebody (2003) points out that the language presented in textbooks is crafted communications. Such argument can be reflected from the content of *NSEFC*, although it is claimed in *Teacher's Handbook* that “language materials in *NSEFC* mainly come from contemporary social life, and the language used is real, authentic and natural” (p. II).

The problem is that what is in the language textbook powerfully shapes learners' perception of target-language-use communities and their capacity to participate in them (Kelly Hall, 2002). The learners would consider what is presented in the textbook as

‘normal’, ‘acceptable’, ‘right’, ‘good’, ‘the way things ought to be’, ‘what people[we/they] do, or not’ (Gee, 1999, p.2).

The letter written by a grandad to persuade his grandson to quit smoking is an example (see Appendix B) of the inauthenticity of the texts used in the textbook. As discussed previously, the letter reads more like a medical analysis on how smoking does harm to people who are addicted to it because, in addition to the use of professional terms in the letter, such as nicotine, withdrawal symptom, physically addicted, mentally addicted, some link words like first, secondly, and lastly are used to structure the letter. Therefore, the language used in this letter is not authentic and students cannot access to the knowledge of how close family members in English-speaking community communicate with each other in their everyday life.

Moreover, at the end of this letter, the grandfather said he found some advice on quitting smoking on the internet for his grandson. Then on the next page is a webpage-like text titled *How can you stop smoking?* (see Appendix B), which intends to reflect the inclusion of website texts. However, it appears to be a copy of a webpage with a displaying window and tool bars, but the website address area is blank. How can the content show up without the website address? So undoubtedly it is an inauthentic text. Therefore, the opportunities provided by the textbooks for students to be exposed to authentic texts were rather limited.

However, no matter whether authentic texts are included within the textbooks, it does not preclude the possibility of teachers using the materials flexibly or supplementing the textbook with additional materials in accord with NECS. As stated in NECS, “If teachers think that some texts lack authenticity, they can replace them with some other language materials” (MOE, 2003, p.40). *Teacher’s Handbook* also suggests that teachers should be the master of the textbook, using the textbook flexibly and creatively, developing teaching materials through multiple channels to increase authentic, interesting and living materials (*Teacher’s Handbook 6*, 2007, p.VI). Therefore, it is significant to investigate what actually happens. How the teacher participants at the case schools actually use the textbooks, whether they use them flexibly and creatively to make authentic texts available in class, and whether they help their students explore the linguistic, social and cultural aspects of the English language texts will be explored in the case study chapters.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, NECS was examined to contextualize classroom practice in terms of the policy statements and requirements on language and literacy development in China. As an outcome-based model of curriculum, NECS presents five expected outcomes areas and also provides some suggestions on implementing this curriculum. *NSEFC* was then examined and it was found that this textbook series is constructed with the inclusion of lexical, grammatical and functional items. The review of the content of the textbooks highlights that there is much attention to high cultures of different countries in the world rather than being focused on the culture of the countries where English is spoken as the native or first language. This reflects a vague perception of the relationship between language and culture and also the impact of Chinese historical and social factors on cultural teaching and learning. Moreover, the English language used within the textbooks is not authentic. With the contextual knowledge outlined in this chapter, it will be interesting to investigate how NECS is implemented and how *NSEFC* is used by the teachers in two case study schools to develop their students' English literacy. Before we step into the case study schools to learn about the participants' perspectives and their practice, the discussion of the methodology employed in this study, including the theoretical framework, research methods, the procedure of data collection and analysis, as well as the limitations of doing this study, will be presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the design of this study. First, the rationale for the choice of a phenomenological case study based on qualitative methodology is presented. Then the data collection procedure, including selecting research sites, recruiting participants, and the research methods used in this study – interview, class observation, focus group interview, together with data analysis, is discussed. This is followed by a discussion of trustworthiness of the study and limitations associated with this research.

4.2 A phenomenological case study

4.2.1 Qualitative methodology

As discussed in Chapter 2, the literacy landscape today demands that teachers transform their classroom uses of literacy (Tan, Bopry & Guo, 2010). The reason is that literacy is no longer only defined as the ability to decode and encode printed words as the result of the wide and frequent use of multimodal texts in people's daily life. In this context, this study aimed to explore how the teacher participants perceived literacy and L2 literacy and how their perceptions impacted the enactment of their classroom teaching. Therefore, I adopted a qualitative methodology that allowed me to focus on the teachers' experience and perceptions of literacy and language teaching.

Qualitative research is descriptive in its approach, using the rich details of the contextual setting to shed light on the phenomenon being investigated (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), which is contrary to quantitative research, where variables are identified and measured, a hypothesis is tested, and statistics provide evidence of findings. In qualitative research, the study of the social worlds which individuals live in contributes significantly to the understanding of how they construct meaning of specific phenomenon or even the world (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, it is essential for this study to explore EFL teachers' experiences within the contemporary society in China in order to understand how they construct their perceptions towards the issue being investigated. Merriam (1998) shares five main characteristics of qualitative research (pp.6-7) (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 *The Main Characteristics of Qualitative Research*

Characteristic	Explanation
Key concern	understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives (the emic, or insider's perspective), not the researcher's (the etic, or outsider's view)
Primary instrument for data collection and analysis	researchers rather than some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer
Research site	the natural setting where the researcher must go physically to do observation
Research strategy	an Inductive research that builds abstraction, concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than tests existing theory
Product	rich descriptions of the context, the players involved, and the activities of interest

This study is concerned with understanding L2 literacy and literacy teaching from Chinese EFL teachers' perspectives, that is, the emic view. I am interested in how my participants "perceive the meaning of the world around them, and to view it through their eyes" (Krathwohl, 1998, p.235). In order to record and analyse these EFL practitioners' points of view and behaviours in their natural setting, I must approach them and enter their schools and classrooms to do the fieldwork. It is important because only in this way can their voices be heard and their experiences be described and interpreted. It is the teachers' voices and experiences that is significant within my study. It is because of these characteristics of my study that a qualitative research design is used. My experience, perspective and prior knowledge of the research topic and study field support the research endeavour.

As noted by Wax (1971, p.3) “while the outsider simply does not know the meanings or the patterns, the insider is so immersed that he may be oblivious to the fact that patterns exist”. I need to be “capable of understanding the setting as an insider” while, at the same time, I have to remain aware of being an outsider so that I can “describe it to and for outsiders” (Patton, 2002, p.268). My educational and working experiences enabled me to develop an understanding of L2 literacy education in China. This makes me “share as intimately as possible in the life and activities of the setting under study to develop an insider’s view of what is happening, the emic perspective” (Patton, 2002, p.268). My postgraduate study experience in the Australian context made me become aware of, and sensitive to the differences in educational traditions and practice between China and Australia, especially in L2 literacy education. Such learning experience also enabled me to construct my understanding of L2 literacy and hence I could view L2 literacy education in China from an outsiders’ perspective but with an insider’s understanding. However, through the data analysis process I need to ensure that the participants’ descriptions rather than my own perceptions were considered and inappropriate subjective judgements were avoided.

As I intended to explore the participants’ perspectives and practice of literacy and L2 literacy development through their lived experience, a phenomenological approach would be appropriate for this study and the reason will be explained in the following section.

4.2.2 Phenomenological study

Phenomenological inquiry is the qualitative framework used in this study, which is “based in a paradigm of personal knowledge and subjectivity, and emphasises the importance of personal perspective and interpretation” (Lester, 1999, p.1). Phenomenology aims to “illustrate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation” (Lester, 1999, p.1). As noted by Sokolowski (2000, p.185),

It [phenomenology] stands back from our rational involvement with things and marvels at the fact that there is disclosure, that things do appear, that the world can be understood, and that we in our life of thinking serve as datives for the manifestation of things.

Phenomenology is based on the recognition of human beings’ experiential ‘life world’ and the description of their experiences in depth (Patton, 2002). Human behaviour,

according to Merleau-Ponty (1964), represents a dialectical relationship between the subject and his or her world. “One can describe neither the objective nor the subjective world but only the world as experienced by the subject” (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992, p.1356). By asking “What is this experience like?” Laverty (2003) contends that this inquiry “attempts to unfold meanings as they are lived in everyday existence” (p.22). More importantly, as what is experienced often includes what is taken for granted or those things that are common sense (Husserl, 1970), the study of these phenomena “intends to return and re-examine these taken for granted experiences and perhaps uncover new and/or forgotten meanings” (Laverty, 2003, p.22).

A phenomenological approach describes the meaning of a lived experience of a phenomenon for several individuals, which in this study is the experience of L2 literacy teaching and learning. This study attempts to identify, understand and describe L2 literacy through individual EFL teachers’ perspectives and actions in case study schools. As teachers’ points of view or perspectives are constructed by their experiences (Ulichny, 1996), individuals with different experiences might as a consequence perceive and teach L2 literacy differently.

The only possible data source in phenomenological research are those “informants who have lived the reality being investigated” (Baker, *et al.*, 1992, p. 1357). The researcher can have access to the data via their verbal descriptions, written reports and artistic expression of the phenomenon (Ray, 1985). In phenomenological study, the essence or basic structure of a phenomenon is expected to be extracted and revealed in the data analysis process to understand the underlying factors that account for what is being experienced. It has to be kept in mind that however data is analysed in a phenomenological study there is a need to “hold to the primacy of the subjective experience” (Baker, *et al.*, 1992, p.1358). The researcher needs to deliberately and purposefully open to the phenomenon “in its own right with its own meaning” (Hycner, 1999), while the research’s meanings and interpretations or theoretical concepts are not allowed to “enter the unique world of the informant/participant” (Creswell, 1998, p.113). This phenomenological study gathered data through interviews and focus-group interviews to give a voice to both the EFL teachers and the students in the case study schools what they actually thought about L2 literacy teaching and learning and also through class observation to see what the teachers did in their practice.

Within phenomenological inquiry, a case study methodology was used. More specifically, a collective case study was used to collect data in more than one case to gain a fuller picture of the phenomenon under investigation. The detailed discussion on how this methodology can be useful for this study follows in next section.

4.2.3 Case study

The case study method has been used for many years across a variety of disciplines. Education researchers, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary situations in education and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Within classification of case studies, a number of taxonomies have been put forward by many researchers from different aspects. Stake (2008) identifies three types of case studies from the point of view of the purpose informing the initial choice: intrinsic case study, instrumental case study and multiple case study or collective case study (pp.121-123). The advantages and disadvantages of these three types are provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Three Types of Case Studies*

Type	Advantage	Disadvantage
intrinsic case study	provides a better understanding of a particular case.	does not lead to understanding of some abstract construct or generic phenomenon, and building theory.
instrumental case study	provides insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization.	does not pursue the intrinsic interest.
collective case study	investigates a phenomenon, population, or general condition by studying a number of cases jointly.	pays less attention to intrinsic interest. Individual cases in the collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristics

Within phenomenological inquiry the case study method is particularly pertinent as it investigates “phenomena within real-life context” (Yin, 1989, p.23). It is particularly suitable for dealing with “critical problems of practice” (Merriam, 1988, p. xiii) and portraying, analysing and interpreting the “uniqueness of real individuals” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.79). The aim of a case study is to discover the “most compelling interpretation” (Bromley, 1986, p.38), and to “convey a holistic and dynamically rich account of an educational program” and use a “common language” to communicate results (Kenny & Grotelueschen, 1980, p.5). The advantage of a case study is the ability “to provide a detailed picture” (Bryce, 2002, p.51) and to seek deep understanding of not only “the present actions of an individual but also his or her past, environment, emotions, and thoughts” (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010, p.455). The use

of case study is also advantageous when the researchers are interested in “insight, discovery, and interpretation” (Merriam, 1998, p.28). Case study, therefore, is the most appropriate for this study to gain an insight into teachers’ perceptions of L2 literacy and unmask the ways their teaching practices is enacted and structured.

Case study research is concerned with process rather than outcomes or products (Yin, 1994; Merriam, 1998) and it focuses on the context and population of the study as well as the process of implementation (Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Merriam, 1998). Case study is concerned with the contextual conditions of the phenomenon being studied (Yi, 2003). In this study, the specific context in which these EFL teachers were placed plays a part in understanding their perspectives of L2 literacy and their teaching practice. This refers to the social context of China becoming increasingly modernized and globalized and the background of NECS having been implemented in senior middle school since 2004. At the school level, the contextual conditions are different in different senior middle schools in terms of physical settings as well as students’ academic level, especially between key schools and regular schools. Therefore, a case study makes it possible to hear the participants’ accounts, observe their behaviour in their real-life context and understand their perspectives in the social and school settings.

For the purpose of this study, a collective case study will be utilized, as it aims to gain a fuller picture of the phenomenon under investigation in more than one case. What I seek to understand is how the Chinese EFL teacher participants perceive L2 literacy and teaching in their social, cultural and school contexts and how these perceptions are reflected in their teaching practice. A collective case design enables me to gain richer information because it comes from six EFL teachers in two different schools. According to Yin (1989), “the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (p.53). While these six EFL teachers shared some similarities such as receiving their education in China and also working in the same social and educational context, they had different English learning experiences and they were teaching English in different school settings. Therefore, a collective case study is advantageous because it can help to explore how these similarities and differences affected the individual teacher’s understanding and practice of L2 literacy, and provide a broader perspective related to the research focus on individual teachers.

Under a phenomenological framework and using case study as the methodological approach, this study carried out data collection through interview, class observation and focus group interview. The next section will present the procedure of the data collection, starting with the description of selecting research sites and recruiting participants.

4.3 Data collection procedures

4.3.1 Selecting research sites

The sites for the present study were two senior middle schools located in an urban city, Lu City (pseudonym), in Shandong Province. Shandong, a coastal province in the east of China, is one of the four provinces where NECS was initially piloted in 2004. Site selection followed the principles of being “suitable” and “feasible” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 432). Sites were chosen that fulfilled the following criteria: they had to be senior middle schools in China; NECS has been implemented in the city where the schools are located. Additionally, I had access to the research sites and found willing participants. Details of the site selection are presented in the following paragraphs.

Two schools were selected as research settings so that the participants’ experiences within different school contexts could be investigated. The Ying School (pseudonym), a provincial key school⁹, was selected as one case study school. This school has won the highest reputation among the senior high schools in the city, and most students at this school are more successful in their academic study than their peers in other schools because the school sets the highest admission scores for the junior middle school graduates in the Senior High School Entrance Examinations. The other school site is the Yan School (pseudonym) which is a regular school ranking at seven or eight out of twelve senior high schools in this city. This school has more students who are underachieving in their academic study, including in English, based on their enrolment scores in the Senior High School Entrance Examinations. These two schools were selected to be representative of senior middle school contexts in the city where, generally, teachers were working with students of different English levels, according to

⁹ According to academic achievements in the examinations after three years schooling in junior middle school, students enter senior middle schools, including key schools and regular schools, or vocational schools. Being admitted to key schools means a greater likelihood of being admitted to universities.

exam results in high-stake exams. Next, how the participants were recruited for this study will be described in the following section.

4.3.2 Recruiting Participants

According to Baker, et al. (1992, p.1358), “phenomenological studies are designed to describe the essence of a given phenomenon and informants are chosen because they have lived the experience being investigated. Sampling is, therefore, purposive.” In this study, a purposive sampling technique was used to select teacher participants to gain rich information for in-depth study. The aim is to select participants who have lived the experience that is the focus of this study, who are willing to talk about their experience, and whose differences enhance the possibilities of rich and unique stories of particular experience (Polkinghorne, 1989; van Manen, 1997).

In total six Chinese EFL teachers, three from each of the two senior middle schools, were selected as the key participants of this study. In order to provide an additional perspective of L2 literacy teaching and learning in China, five students¹⁰ from each school, who were 18 years old or over, were also interviewed in two focus groups. Details about the recruitment process are now presented.

Ethics clearance was obtained from the university prior to recruitment of the participants in each school. Initial contact with each school happened through personal connection which provided a gateway into the schools and the permission for carrying out the study was then sought from the schools. The potential participants, who were suggested by my contacts in both schools, were provided with an Information Letter for Teacher Participants (Appendix D) to be informed of the purpose and methodology of the study and were given the opportunity to ask questions they were concerned with. When three participants of each school were recruited, written consent (Appendix E) was obtained and each participant, for confidentiality, was assigned a pseudonym. Information about the participants (using their pseudonyms) is presented in Table 4.3.

Challenges were encountered when recruiting participants. The initial plan was to recruit participants who taught Senior 1 or Senior 2 in both schools, excluding teachers who were working with Senior 3 students. The reason is that teachers responsible for Senior 3 were concerned with the upcoming college entrance examinations and this

¹⁰ Normally, students in senior middle school are normally 16 -18 years old.

may have resulted in a narrow use of the curriculum (Cheng & Qi, 2006). However, when recruiting teachers from the Yan School, it was discovered that Senior 2 were preparing for another important test – the Academic Level Examination which was coming in a month. After the mid-term examinations, the focus was on revision for this exam to ensure a higher passing rate and, therefore, no new lesson learning was taking place in class. Thus, a decision was made to continue with this particular research site but limit participant selection in this school to Senior 1 English teachers.

Table 4.3 *Brief Information about the Six Teacher Participants*

School	Participants	Grade	Professional title ¹¹	Academic Degree	Years of teaching
The Ying School	Guo	Senior 2	First-class	BA; was doing Master's on oral interpretation	10 years at a tertiary college; 1.5 years at the Ying school
	Ren	Senior2	First-class	BA	8 years
	Long	Senior 1	First-class	BA	8 years
The Yan School	Yi	Senior 1	Senior	BA	22 years
	Jian	Senior 1	Senior	BA	23 years
	Bai	Senior 1	First-class	Diploma for three years' college education; Undergraduate Diploma	5 years at a senior middle school in her hometown; 16 years at the Yan School

¹¹ The secondary teachers in China are ranked as second-class teacher, first-class teacher or senior teacher.

To provide an additional perspective on L2 literacy teaching and learning a number of students were also involved in this study. The Chinese students' views and experiences on English learning can help to understand what is needed and expected of L2 literacy development at school from students' perspectives. The selection of student participants was based on three criteria: aged over 18 years out of ethical consideration because they themselves could decide whether to participate in this study or not, coming from different classes taught by different English teachers, and being at different English levels within their classes according to their teachers. Their teachers did not have to be the teachers involved in this study. The aim was to investigate the students' understanding and experiences of L2 literacy development. Recruiting a range of student participants was intended to provide as complete a picture of students' English learning as possible. The student participants were selected in consultation with their classroom teachers. As the ideal focus group consists of 4-6 people so that individuals have enough time to provide in-depth information during the period of 90 minutes (Greenbaum, 1997), five students were recruited from each school. With 6 EFL teachers and 10 students from two middle schools participating in this phenomenological case study, how the data were collected follows.

4.3.3 Data collection

Multiple sources of information were sought and used in this study in order to “provide a comprehensive perspective” (Patton, 2002, p.306) of the phenomenon being studied. In a case study, it is crucially important to collect extensive data to “produce understanding of the entity being studied” (Burns, 1997, p.365). This study employed a combination of semi-structured interviews of the teacher participants, focus group interviews of the student participants, and class observation to cross-check findings. The aim is to “build on the strengths of each type of data collection while minimizing the weaknesses of any single approach” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002, p.307). This combination of data types – triangulation – is claimed to be the most effective way to establish trustworthiness in qualitative study (Mathison, 1988) as it increases the possibility of understanding the phenomenon being investigated from various perspectives (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). The data collection methods will be discussed as follows:

4.3.3.1 Semi-structured interview

Interviews are valuable to explore people's perspectives of their experiences including opinions, beliefs, and feelings (Ary, *et.al*, 2010; Patton, 2002). Phenomenological studies require that data collection is free from preconceived notions, expectations and frameworks (Field & Morse, 1985). Therefore, the questions posed should be designed to be open-ended and broad so as to avoid interviewer influence (Baker, *et al.*, 1992). Additionally, open-ended questions help to reveal important aspects of the phenomenon being studied (Ary, *et.al*, 2010). Further advantages of open-ended questions include: opportunities for exploring phenomenon in depth, clearing up misunderstandings, testing the limits of knowledge and uncovering new relationships from unexpected answers (Burns, 1997; Merriam, 1988). Through establishing a rapport, the interviewer is assisted in understanding the true benefits of the interviewee (Burns, 1997).

Semi-structured interviews were utilized in this study to allow flexibility to modify questions during the interview process, although questions were developed beforehand as a guide. Following Merriam's (1988) suggestion I remained neutral and nonjudgmental, not only listening to what interviewees were saying with sincere interest, but also staying sensitive to the verbal and nonverbal messages being conveyed by the interviewees.

The purpose of semi-structured interviews in this study was to elicit beliefs and conceptions of L2 literacy from the participants' experiences both as English learners and teachers. Each teacher participant was interviewed for approximately 45-60 minutes on a day before their classes were observed to explore their conceptual understanding of L2 literacy, their experiences of helping their students develop L2 literacy, and the experiences of developing their own L2 literacy. The interviews followed the Interview Protocol (Appendix F). Moreover, the use of semi-structured interviews and an interview guide also provided opportunities for emergent topics to be pursued (Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 1998).

The interview guide was important to make sure similar questions were asked of all participants. The interview guide was developed further as the interview were being conducted and additional questions were asked according to participants' responses. When the first interview with the first teacher participant was completed, the data were transcribed and translated immediately and then it was sent to my supervisor, together

with my reflections of doing the first interview. According to my supervisor's advice, some modifications were made to the interview questions so that the following interviews were more effective and fruitful. For example, instead of asking the teacher "What are the best activities to promote students' English learning", the interviewee was asked directly "What activities are employed in your class to promote students' English learning? Are there any activities you provide for students to get involved in the real use English language?" This change allowed for direct responses from the participants with respect to their practice. An additional change was the order of the interview questions. Changing the order of the questions assisted in developing a coherent flow. For instance, the questions in terms of the teacher's perceptions of literacy and L2 literacy, and their practice of developing students' L2 literacy were asked one after another. This provided opportunities for the interviewees to clarify their understanding of literacy and L2 literacy before discussing their practice.

The second interview with each teacher participant was conducted after class observation and the questions were informed by participants' initial responses in the first interview together with how these responses were reflected in practice. The second interview was essential and important for this study because it provided the opportunity for me to ask further questions after I reviewed the data of the first interviews to avoid misinterpretation of the participants' responses and also the opportunity to discuss about their practice in observed lessons. The participants could take this opportunity to express any additional perspectives, if any, on the research topic.

Both interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants, and notes were taken as well to highlight main points of view expressed by the interviewees. In total, approximately 10 hours of taped interview data were collected and transcribed. While the data of what the participants said were collected through interviews, class observation was employed to collect information about what they did in classroom.

4.3.3.2 Class observation

In this study class observations were important as they reflected the principles and beliefs of the participant teachers (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p.251; Burns, 1997; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Additionally, these observations shed light on some significant subtleties that the participants were not conscious of or that the individual could not articulate (Ary, *et al.*, 2006).

By observing the participants' classes, a firsthand account of their teaching practice was obtained. Four to five classes of each participant were observed. These provided an insight into how L2 literacy understandings were translated into practice. Classroom observations were conducted with each teacher participant over the period, normally a week, during which a curriculum module was completed. A Class Observation Guide (See Appendix G) was designed for this research based on the research questions and it helped me to stay focused on the respects that were closely related to this study. The focus of the observations was on how the participants' perceptions of L2 literacy were reflected in what they were doing, and the extent to which English language was explored beyond vocabulary and grammar. Specifically, I was looking for what the participants focused on in class, what materials they used to teach English, whether any opportunities were provided for their students to explore social and cultural aspects of English language, and whether a variety of text types were employed to teach and learn English in class. These aspects were examined as they are consistent with the broadened definition of literacy and are in accordance with NECS, namely, developing students' cultural awareness using the strategy of optimizing learning resources for learning and using the English language (MOE, 2001).

In addition to the teacher interviews and class observations, the students in both schools were invited to be interviewed in focus groups to provide an additional perspective with respect to L2 literacy and development.

4.3.3.3 Focus groups

The focus groups, according to Marshall and Rossman (2006), provide a more natural and stress-free environment for participants and also provide flexibility for the researcher to explore unanticipated issues. Additionally, focus group interviews enhance data quality through interactions between participants in discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2000) and the opportunity to observe multiple perspectives and range of views (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For these reasons, this study employed a focus group interview method to explore students' perspectives and experiences of L2 literacy development.

Patton (2002) states that selection of focus group participants and the process of the interview assist in the success of the focus group. Participants in a group should be homogeneous, the topic should be focused and the facilitator is required to keep the

discussion on target ensuring interaction among participants stays on topic (Patton, 2002). In this study, all student participants were over 18 years of age from the same school, although they were from different classes and had different levels of English. Three boys and two girls formed the focus group in the Ying School and the focus group in the Yan School consisted of four girls and one boy. All participants were given information sheets (Appendix D) before they agreed to participate. Consent forms (Appendix E) were signed before the focus group interviews were conducted and participants were aware that the interviews would be recorded and were given reassurance that their responses would be anonymous.

The role of moderator is central to the success of the focus groups, especially as they involve young people (Vaughn, Schumm & Sinagub, 1996). I was directly involved in preparing the interview protocol (Appendix F), recruiting participants and selecting venue. In order to minimize the distance between moderator and focus group members, as recommended by Gray, Amos and Currie (1997), I dressed casually and used colloquial language. Additionally, I introduced myself to the student participants and stressed there were no right or wrong, good or bad answers and that the aim of the interview was to investigate what was happening in their real life and study. During the focus group interviews I was conscious of trying not to control the discussion but acted as a facilitator (Barbour, 2007).

Although I used the Interview Protocol (Appendix H), the sequence of questions changed in response to issues raised by the student participants and interesting comments they made. In order to encourage their participation, it was also necessary to show interest in their responses and not to make comments, especially disagreement. Body language was also very useful to influence the group, such as occasional nodding and making eye contact to encourage continued involvement. In addition, the participants were asked to clarify statements. For example, "In terms of the learning materials, you mostly talked about what you use in class. What do you use for learning English after class?" Or when a participant stated "I memorize the vocabulary passively," I probed to determine exactly what the participant meant by "passively". These strategies were used to ensure that information gathered during focus group interviews was clear and rich. Also, I needed to make sure that all participants were involved in the discussion by directly asking the quiet students questions or encouraging them to express their views with eye contact.

While collecting data in qualitative research, data analysis occurs simultaneously (Merriam, 1998; Baxter & Jack, 2008), and how data analysis was proceeded in this study will be articulated as follows.

4.3.4 Data analysis

Transcription, which is the first step of analysis, had already started when the interviews were conducted. Merriam (1998) gives some suggestions for analysing data as they are being collected. When the first data collection activity is done, read the data more than once, like the transcript of the first interview and the field notes from the first observation, to “capture the reflections, tentative themes, hunches, ideas and things to pursue” (Merriam, 1998, p.161). This process also assists in identifying possible questions to ask in subsequent interviews. The comparisons between each data collection activity and the former one always inform the next data collected. When all the data are collected, they are organized and refined before being analysed. Thus, this process of data collection and analysis is “recursive and dynamic” (Merriam, 1998, p.155).

The first interview was transcribed verbatim as soon as it was completed and some rudimentary analysis was performed. This is important because some modifications needed to be made to the interview questions so that more informative and valuable data could be collected from the following interviews. Every first interview with each participant was transcribed and studied to locate the emergent themes and to identify questions to be asked for further explanation and clarification during the second interview with each participant. The second interviews were transcribed at the completion of data collection. All interview transcripts were read to achieve a sense of the whole, and reread while listening to the recordings several times to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. This process of repeated reading and the use of the recordings to listen to the data, results in data immersion and refers to the researcher’s closeness to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data analysis is also referred to as data explication in phenomenological study (Hycner, 1999). While analysing the interview data in a phenomenological study, it is important to bracket out the researcher’s personal views or preconceptions (Miller & Crabtree, 1992) in order to avoid inappropriate subjective judgement. It is the participants’ descriptions rather than my own perceptions that were considered throughout the data

analysis process. When the participants' interview data were examined, statements that referred to the phenomenon investigated were lifted out of the transcript to form a list of units of meaning (Hycner, 1999) for each teacher participant and they were recorded separately (see Appendix I). The list of units of relevant meaning extracted from interview data was carefully scrutinized and the clearly redundant units were eliminated (Moustakas, 1994). By rigorously examining the list of meaning units, I elicited the essence of meaning units to identify themes for each of the participants in this study. This process clearly illustrated the participants' individual experiences of learning and teaching English. Then the meaning units were grouped together to form clusters of themes (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 1998) from which general and unique themes emerged eventually.

The notes of class observations were also reviewed and each teacher participant's teaching practice against the intended outcomes as suggested in the Teacher's Book was outlined in a table (see Appendix I). Any evidence that reflected their conceptual understanding of language and literacy were highlighted, including the focus of the class, the texts used for teaching English, the opportunities provided for students to access authentic English as well as social and cultural knowledge of English language mentioned in class. The aim is to see how their teaching practices reflected their perspectives and corresponded with what is expected and required of students' L2 literacy development in the curriculum.

In addition, the official document, that is the currently used English curriculum NECS, and the English textbooks used in both schools were also reviewed and analysed, and detailed discussion was provided in Chapter 3. The reason for examining these documents was to set the scene for the case study schools for the readers to better understand the phenomenon under investigation.

4.4 Trustworthiness

The primary rationale for the investigation in qualitative case studies is understanding, which differs from experimental studies where the objective is to discover a law or test a hypothesis. Thus, the criteria for trusting a study are different. Four major concerns are suggested relating to trustworthiness and described by Guba and Lincoln (1981) as: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. According to Guba (1981), the

naturalistic terms appropriate to the four aspects of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These parallel the scientific terms internal validity, external validity or generalizability, reliability and objectivity in assessing quantitative research. Guba also suggests the methods to be used during and after the study to build trustworthiness for qualitative study. For example, doing member checks both during and after the study can help to establish credibility; collecting and developing thick descriptive data and doing purposive sampling ensure transferability; using overlap methods and leaving audit trail is helpful to provide dependability; doing triangulation during the study is a criterion to assess both credibility and confirmability.

In this study, member checking, peer debriefing and triangulation were applied to assure its credibility. Member checking, that is, “testing the data with members of the relevant human data source groups”, is the most important action inquirers can take (Guba, 1981, p.80). Member checking was first carried out after the interviews and classroom observations at the research sites. My interpretation of the collected data was clarified through the discussion with the participants. Discussion was continued when necessary during data analysis procedure through correspondence with the participants. The peer debriefing was conducted with my supervisor. When the first interview was done, the data was transcribed and translated immediately and then sent to the supervisor for checking, and after advice some modifications were made according to the supervisor’s advice in order to produce a more reliable outcome in the following interviews. The phenomenological research design also contributed towards credibility. I bracketed myself consciously in order to understand the perspectives of the participants interviewed and the phenomenon that I was studying, with the focus on an insider perspective.

Triangulation was also applied to strengthen both credibility and confirmability because it increases the possibility of understanding the phenomenon under study from various perspectives. Multiple sources of data (teacher participants’ own accounts of their experiences and understandings, their behaviours in class, the documents related to the study focus, and student participants’ experiences and perspectives) were used to confirm the findings. In this way, a holistic understanding of EFL teachers’ beliefs and how they were reflected through their lived experience helped to construct plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied.

Qualitative studies, according to Guba (1981), do not attempt to form generalizations as “virtually all social/behavioural phenomena are context-bound” (p.86), but to form working hypotheses that may be transferred from one context to another” (p.81). So transferability is dependent upon the degree of fit between the contexts. In this study, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants to ensure transferability. The aim, as suggested by Guba (1981), is not to provide representative or typical information but to maximize the range of information uncovered (Guba, 1981). Also, the contextual features of the sites and participants as well as the procedure of data collection and analysis were described in detail. The rich and thick description will permit comparison of this context to other possible contexts in China.

Dependability is a concept that “embraces elements both of the stability (implied by reliability) and of the trackability required by explainable changes in instrumentation” (Guba, 1981, p.81). It is concerned whether the findings of a study would be repeated if the study were replicated with the same or similar subjects in the same or similar context (Lincoln and Guba, 1981). Guba (1981) suggests using multiple methods to strengthen the stability of data as the weakness of one method is compensated by the strengths of another. In this study, again, triangulation and peer debriefing with the use of audit trail were utilized to yield credible understandings. While a few strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, there are still some limitations in terms of the research design and also the application of the design. The next section will discuss the aspects regarding the limitations of the study.

4.5 Limitations of this research design

Although the findings of this study can be transferred to the similar contexts, they are not generalizable in the contexts that vary greatly. As more time and financial support would be needed to cover the rural area due to vast distances, this study only selected two senior middle schools in an urban city in China as the research sites. However, the vast geographical coverage in China could result in great regional difference and also diverse developmental levels of the economy in different regions. This has a direct influence on the development of English education with respect to the availability of modern technology and equipment to access updated information for teaching and learning English, the extent of involvement in communication with the outside world, and the availability of the opportunities for learning and using English in real life.

Therefore, it is possible that teachers' experiences might be different when they are situated in different contexts. This has an impact on their perceptions and teaching practice of L2 literacy. Further research needs to be conducted in the future to cross-check or validate the findings of this study.

There are also limitations with respect to the application of the research design. When interviewing my participants, sometimes I failed to be aware of an interesting topic brought up by the participants and neglected to ask further questions to elicit more data that might have been valuable for my research. For example, when a participant said that he thought the life of being a teacher was too simple, dull and lacked challenge, I did not explore the reasons why he thought in this way. One of the reasons for my being unaware of some topics could be that I have a different perspective on teaching and research from that of Western cultures and so was possibly too close to and familiar with the context under investigation. My limited experience of doing research interviews could be another reason for being unaware of some interesting topics and, therefore, being unable to ask further probing questions.

The interviews in this study were conducted in Chinese which had advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it was beneficial for my study because it guaranteed effective communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. Additionally, I was afraid that some teachers would not be willing to participate in the study if they were required to speak English in the interview, which definitely increased the difficulty in recruiting participants. However, conducting the interviews in Chinese resulted in some limitations to this study. Firstly, I lost the opportunity to look into these teacher participants' English proficiency, or their ability to communicate properly and effectively in English. Also, this resulted in all the transcribed data being translated into English. It is not easy to interpret the exact meanings and connotations of the original remarks in Chinese, although I endeavoured to achieve this goal, because the translation was based on my understanding of the participants' words.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter described the research design for this study. The reasons why qualitative methodology, the specific lens of phenomenology, and case study approach were appropriate for this study were explained. Then detailed description of data collection procedures was provided. The application of multi-research methods and multiple

information sources helped to provide a holistic understanding of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices. To establish the trustworthiness of this study, measures including purposeful sampling, member checking, peer debriefing and triangulation were taken during the data collection and data analysis processes. The limitations of this study were discussed.

The next two chapters will present the data through a detailed examination of the teacher participants' perceptions and their pedagogical practices in the Ying School and the Yan School. In this way, an understanding of the teacher participants' perspectives of L2 literacy and the impacts of their perspectives on the structuring and enacting of their practices can be attained.

CHAPTER 5 EFL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF L2 LITERACY AND THEIR PRACTICES IN THE YING SCHOOL

This chapter introduces the Ying School, three of the teachers working in the school and a focus group of students. The teachers and students described their perceptions of English teaching and learning within the school. In the first section the school context is outlined with a description of the school and the classrooms. This is followed by an outline of each of the three teachers, including their personal context and their perceptions and practices of the aspects associated the research questions. The chapter ends with a small group of students' perspectives and experiences of English learning.

5.1 School context

The Ying School is a well-established key provincial senior high school in Lu City in the eastern area of China where over six million citizens live. As a prestigious academic senior high school, the Ying School ranks highly among senior high schools in Lu City with respect to students' academic achievements, especially the rate of graduates' admission to Tier One tertiary institutions¹². Despite the fact that since 2008 students' exam results and graduates' university enrolment rate are no longer published to rank the schools, the Ying School is still listed among the top schools due to long-standing recognition of its academic achievements. Moreover, since NECS was piloted in Shandong Province, the school has been a national demonstration school for the implementation of NECS.

In addition to having students who are preparing for the PMET to enter domestic universities, the Ying School is also running some international classes, which is intended to prepare their students for going abroad to receive higher education. So some teachers from English speaking countries are employed specifically to help the students in international classes with their English.

¹² This is how tertiary institutions are ranked within China. Tier One institutions include 112 universities in Project 211 which was set up in 1995 by the Ministry of Education to strengthen leading institutions of higher education for the 21st century. Tier Two Institutions consist of the bulk of four and three-year universities and colleges across China. Tier Three institutions represent private colleges, senior vocational colleges and foreign joint programs. (Hlavka, 2009)

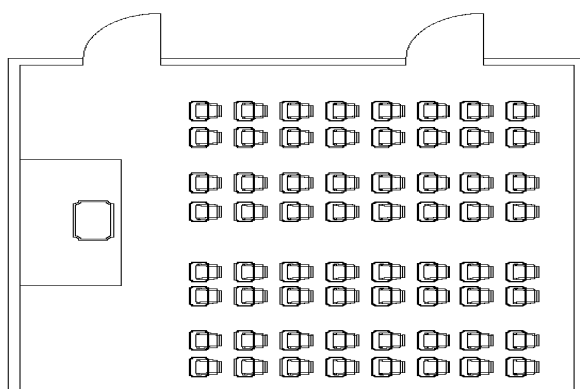
The school is situated in the central area of the city. The eye-catching school gate impresses every passer-by. The broad and tall school gate is supported by striking red pillars, and in the upper centre hangs a horizontal inscribed board with the school name on it. Special meanings have long been attached to the red colour in China, for example, 朱门 *zhumen* [red-painted gate] delivers the message that this is where high-ranking officials and nobles lived in ancient China, symbolizing authority and power. In this sense, the red-painted pillars of the school reflect the high prestige of the Ying School. Also, the location of the school at the top of a slope suggests a high position, implying that those who desire to enter this school have to make great effort to ‘climb up the slope’ to reach the academic requirements¹³ of the school. The physical architecture can be seen to symbolise the aspirational academic achievements that the school values.

In the central garden of the campus there is a monument, which is engraved with students’ names who have won awards in international competitions. This monument was erected to remember the honour that these winners have brought to the school and thus to inspire the current students to strive for outstanding academic accomplishments. Moreover, these 27 students also won admission to top universities in China. This further emphasises that academic achievements are valued and recognises the educational successes in the school and in a wider social culture.

Students at the Ying School have designated classrooms and each classroom holds a maximum of 64 students. As students always stay in their fixed classroom while their subject teachers come to the classrooms at their timetabled periods, their classrooms are not subject-distinctive and they look very similar. All the classrooms are traditionally structured, with the teacher’s desk placed on a 30cm high platform in front and students’ desks arranged in rows (see Diagram 5.1). This classroom layout suggests the hierarchical relationship between teacher and students, and lack of opportunity for students to move or interact with one another.

¹³ Senior high schools in Lu City recruit their students according to their results in the Senior High School Entrance Examinations. The Ying School always sets the highest admission scores for their candidates among the schools.

Diagram 5.1 *The Layout of Classrooms at the Ying School*



Multimedia facilities are available in the front of the classroom for the convenience of the teacher, while students' desks are piled with course books, exercise books, test papers and hand-outs.

The timetable also gives insight into the school's values. Chinese, mathematics and English are given priority in the timetable at the Ying School, each occurring four times a week, mostly in the mornings. In addition, students also have extra 20-minute morning lessons (7.30 am – 7.50 am) every day to do oral reading and reciting in Chinese or English. This is traditionally believed to be effective for literacy development. These three subjects are emphasised because they account for 60% of the full scores in the high-stake exams – the college entrance examinations. Although students at the Ying School are encouraged to get involved in various students' societies, the time for extracurricular activities is limited to 50 minutes at the end of each school day. Academic study on 9 subjects in total, which takes up to 7 hours each day, is what students are devoted to doing. Therefore, the school timetable also reinforces the value of the college entrance examinations.

The following sections introduce the three participants in this school and describe the way they perceived literacy and L2 literacy, the teaching and learning of culture and the use of authentic texts in EFL classroom. The first teacher is Guo who was the first teacher who agreed to participate in my study. As he himself was studying for his Master's Degree at that time, he was considerate of me as a postgraduate and willing to help with this study. However, he was not always available at school as he had to go to university and I could only meet with him when he had classes in the morning.

5.2 Introducing Guo

5.2.1 Personal context

After teaching English for nearly 10 years at a tertiary institute, Guo became an English teacher at the Ying School in 2011 because, as he said, “*personally, I like teaching but am not keen on doing research, and therefore, high school is a better place for me*¹⁴”. He admitted that, teaching at this school, he could feel the pressure from the school and students’ parents because of their high expectations of the students’ academic study, especially their results in high-stake exams. However, he was not worried much about it and said, “*as I taught English major students at a tertiary school previously, what I have accumulated is enough to teach here [the Ying School]. Regarding this, there is not much pressure.*”

Guo was teaching two classes of Senior 2. There were 58 students in one class and 61 in the other and they were aged around seventeen. Being admitted to this key school, most students did well in their academic study and Guo commented “*they are very smart*”. However, although it was his second year teaching them, class observations show that Guo could hardly remember all their names as he had to refer to the seating chart on the teacher’s desk to question individual students. He confessed that playing multi-roles as a teacher at work, a student at university, a son and also a father at home kept him so busy that he had limited communication with his students, especially after class.

I am here only when I have class and I cannot give my students extra help. They cannot find me when they have questions to ask after class. (Guo)

After work, Guo was sometimes exposed to English by watching American soap operas online, but he was more interested in current political affairs and occasionally browsed websites of the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Reuters. He said, therefore, he could help his students widen their knowledge.

I am far from being knowledgeable, but at least I know a little bit more than our students. So I can introduce some hot topics in class. For example, what’s Kyoto Protocol, what’s America’s attitude and what’s China’s attitude towards it, and the environmental diplomacy among countries. I think female teachers know less about this. It is one of my advantages and I am rather interested in it. (Guo)

¹⁴ Statements in italics are verbatim remarks of the participants.

Guo made an interesting comment on female teachers. Although this interested me as a female teacher, this study does not focus on male attitudes in the Chinese context.

In addition to teaching English, occasionally his supervisor provided Guo with some opportunities to work in English. For example, he did document translation work for the World Health Organisation and was working as an interpreter for the French architects who were responsible for a construction project in Lu City.

Being engaged in different jobs, Guo was trying to balance his teaching, his study and his life. He was confident of his English teaching and such confidence came from his prior experience of teaching English at a tertiary school, his educational background and also his experience of working in English. In the following sections, Guo's perception of literacy and L2 literacy, cultural teaching and learning, and the use of authentic texts, will be presented, together with his teaching practice as observed.

5.2.2 Literacy and L2 literacy

Guo noted that people nowadays assess rich information from a range of channels because of the use of technology and he indicated that *"literacy has been improved. Not only us, but also our students know a lot."* He thought that students' literacy could be developed in class and after class.

In class, students should master what is taught by the teachers. It is more important for teachers to arouse students' interest in reading. After class, students should read extensively. (Guo)

Guo considered English as a useful tool and he hoped that his students could *"use this tool to broaden their horizon and see what is going on in the world outside"*. However, he admitted that *"the results in the exams must be good"* because *"the Chinese educational system decides that, for senior high school students, the most important thing is to enter university"*. Therefore, *"the PMET plays an instructive role in English teaching and learning"*. According to Guo, at the moment *"the focus of English teaching and learning at senior high school level has shifted to reading comprehension, as reading comprehension accounts for half of the total score in the PMET"*. He thought that this *"benefits students' English learning as students have to do a lot of reading practice to get high marks"*.

However, when talking about how he helped his students develop their L2 literacy, Guo prioritized learning vocabulary and grammar.

The first step [in class] is learning vocabulary. Students memorise new words before class. In class I explain the key words [both in Chinese and English] carefully and students need to master the usage of key words through translating sentences, which is one way for them to know how to use these key words. Then referring to the PMET, I provide them with more exercises to consolidate their mastery of language points¹⁵. (Guo)

Guo believed that “vocabulary and grammar are the foundational knowledge. Without learning them, students might not understand sentences at all or misunderstanding might occur, and it will be hard for students to get good results in exams or make further improvement”. Translation is the method that Guo valued to learn words and he addressed, “I strongly advocate for learning words through translation and it is one feature of my class that my students are asked to do a lot of translation”. Also, when asked what activities could best promote students’ English learning, again “English-Chinese translation” was his answer. The reason, as he explained, is that students can learn how to use words and phrases in real life through translation, and he gave the following example:

Today we learn a new word ‘commit’, and I told my students that its noun form is commitment and asked them to translate a sentence 中国政府将履行到 2020 年温室气体排放消减百分之四十的承诺 [The Chinese government will fulfil the commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emission by 40% by 2020]. Carbon emission has recently been the issue attracting the world’s attention. Such a sentence not only stays close to the topic of the unit we are learning – environment protection, but students can also learn which verbs can be used with ‘commitment’, like to fulfil one’s commitment, to keep one’s commitment, etc. The usage of the preposition ‘by’ can also be learned from this sentence. Students like learning in this way. . . The learning is linked with real life without leaving our textbook. (Guo)

In line with what Guo said, class observations show that he did ask his students to do a lot of translation work when teaching new words. Guo’s belief in the effectiveness of the translation method can partly be attributed to his background as a postgraduate major in English interpretation and his working experience as a translator and an interpreter.

After students laid a firm foundation in vocabulary and grammar, Guo thought that they needed to do more reading practice. So he also downloaded reading materials, mostly

¹⁵ Language point is a frequently used term by EFL teachers in China, referring to vocabulary and grammar knowledge which is more likely to be tested in exams.

on economics and politics, from foreign websites, such as New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Reuters, for his students to read.

He held the belief in a bottom-up reading approach which involves readers decoding strategies. This strategy begins with letters, sounds, words and sentences building to more complex texts. Guo applied an intensive reading approach focused on decoding words in texts. Class observation shows that he spent most course hours on lecturing about the usages of words and structures. Guo spoke in English to give instructions, interpret words and give example sentences, but he code-switched frequently to ensure that his explanation was clear to his students. Guo believed doing written exercises was the best way to master vocabulary and grammar, and therefore he attended to all vocabulary and grammar exercises in the textbook and the exercise book. However, according to class observation, there was no opportunity provided for his students to practice reading skills by reading texts for information in class.

Writing did not appear to have the same emphasis as reading although Guo mentioned when asked about writing:

I often tell my students to learn to use sentence patterns and expressions that are frequently used by English speakers and try to write in a similar way as they normally do, rather than write short sentences made up by themselves. (Guo)

This statement presupposes that his students were able to engage with authentic texts so that they could learn from them and write in the same way as English speakers do. This could be interpreted as engaging in authentic texts rather than being so definitive about it. But according to the class observation data, the textbook was the focus during the lessons and the students had no opportunity to be engaged with authentic texts in class.

Although Guo did not mention speaking and listening he did complain about the policy decision that the listening test would be removed from the PMET in the near future. He described this decision as being “*stupid and ridiculous*” because students would “*hold a resistant attitude towards listening practice no matter how much teachers say about the importance of listening and speaking*”. As a result, “*students will be disadvantaged in their ability to listen and speak in English*” and “*not only dumb English but also deaf English will appear*”, which means students are not able to speak English or understand English by listening.

Guo was strongly against this policy, but there was no evidence in his class to show that he helped his students practice their listening and speaking skills. When teaching the textbook, his focus was on the reading section rather than on listening and speaking section. Asking and answering questions was the only form of interaction between Guo and his students. Classroom activities like pair or group discussion proposed in both the textbook and the *Teacher's Handbook* did not occur in class as, in Guo's opinion,

Group discussion is not suitable for English teaching and learning at senior high school level. It appears to be pleasant but of no use. The way that can help students master something is still explaining words in detail and then ask them to do plenty of written exercises repeatedly. (Guo)

It appeared that the students were not engaged in any practice to develop their ability to communicate with each other in English in a more natural way.

5.2.3 The teaching and learning of culture

Guo was quite aware of the importance of culture in English learning and stated:

Background knowledge and culture cannot be ignored. Sometimes it is hard to comprehend a passage without background knowledge. Besides, with respect to the culture of a foreigner who talks with you in English, sometimes what happens is that you might understand the literal meaning of what he or she says but might not get the implied meaning or embedded intention. So it is not enough to learn English from textbooks in class, but more should be learned beyond our textbooks. (Guo)

In terms of background knowledge, Guo gave an example when referring to the downloaded articles he provided for his students to read.

When they read about American elections, the knowledge related to Democratic and Republican parties is needed. (Guo)

Guo tended to emphasize what he termed 'hot topics' rather than discussing background knowledge and the knowledge related to how to engage with people in specific social and cultural context. In this way he suggested he was trying to broaden his students' horizons in addition to teaching the English language.

We teachers need to know about background knowledge, so we can bring in some hot topics that are widely concerned in the world, to open a window for our students to see what is going on around the world. For example, what is the Kyoto Protocol, what are the attitudes of different countries? (Guo)

Guo appeared to be proud of his work in this aspect:

It is one of my advantages that I am interested in some hot topics and have accumulated a lot of knowledge about them. (Guo)

The example that Guo gave to explain his teaching of the word ‘commit’ also elucidate how he related hot topics in his teaching.

However, despite the fact that Guo agreed that culture played an essential role in English learning, he admitted that “*it is hard [to teach culture], mostly due to the limited time in class*”. Maybe for this reason, he did not talk about culture in the observed lessons.

5.2.4 The use of authentic texts

“*I think the language in our textbooks is not bad*” is Guo’s first response when asked about his understanding of authentic texts, and the reason is that “*they were written and compiled by some authoritative experts, including some English speakers.*”

In addition, he regarded the texts downloaded from some “*good and authoritative websites, such as New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Reuters*” as authentic English and provided them for his students to read. However, he was focused on teaching vocabulary and structures to decode the texts rather than helping them explore the social and cultural aspects of these authentic texts.

I ask them to read them on their own first, and then I explain some key words and translate the texts. (Guo)

Whatever Guo said about the use of authentic texts, class observations show no evidence of him using authentic texts in class other than the provided material. In addition to the textbook, Guo only used an exercise book which was compiled by the EFL teachers of the school to provide more written vocabulary and grammar exercises (see Appendix J) as well as test papers for each unit of the textbook. Moreover, although limited multimedia facilities were available in classrooms, during the observation period, Guo used the projector once to present gap-filling vocabulary exercises. During the observation period, there appeared to be no attempt to expose his students to anything other than written texts.

The next teacher participant Ren, in addition to teaching a Senior 2 class, was also the classroom teacher of an international class in which the students aimed to study in America after taking TOFEL (Test of English as Foreign Language) and SAT (Scholastic Assessment Test). As this study aimed to examine English teachers’

perspectives and practice in ordinary EFL classrooms, his teaching of this international class was not investigated in this study.

5.3 Introducing Ren

5.3.1 Personal context

Ren started his teaching career after graduation from a teacher's college in 2004. Ren expressed satisfaction in being a teacher because he loved staying with young people. He thought that his mild disposition and being patient made him suitable to be a teacher. He mentioned that he had two career options when graduating from university: teaching in a tertiary school or in a high school. He chose to be a senior high school teacher because "*students at high schools put study at the first place and they need to listen to teachers, although the pressure is big due to the college entrance examinations*".

According to Ren, it was fiercely competitive to win a position in such a prestigious school as the Ying School.

The school got over 1000 applications in 2004 when I graduated from the university. After a written test and interview, finally, around 30 candidates were selected and employed, some of whom were even postgraduates. I was among four English teachers. (Ren)

Ren also talked about that he chose English as his major at university although he preferred learning history and politics because his teacher at high school told him it would be easier to find a job if he was majoring in English. He also referred to one of his English teachers whom he did not favour as a factor that also impacted his choice of being an English teacher.

His class was not interesting and more importantly, he could not give us enough help in English learning. At that time, I was thinking if I could be an English teacher one day, I would not be like him. (Ren)

When Ren started teaching in 2004, the new curriculum reform was just piloted in four provinces, including Shandong Province. Ren mentioned the differences brought about by the implementation of the new curriculum, which presents a contradictory situation that English teachers were faced with.

Now, students' dominant position in the classroom is stressed. Teachers are trying to give the class back to students, although it is hard to really achieve this due to the pressure of the exams. But at least we have it in mind that students are the masters of the class while teachers play a leading role but not the controller of the

class. . . . However, teachers are struggling in class with getting students involved in more activities or completing the required teaching tasks. (Ren)

Working in this provincial key school which was actively engaged in a number of international events, Ren had some opportunities to use English on such occasions. For example, he took the student representatives of their school to attend the International Youth Forum held in Korea in October, 2012 and English was the language used for this conference. He also worked as the principal's English interpreter when their German sister school visited.

Being the classroom teacher of an international class also provided Ren with the opportunity to use English in addition to teaching. For instance, he had regular meetings with his English-speaking colleagues to discuss their students' English learning. By contrast, after work, Ren was not exposed to much English, although he occasionally listened to Voice of America (VOA) and watched American movies or television programs like 'The Big Bang Theory'. In spite of having the experience of using English in real life situations, Ren confessed that it was not easy to speak in English naturally and properly.

When I speak with a foreigner, I often realize that I use a wrong word right after I speak it out. Sometime I can correct it right away but sometimes it is too late to make a correction. In fact, I am not proficient enough in speaking. (Ren)

Ren had 57 students in his Senior 2 group, mostly aged 17, about half of whom, according to him, were able to read and write in English, while around ten students had difficulty in their academic study, including English. Ren described his students as being too passive in class due to the pressure of the high-stake exams.

Students have become more and more passive since Senior 2, and some teachers of Senior 3 even complain that their students are not willing to answer questions but only prefer to listen to teacher's lectures and concentrate on exams. (Ren)

Based on the understanding of his personal background, the following sections will present how Ren perceived literacy and L2 literacy, culture teaching and learning as well as the use of authentic texts in his English lessons. According to class observations, his teaching practices will also be described.

5.3.2 Literacy and L2 literacy

According to Ren, "being literate nowadays means more than a graduate certificate" and it also includes "being courteous, knowledgeable and having one's own view and

judgement". He referred to reading diverse information with the focus on reading literature, including *"traditional Chinese classic works and outstanding works in the world, such as American literature, British literature and French literature"*. He also used the word 多元化 [multiple] to describe the ways that people access information due to the application of technology.

However, Ren's attitude was not fully positive towards such technological progress and he thought *"computers are overused"*. He commented that *"students do not increase their quantity of reading because of the convenience that e-books bring; instead, the number of students who really enjoy reading is getting less"*.

Moreover, Ren indicated that the changes brought about by the development of the technology made teaching more challenging because students did not have to depend on teachers to acquire information and knowledge. So teachers had to *"follow the trend of the times and keep learning new things"* so that they would not *"lag behind their students"*. He especially mentioned that English teachers need to *"learn about the new words emerging each year"*.

As various information was available and accessible on the internet, Ren thought that teachers were responsible for guiding students how to use the internet properly and safely because *"some of the content on the internet is not good for them and students are more likely to be addicted to online games"*. In addition, he noted that teachers should *"guide them how to select information"* and he believed that news from VOA and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) were good materials for English learning.

In contrast to this in the period of observation Ren did not mention the strategies of reading on-line texts although they had a text which was set out like a website page.

Additionally, Ren especially stated that reading literature was a good way to learn English and mentioned his practice of involving his students in reading literature.

I asked my students to read a literary fiction in English during the first school holidays¹⁶ and then write a book review in English. (Ren)

¹⁶ Chinese senior high school students have two school holidays in a year – seven-week summer holidays and three-week winter holidays.

However, as “*the most realistic goal at present is that they [the students] can get good results in the PMET*” (Ren), Ren interpreted getting students prepared for exams as a way to develop their English literacy and he further explained:

First I have to keep to our school’s teaching plan. Two modules should be finished in a semester¹⁷. Our textbooks cover all basic vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, including 3,500 words and their usages required in NECS. Besides, we add another 1,000 words and phrases so that our students can master around 4,500 lexical items to get good results in the PMET. Then I instruct them to read extensively after class. For example, doing cloze and reading comprehension exercises is more effective and practical for students to work well in exams. (Ren)

Class observation shows that Ren spent a larger proportion of course hours (85 minutes) delivering vocabulary and grammar knowledge in the first three lessons (totally 135 minutes) while other class activities that the students got involved in, such as discussion, only occurred in the last observed lesson but for a very limited time (2 minutes). In the last lesson Ren also provided an opportunity for his students to focus on meaning of the text in the textbook. He referred to some reading strategies, like looking for topic sentences, to help the students make meaning from the text and asked them to practise reading skills, such as skimming and scanning as suggested in the textbook.

When teaching vocabulary, sometimes Ren extended beyond word learning to include both a more specific focus on meaning making and also on language learning strategy. For example, he made up a paragraph, borrowing the plot of *Robinson Crusoe*, to help his students tell the different meanings of ‘bare’.

After the boat sank, Robinson lived on a bare island. Many trees there were bare. His arms and feet were bare. He barely had food to eat and a shelter to live in. He knew nothing but the bare fact that he had to survive. He killed beasts with his bare hands. At first, he was hungry, and he ate the bare minimum of food available
These are the bare bones of this novel.

Compared to the lecture on explicit rules of using the words, students seemed more interested and engaged in this practice. They spoke out the meanings of each ‘bare’ loudly in Chinese. Students’ previous knowledge about the story of Robinson allowed them to guess the meanings of the word without much difficulty.

¹⁷ There are two terms in a semester, and one term lasts about 10 weeks.

Although Ren's priority was preparing the students for exams, he was concerned that *"the dumb English is still a very serious phenomenon in China"*.

So much time, energy and money is spent in learning English but students end up with dumb English and can hardly use it. (Ren)

He thought that the reason was that Chinese students *"overdo grammar exercises and testing practice but have few opportunities to listen and speak in English"*.

Ren also mentioned the policy that meant the listening test would be removed from the PMET and he worried that this policy might disadvantage students.

Those students who hold a utilitarian attitude would prefer not to practice listening. . . Anyway, this is the policy maker's decision and we teachers can do nothing to change it. (Ren)

Ren thought at least he endeavoured to provide his students some opportunities to interact in English in class. For example, he had one student make a presentation for 5 minutes at the beginning of each class on the topic the student favoured, such as tourism, culture, music, art, movie, etc., and in various forms, like making presentations, singing, role play, etc. They also had a debate competition in English and role-played 'The Million Pound Note' written by Mark Twain. In the observed lessons, the students who made presentations read through the slides of the PowerPoints they made beforehand and there seemed little opportunity for speaking in English spontaneously.

In spite of saying that *"listening and speaking cannot be disregarded"*, Ren admitted that *"if the time in class is limited, listening and speaking practice has to be cut off"* (Ren). Therefore, according to class observation, Listening and Speaking section in the textbook was not highlighted and Ren did not engage his students in any task to use functional items provided in this section to practice listening and speaking.

The opportunity that Ren provided his students with to practice speaking was talking about their opinion on smoking.

Ren: *Why do you think some adolescents start smoking, xxx [a boy's name]?*

Boy 1: *They smoke because smoking makes them seem cool and they feel it appeals to the girls.*

Ren: *xxx [another boy's name], what's your opinion?*

Boy 2: *Because it makes them look like adults.*

After reading the text in the textbook, students were asked to work in pairs to discuss in English and make up a dialogue, one trying to persuade the other to give up smoking.

After a couple of minutes' preparation, three pairs of students had the opportunity to present their dialogues before the class.

5.3.3 The teaching and learning of culture

'Background knowledge' was the term that Ren used to talk about the culture, but he referred to the cultures of different countries no matter whether English is spoken as the native language in these countries.

I add some background knowledge when teaching the textbook. For instance, there is a passage in another module named 'Anne's Diary' which is about Anne Frank's experience during the Second World War. So I introduced some related knowledge. (Ren)

Anne Frank was a German writer and she wrote about her life in the family hiding place in Amsterdam during the Second World War. The related knowledge could not be about the culture of English-speaking society, although the text was translated and presented in English.

Moreover, Ren was mostly focused on the factual knowledge rather than the knowledge of how to engage with native English speakers in authentic social and cultural contexts.

The first unit of this textbook is about art. I am personally not good at art, so I just told them about a few well-known writers and their representative works. The topic of Unit 2 is poetry, so I added some nursery rhymes as well as several translated Chinese Tang poems. (Ren)

No matter what he taught about culture, Ren noted that the exam-valued social and educational context served as an obstacle to the teaching and learning of culture in class.

The Academic Level Test¹⁸ is approaching. At present, schools in the whole province are compared and ranked according to their passing rate and excellence rate of this examination. Our principal has even personally talked to all English teachers concerned to address its importance. It would be inappropriate if we talk too much about some irrelevant content in class at present. (Ren)

In line with what Ren said, there was no evidence of teaching and learning about the target language culture in his observed lessons.

¹⁸ The Academic Level Assessment is intended for students to get their senior high school certificate when they get the required marks in the exams for each subject learned at school.

5.3.4 The use of authentic texts

Ren acknowledged that “*authentic English is created by native speakers*” and was aware that “*the content of the textbooks was produced, made up, or remoulded by Chinese people, and it is surely not authentic English*”. Thus, he suggested that his students “*read some original English literary works*” after class.

However, Ren confessed that in class textbooks were mostly used, in addition to an exercise book and vocabulary handouts. Although Senior Two students were provided with two or three pieces of latest news reports to read after class every week, Ren said he just sometimes “*picked out some words to emphasize their usages and explained some long and complex sentences if necessary in class*” (Ren). The focus was not on the social and cultural aspects of these authentic texts.

In observed lessons the textbook was the only material used for teaching and learning English and there were no additional authentic texts provided for the students to read. Neither was there any reference to the social and cultural aspects of English texts. Although multimedia equipment was employed in his class, it was mainly used to present grammatical notes rather than to expose the students to multimodal texts.

Of a similar age to Ren, another participant Long was a passionate teacher who loved teaching and was proud of being the teacher of a lot of excellent students. The following section will provide some details about him and his teaching.

5.4 Introducing Long

5.4.1 Personal context

It was the ninth year since Long graduated from a teachers’ college and became a teacher in the Ying School in 2004. Although he admitted that “*choosing to study in the teachers’ college was mainly because there were more possibilities to be admitted to university*”, he was quite happy and satisfied with being a teacher in the Ying School. For one thing, as he stated, “*different from most schools, we are not required to keep office hours, which means I have a lot of free time*”. For another thing, he was proud of

having taught “*an experimental class¹⁹ where the top students from the whole province gathered*”. He described these students as being “*enthusiastic about learning*” and “*their learning attitudes were very positive*”, and therefore, “*most of them did very well in the College Entrance Examinations or in the tests given by some top universities*”.

Speaking of the reason why he chose to be an English teacher, Long thought his English teachers in junior and senior middle school had a positive influence on him.

They all loved this subject [English] very much. So I also took a keen interest in English. Their pronunciation was very good. Moreover, their teaching was not restricted by the textbook, which made their classes attractive. (Long)

As an English teacher, Long thought that he needed to keep learning English to “*set a good example for his students to follow*”. Reading English literary works was a way he preferred to learn English and during school holidays he did intensive listening practice for five hours every day. Long also had some opportunities to communicate with his colleagues who came from English speaking countries at school time and even worked as the interpreter when the Ying School had visitors from their foreign sister schools.

Long had 59 students in each of two Senior One classes and most of the students were aged 16. In terms of students’ purpose of learning English, Long thought that a lot of his students learned English out of their interest in English songs and movies and so they desired to improve their English to “*better understand the meaning of English songs or the humour and implications of English movies*”.

Although his students had to prepare for different tests to continue their further study, Long thought that tests to some extent had a positive effect on their English learning.

The better results they get in the exams, the more confident they will become in English, and they will be more willing to access English actively, like watching American dramas or listening to English songs. The more they watch and listen to English, the more they find it interesting to learn English and the better their English will be. (Long)

However, Long had to admit that some students ended up with learning ‘dumb English’ as the result of exam-oriented learning.

¹⁹ The Ying School used to recruit students from the whole province based on their exam results. The class they were in was named experimental class and more experienced teachers were designated to teach them.

If English is learned as a school subject, it turns out to be 'dumb English'. You might know quite a few words and do well in exams but find out that you know little about English on most occasions when you want to use it in a real way. (Long)

Observation data indicate that Long's students behaved very well in class, listening attentively, keeping notes and responding to Long when needed, but they never spoke loudly unless being asked to, or raised questions actively. Long thought that they were the product of the Chinese educational system.

Our students or students in our province are more passive, because they have been taught to receive [knowledge] passively since they were young and they have been used to this after they went through their primary and junior middle school education. (Long)

This, as Long pointed out, impeded the transformation from teacher-centred teaching to student-centred teaching. However, Long believed that “*our continuous efforts will make a difference*” (Long).

The following sections will present the data in regards to Long's perception of literacy and L2 literacy, culture teaching and learning, and the use of authentic texts, together with his teaching practice in observed lessons.

5.4.2 Literacy and L2 literacy

Long interpreted literacy mainly as the ability to read, especially to achieve different reading purposes. When being reminded of the use of a range of channels or media to access information nowadays, Long added:

We are not restricted to reading texts on paper as various materials are available on the Internet. So, being literate should include the ability to get access to information. (Long)

Similarly, Long emphasized reading and comprehension when interpreting L2 literacy.

A lot of students find that when they are reading they might forget what they just read. They cannot remember the previous part when they finish reading two thirds of a passage. It is not good for the comprehension of the whole passage. If they are good at English literacy, they can not only read an English article, but also can comprehend it. (Long)

However, Long prioritized vocabulary and grammar and limited this to the ability to read paper-bound texts when he talked about his expectation of his students' L2 literacy development.

When they finish their senior high school education, they should have about 4,000 vocabulary items and essential grammar knowledge, and they can understand the

passages for medium level readers. I hope that they are able to read their favourite books in English. (Long)

He explained the reason for such priority was that the students' *"grammatical framework is not well structured and their vocabulary needs to be built up"*.

Class observations demonstrate that Long spent nearly half of the four lessons on vocabulary and grammar. An episode of Long's teaching the usage of 'die' is presented as follows:

Long: [when coming across the phrase 'die out'] *Is there any other phrases we have learned with 'die'?*

Students: *die of, die from*

Long: *Yes. 通常 die of 指缓慢的死亡而 die from 指猝死 [Usually 'die of' refers to a slow death, while 'die from' refers to a sudden death.] 还有一个短语是 die off, 指一个一个死去 [There is another phrase 'die off', which refers to dying one after another.] For example, Conan went into the house to look into the case because the families died off within one week.*

Long was concentrated on such explicit knowledge and differentiation in words which were necessary for exam questions. He also referred to the PMET when possible. For example, after students read a short poem 'A squirrel poem' written by William B. Yeats in the textbook, Long picked out 'when' to explain:

When 在这里是并列连词 ['when' is used as a conjunction here]. For example, how can you expect to learn anything when you never listen? 高考题中曾经考过这个词的用法 [This usage has been tested in the PMET] Why did you buy a ticket when you could have entered for free? 注意 when 在这里的用法 [You need to pay attention to the usage of when here].

However, Long sometimes adopted strategies to help his students learn how the words were used in real circumstances. For instance, when he addressed that no article should be used before 'fun', he sang *"What fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh"*. When they came across the word 'reserve', he drew a table with a sign on it on the chalkboard, and wrote 'reserved' on the sign to indicate that it means *"it is kept for someone else and you cannot use this table"* (Long). This approach of teaching words seemed appealing to students.

In addition to vocabulary, Long gave emphasis on *"the expansion of students' reading quantity"* because he believed that students could learn *"how the words, phrases and grammar learned from the textbooks are used in a broader range of contexts"*, which he described as *"building up a written English language environment"*.

Therefore, Long was trying to provide his students with more reading materials “*related to the topics of the units in the textbooks, especially those written by famous writers*”. In addition, he mentioned that he provided Helen Keller’s ‘Three Days to See’ for his students to read intensively and then learn some paragraphs by heart.

Based on his input and output theory, Long believed that “*rote-learning is an effective way*” to learn English. He compared memorising some texts, “*especially those written by some famous writers*”, to “*absorbing nutrients*” and thought his students should “*take advantage of having a good memory at this age to get as much input as possible for future use.*” When I was interviewing Long in his office, during ten minutes’ class break his students came to his office individually to recite the passage as required to him.

Long encouraged his high level students to read English literary works after class, like *Harry Potter*. However, for those students whose English was at the low and medium level, reading textbooks was the priority because “*it is the most efficient way to pass exams*”, although he considered it important to read extensively.

In addition to reading, Long thought “*it is a bit earlier for Senior One students to speak [in English]*” as he believed that “*only adequate input can assure output*” so that his students needed a vast amount of input (reception) before they could attempt any output (production) of speaking and writing.

Long spoke English in class as a way to have his students practise their listening. As indicated from observation data, he talked in English for 22 minutes in the first lesson, only code switching to introduce some new words and phrases. However, Chinese was used more frequently to explain grammatical items, which was in line with his remarks in the interview:

In my class I try to speak English as much as possible, but I have to speak a lot of Chinese when I explain grammar and when I explain the answers to the exercises.

(Long)

Class observations show that although the main interaction between Long and his students was still asking and answering questions in English, the students had some opportunities to practise speaking in English spontaneously in class. For instance, the students worked in pairs to talk about wildlife protection in English and then seven individual students were asked to share their ideas in English. Long also drew students’ attention to functional language in the textbook something I did not observe in the other

two classrooms, but he did not engage his students in any speaking practice with the use of these functional items.

Similar to speaking practice, Long considered that writing practice was too early for Senior One students too.

We don't have a high requirement on writing at Senior One. At the moment, they are at the input stage and need to get exposed to standard and authentic English materials. (Long)

Therefore, in class Long chose to disregard the writing task in the textbook which was writing a letter to WWF in regard to wildlife protection and focus on reading area instead.

5.4.3 The use of authentic texts

Long thought it necessary to expose his students to “*standard and authentic English texts*” (Long), and he articulated what he considered to be authentic texts.

No matter whether it is British English or American English, or even Canadian English, as long as English is spoken as the native or first language, but not Chinglish that we create ourselves, we can learn and imitate it. (Long)

Long noted that, in addition to textbooks, he exposed his students to such English texts as “*interesting, entertaining and educational English video clips*” and the articles associated with some big events that students were interested in and concerned with in class. For example, when Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in Literature, he downloaded the relevant articles from some foreign media on the internet, like *Times*, *CNN*, *Economics*, etc., for his students to read. He also encouraged his students to watch English TV programs, like *Discovery*, and English films after class.

I suggest to their parents that they leave English TV programs on when the kids are having dinner or at weekends so that the kids can be exposed to as much English as possible. It doesn't matter whether the kids are focused on them or not, but at least they are immersed in such an English environment, which will benefit their textbook learning. (Long)

In one of the observed lessons Long played a video clip from an English documentary film *Walking with Dinosaurs* made by BBC as the second passage in the textbook is about the extinction of dinosaurs. The students watched this video twice for 5 minutes without any task to complete afterwards. Long neither checked their understanding of the language in the video nor gave any explanation to or any comments on this video.

So, it is hard to tell how well the students could understand this multimodal authentic texts.

Another authentic text that was used in Long's class was a printed article entitled *Our Family Creed: The Things That Make Life Most Worth Living*, written by John D. Rockefeller (1839 – 1937) (see Appendix K). The students were asked to read it and learn it by rote after class. Although it was written by an American, the language in this text is not contemporary. In class the form of the language was highlighted but there was no mention of the social and cultural aspects of the text.

It is suggested in the *Teacher's Handbook* that teachers could help their students explore the topic of wild animal protection by visiting the website of WWF (World Wildlife Fund). However, Long did not expose his students to such on-line authentic texts.

While the above sections presented the teacher participants' perceptions of L2 teaching and learning and their teaching practice in classroom, it is important to also listen to students' voices to look at L2 literacy teaching and learning in the Ying School from their perspectives.

5.5 Students' perspectives and experiences of English learning

Two girls, Li²⁰ and Mei, and three boys Ming, Xiang and Yong from different classes of Senior Two in the Ying School were involved in the focus group interview. They were around the age of seventeen. The interview was conducted in Chinese to build up a natural and comfortable atmosphere so that the participants could feel relaxed and comfortable to share their experiences and their idea.

All five students expressed that they were fond of learning English, although they gave different reasons. For example, Ming and Yong mentioned that there were more possibilities that they might use English in life or in their future study or work. Li was more interested in learning a different language so that she could not only obtain the first-hand information in English but also understand different culture. Xiang thought that learning English helped him “*learn to think and express in a different way*” and he

²⁰ The pseudonyms are used for the student participants.

could also “*appreciate the beauty of English original works*” which the translated works could not capture.

Only one student Mei suggested that, “*We have to take English exam to enter the universities, so we should learn English*”.

However, most of the students were not satisfied with their ability to communicate in English, especially their ability to listen and speak in English, due to insufficient practice. For example, Xiang said that he felt “*rather nervous*” when communicating with others in English; Li stated that “*there is no environment for listening and speaking in English because the exam-oriented education is focused on reading and writing*”. Ming even claimed that he had “*never used English out of English class*”.

Some students recognized that it was because “*English learning in our country lays too much emphasis on grammar but ignores how to communicate in real contexts*” (Xiang). As a result, when speaking in English, Yong stated that he was “*restricted to sentence structures and rules and always worried about making mistakes in grammar*”.

With respect to social and cultural aspects of the language, Li mentioned that “*We have few opportunities to learn how English is used in real situations, and therefore we have no idea how to communicate with native speakers in English appropriately*”, and this conclusion was drawn from her experience of a study tour in Britain.

When we went to Britain for a study tour this summer, we took a placement test. In this test few items were aimed to test grammar, but most were about using appropriate responses in different contexts. I found it hard because we seldom did such practice. (Li)

For most of time they accessed authentic texts after class in which the target culture was embedded. Xiang gave the following example.

I learned an expression from an English movie – to answer the call of nature, which is a euphemistic expression for going to toilet. I shared it with some of my classmates. They laughed and thought it funny to speak in this way. (Xiang)

Additionally, Xiang recognised that language was not the only factor that impacted proper and effective communication, although he did not use the term ‘culture’.

[It is important to] Think as English speakers do. What I mean is that if two people think in different ways, language will not be the only problem to make communication. (Xiang)

Some students thought that “*the textbook cannot meet the demands for using the language*” (Ming), although they acknowledged that the textbooks were helpful in

“*laying a good foundation in basic linguistic knowledge*” (Mei) and “*passing the PMET*” (Ming). Thus, they had to “*learn by themselves for more improvement*” (Mei). Moreover, they were aware that the texts used in class were not authentic, as evidenced from Li’s and Xiang’s statements:

There are differences between English used in the real life and what we have learned from the textbooks. We are learning English in the way that we Chinese people use English. We should learn more from how native English speakers use this language rather than relying on the textbooks. (Li)

Teachers at school seldom give us authentic supplementary materials, except for two or three articles about current national or international affairs. (Xiang)

Additionally, one student, Yong, highlighted different opinions held by both teachers and parents from that of students in terms of using authentic texts to learn English.

If I could do as I wish, I definitely prefer watching English movies and listening to English songs more often, but my teachers and parents may think I am not focusing my attention on learning English. (Yong)

The students had accessed some authentic texts independently, such as English novels, movies, celebrities’ speeches, newspaper, except Ming who stated that he only used the textbooks to learn English. Li also mentioned that she read English texts from an English learning website called *Youdao Dictionary*. However, this website was developed and run by a big Chinese internet company. It is not only intended for English learners in China but is also a type of marketing practice. Therefore, some texts on this website are not authentic.

In conclusion, the focus group interview suggests that the students in the Ying School had the desire to use English in their current and future life and some of them had access to English authentic texts after class independently. However, as English teaching and learning in class was mainly focused on language knowledge in the textbooks, their opportunity to learn about the social and cultural aspects of English was mostly available after class.

In the following Chapter we will approach the other case study school – the Yan School where three EFL teachers working with Senior One students were interviewed and their lessons were observed. In this regular school, the students in this regular school fell far behind their peers in the Ying School in their academic study, including English. Therefore, it is significant to examine the teachers’ perceptions and practice of teaching English literacy as well as the students’ perspectives and experience of English learning.

CHAPTER 6 EFL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF L2 LITERACY AND THEIR PRACTICE IN THE YAN SCHOOL

As in the previous chapter, this chapter presents the context of the Yan School at first, then introduces three participant teachers according to interview and class observation data, finishing with student participants' perspectives and experiences of English learning.

6.1 School context

The Yan School, located in the eastern area of Lu city, was founded in the 1950s. As a regular school, the Yan School did not have the advantage of recruiting²¹ the students who were high achievers in their academic studies. This led to a lower university enrolment rate of its graduates, compared to key schools such as the Ying School. Previously, the campus was enclosed by a brick wall, which separated the school from its surroundings. Several years ago, the brick wall was replaced by a fence, through which passers-by could have a view of the beautiful campus from outside. In this way the school promoted itself as being more open and inviting, as a way to recruit more candidates.

When the study was undertaken, there are around 2000 students and over 200 teachers in Yan School. Students' classrooms and teachers' offices are located in a new six-level teaching building built in 2010. Despite the fact that the classrooms are more spacious and better equipped in the Yan School than those in the Ying School, the layout of the classroom is exactly the same as that of the Ying School and most of facilities are virtually identical in both schools.

The school prioritizes English and mathematics, scheduling both subjects every day. The reason for prioritizing English and maths is the proportion (40%) of the two

²¹ Each school sets their threshold score to admit junior middle school graduates according their results of the High School Entrance Examinations. Key schools' threshold scores are much higher than regular schools'.

subjects in the college entrance examinations and the low achievement in both subjects at this school.

There are three EFL teachers in this school involved in this case study and all of them were teaching Senior One groups with most of the students aged 16. Each of the participants will be introduced in the following sections.

6.2 Introducing Yi

6.2.1 Personal context

In her forties, Yi had been teaching English at the Yan School since 1990 after she graduated from a provincial teachers' college. She described herself as being uncomplicated and conservative because of her living and schooling experience.

I have never left the school environment, from schooling to working, so I don't have any experience of living in other cities or working in other places, which might contribute to my simple and conservative personality.

Yi said she loved being a teacher, but then she continued with the remarks about her dissatisfaction in being a teacher. She explained that her salary was not high but most importantly, she did not have the freedom she desired. For example, she had to “*keep office hours*”, “*had no voice in what to teach*” and had to “*be evaluated by somebody else*”. Yi also complained that no matter how hard she worked, her effort could not be reflected from her students' results in exams, which frustrated her.

When the study was done, Yi was teaching two Senior One classes. She expected that her students could use English when they needed it, such as “*applying for a tertiary school in a foreign country by themselves*”, “*accessing English information on the internet*” and “*appreciating the beauty of the English language*”. However, she was aware that what she expected was “*only an ideal but hard to achieve*” because most of her students “*even have difficulty passing the Academic Level Test although this test is much easier than the College Entrance Examinations*”. She attributed this to their bad learning habit that they formed during their previous years of schooling: “*they don't accumulate knowledge in a timely way*”. As a result, she concluded, “*they lose interest and confidence in learning English*”. She also thought that her students' behaviour in class mirrored their English level.

If the students' English is poor, they appear listless and passive in class; if the students' English is good, they appear more active and engaged. (Yi)

The class observations confirmed that some of the students were not attentive in class. For example, when Yi presented vocabulary exercises on the projector, some students did not even look up at it. Yi thought that the large population in one class, normally over fifty or even sixty students, made it hard to attend to every young person in the class.

The following sections will indicate Yi's perceptions of literacy and L2 literacy, culture teaching and learning as well as the use of authentic texts in English. Her teaching practice in the observed classes will also be presented in the sections.

6.2.2 Literacy and L2 literacy

Being unfamiliar with the term literacy, Yi did not give an explicit definition of literacy, but her understanding of literacy went beyond the ability to read and write.

Being literate means more than the ability to read and write and it also refers to being knowledgeable and morally cultivated as well as the attitude towards some issues and the ability to tackle problems. ... In addition, it should include the ability to use high technology like computers. (Yi)

However, when talking about L2 literacy, Yi firstly laid the emphasis on vocabulary by comparing words to bricks for building a house, and then addressed the use of textbooks to develop reading comprehension. Yi was concerned that her students had difficulty in remembering words. They “*memorize spelling by remembering exact letters*” rather than spelling words according to phonetics. Moreover, although Yi was well aware that “*the meanings of words should be understood in the sentences, contexts and discourses where they are used*”, her students' problem was that “*even though they remember the words, they still have difficulty in understanding sentences or passages*”.

During the period of class observation it was not vocabulary in context that was highlighted, rather Yi focused on the spelling of words. For example, she asked her students to copy the new words five times as their homework so that students could memorize the spelling. Yi also asked her students to learn the sentences in the reading passage by heart in order to learn the structures like attributive clause, reverse structure and passive voice. However, she did not use a task in the textbook which was intended to help students practise using the future passive voice by designing a poster for a sports

meeting. She thought that the students “do not know how to structure sentences correctly” so that they were not able to fulfil this task.

Yi believed that “doing more reading practice is the only way to solve this problem”, and she said that she helped her students practice reading skills by using different reading strategies.

When I teach a reading passage in the textbook, normally I ask them to read it first to grasp the gist of the passage and the main idea of each paragraph. Then I analyse sentence structures and explain the rules of some words. After class they practise reading by doing reading comprehension exercises in test-format papers.
(Yi)

However, according to class observation, instead of helping her students practise reading skills as mentioned above, Yi just translated every sentence of the reading passage into Chinese to ensure that her students could comprehend the passage.

According to Yi, she also provided opportunity for her students to practise listening, usually in morning classes once a week although the practice was structured in the same format as listening test in the PMET paper. Yi admitted that even she could not “think and speak in the way that native English speakers think and speak”, although it was advocated that students should learn to do so. The observation data indicated that Yi mostly spoke in Chinese and she was teaching about English but not in English. Therefore, students were exposed to very limited spoken English in class.

However, Yi did encourage her students to speak English by retelling the passage in the textbook in their own words. However, the students were just trying to learn the sentences in the passage by heart due to their levels of English competence. None of the students were able to talk about the topic related to Olympic Games in a spontaneous way. Actually, as disclosed by Yi, “there is no real communication in English in class”.

Moreover, Yi were more concerned with the grammatical correctness of his students’ spoken English. For example, she always interrupted the students to correct their grammar mistakes.

A student: . . . *The Olympics held every four years.* . . .

Yi (interrupting the student): *The Olympics are held every four years.* 这里应该用被动语态 [The passive voice should be used here.]

As to developing students’ ability of writing, Yi depicted that she was teaching writing conventions of a type of text – letters, introducing “how English format differs from

Chinese format in letters". Then she would provide an easy model for her students to learn by rote because "*many of the students do not know how to structure sentences correctly*". Such Chinese traditional practice of teaching and learning literacy was also reflected from her frequent use of a word 灌输 [feed or instil] in her speech.

*The students have been **fed** on some complex sentence structures when they are still in junior middle school.*

*When we are **feeding** our students on English linguistic knowledge . . .*

*We should not only be limited to **feeding** our students on what they should learn, but...*

6.2.3 The teaching and learning of culture

Yi did not give an explicit definition of culture but she referred to "*some relevant common knowledge in specific fields, like football*" and some paralinguistic knowledge like "*the table manners and the proper body distances between people*".

However, although Yi recognized that "*teachers should penetrate such stuff as culture into language teaching, especially the background of the English-speaking countries*", She stated that she didn't have time to do so because they had to finish "*the required content in textbooks within limited course hours*" and her students needed more time "*to consolidate basic knowledge like vocabulary*". She excluded culture from "*the required content*" and even considered the teaching and learning of culture as "*a deviation from what should be learned*" because culture did not feature in exams.

Yi also reported her insufficient knowledge and practical experience of getting involved in the culture of English speaking countries limited her ability to teach about culture. For example, she said that she had no interest in reading about current affairs no matter in English or in Chinese. Despite the experience of staying in Canada for a month in 2003 to receive in-service training, Yi did not truly engage with the culture and the language of Canada as for most of the time the teachers from China "*stayed together and still communicated in Chinese after class*". In class, the class observation indicated that there was limited reference of culture, except for the knowledge associated with Olympic Games, which was identified as background knowledge by Yi.

6.2.4 The use of authentic texts

Yi complained that she did not have the right to choose the learning materials but had to use the prescribed textbooks. Such textbook-focused teaching and learning left little time to expose the students to a range of texts in class. However, Yi was aware of the limitations associated with authenticity by pointing out that “*the language that we teachers use is grammatically correct but not the same as how English is used by English speakers*”. She regarded English literary works as good materials to learn authentic expression and she named some other texts that students could read to learn English. There are some authentic texts like English movies in Yi’s list, but most of the texts were written for Chinese language learners and are used by them in the Chinese context. These texts therefore have limited value in demonstrating to Chinese students the way English is used authentically in English speaking communities.

Additionally, Yi acknowledged the capacity associated with multimedia technology even if exams and textbooks constrained its use in class. Of all the teacher participants thus far, Yi was most able to talk about the issues that this study was exploring. For instance, she mentioned that the use of multimedia technology helped to arouse students’ interest in learning English and the accessibility of the internet in classroom enabled her to demonstrate how to learn English. However, for a number of reasons, such as limited course hours, the pressure of the high-stake exams, and the lack of availability of the technology devices for big classes, class observation showed that Yi’s students did not have the opportunity to explore more about the Olympics by visiting the official website of the Olympic Movement as suggested in the *Teacher’s Handbook*.

The next teacher participant Jian was a very outgoing person. During the interview he not only responded to the interview questions, but also spoke about a number of issues somewhat related to my interview. The next section details Jian’s experiences of learning and teaching English as well as his perspectives and practices of developing students’ L2 literacy.

6.3 Introducing Jian

6.3.1 Personal Context

Jian was in his forties and it was his 24th year of teaching in the Yan school when he got involved in this study. He joked that he had spent half of his life time teaching. Jian made use of my presence in his class. He gave me a call after we first met, inviting me to his class the next morning to talk about my experiences in Australia. He thought it a good opportunity for his students to learn more about Australia and to motivate them to learn English. Actually, I spent half a lesson's time (over 20 minutes) talking about life and study in Australia and answering the students' questions. Meanwhile, Jian also added his experience in Australia as he received a professional training in Sydney for a month in 2002. The students showed great interest in this lesson.

Different from other teacher participants who chose English as the major because of practical considerations, Jian chose to be an English teacher because he really loved learning English and was always good at it when he was studying at school. He appreciated that his English learning benefited from good teachers he had, one of whom was a Canadian teacher in the teacher's college where he studied. This teacher bought every student in his class a book with 101 popular songs in Europe and America, together with a tape. Jian said proudly that he did not disappoint his teacher's expectation and had learned to sing every song in that book. This practice benefited him in his English learning, especially in oral English, and he thought it fun to learn English in this way.

As a teacher, Jian was conscious that *“new things keep emerging, and we teachers can't stop learning because we need to update our knowledge to make our class more attractive”*. He often read the *China Daily*, watched English movies and basketball matches, like NBA, and read English version of government reports. He thought these benefited his English learning. He said with satisfaction that *“my English vocabulary is richer than my colleagues.”* He also mentioned proudly his good performance among English teachers who received professional training in Sydney. To be eligible for the training, the teachers had to be recommended by their schools and then went through a written test.

I was among the top ten in the admission test. When we finished the course there, we had an exam again and I got the second place among 49 EFL teachers. I was 36 at that time while most of other teachers in the group were under 30. But I found that most of them could not compare with me in terms of the range of knowledge.
(Jian)

Jian had over 50 students in both of his Senior One class groups, most of whom were aged 16. According to Jian, the Yan School “*finds itself at the bottom of the nine senior middle schools in the urban area*” and “*most of the students were not motivated in their academic studies, including English*”. According to Jian, “*very few students, only single digit number of them, were learning English out of interest, and some students are very struggling in English class*”. Although Jian felt that “*it is hard to motivate the students to study*”, he still tried to convince them of the importance of English with true stories in life. For instance,

One of my friends does transit trade in Hong Kong. Once, he should have packaged by pound but he packaged by 500 grams as he didn't know what pound meant. Finally, he ended up with suffering a great loss by repackaging all of the goods. If he had learned English this would not have happened. (Jian)

Next, Jian's perspectives on literacy and L2 literacy, culture teaching and learning, as well as his view on using authentic texts will be presented in the following sections. The observation data will also be included to demonstrate his teaching practices in the researched areas.

6.3.2 Literacy and L2 literacy

According to Jian, literacy included the ability “*to process the information to meet different demands*”. For example, “*people look for price when reading advertisements, read instructions of products for specific functions, and try to figure out the answers to wh-questions when reading stories*”.

Jian considered that, in addition to being able to read and write, being literate nowadays should include “*having some common knowledge, like how to use the computer*”.

However, Jian said that he was not clear about the term L2 literacy and even asked if L2 literacy was referred to as reading textbooks. Even so, Jian was fairly conscious that teachers should help their students, especially English beginners, learn English by “*starting with easy and interesting stories, like those in 'New Concept English II', to learn how to make meaning from English texts*”.

Allied to this, Jian talked about his strategy of teaching reading, which he named as “无任务阅读” [reading without any tasks].

For those students who get a headache in English class, I put forward that they learn to sing English songs and read some stories without any tasks. Don't give them any questions to answer after reading, which they fear to do, because they feel it hard. So just let them read without pressure to develop their interests and then gradually make higher requirements on the skills they should master about the language. (Jian)

Jian claimed that “it makes little difference in language learning which materials are used”, and the class observation shows that Jian only used the textbook in his class and did not provide any other texts for his students to read due to the pressure from the powerful figures represented by the principal at school.

If you spend a lot of time on these [stories], they cannot do well in exams. As a result, somebody will come to talk to you [blaming you for students' poor performance in exams]. So this is a contradiction. (Jian)

Additionally, according to class observation data, instead of engaging his students in any activity to practice their reading skills, Jian translated every sentence of the passage in the textbook into Chinese. Moreover, Jian did not expose his students to much English in class because he always spoke in Chinese, and so the students did not have the opportunity to practise speaking in English. As he pointed out, the expectation associated with the examination system is a factor that impacted on his teaching:

If there is no radical change in exam-oriented education, it is hard to expect any revolutionary change in class. (Jian)

With regards to learning vocabulary, Jian objected to merely memorizing spelling of words. On the day when I visited him for the first time, he showed me his students' spelling test papers which were used regularly and uniformly by all the English teachers in Senior One to test students' spelling, saying that:

I am against doing this and feel it boring. I asked my students if they felt the same and they responded 'Yes' with very loud voice. We know from practice that words should be learned in a passage. Also from a professional perspective, together with grammar, they have to be learned in passages and contexts. (Jian)

Jian also gave an example of how he made word learning appealing to his students.

When I taught the unit about the Olympic Games, I told them some vocabulary used in basketball games, like 'steal' which they are very familiar with but means rebounds, and they feel it very interesting and easy to remember. (Jian)

However, Jian was still struggling with sticking to his own approach in the exam-valued context in China.

But this way [learning vocabulary and grammar in stories] does not work efficiently for the exams. I make great effort but it cannot be reflected from students' exam papers. When can we see the effect? I think when they continue their English learning in the universities, they might find that I was right. The effect is in the long run but I cannot see it. (Jian)

According to the class observations, and a point of difference to the other teacher participants, Jian did not spend much time on explaining the usages of the words but talked about how some common words were used in life. For example, the word 'explore' is used in 'internet explorer' and the familiar icon 'e' on the desktop comes from the word 'explorer'. When they came across the word 'trade' in the passage, he referred to the WTO (World Trade Organisation). He also talked about the use of the word 'isolation' as in 'Isolation Room' in an Australian school which he visited years ago. There appeared to be no opportunity for his students to practise using these words to communicate effectively in English.

6.3.3 The teaching and learning of culture

Background knowledge is the term that Jian always used to talk about the knowledge relevant to culture. According to him, "*rich background knowledge will be very helpful to comprehend the relevant passages*". For English teachers, teaching background knowledge was also a way "*to make reading passages appealing to students*".

Jian said confidently that "*a lot of EFL teachers cannot compare with me in terms of the scope of knowledge*", and he thought that "*many EFL teachers are restricted to teaching the knowledge from textbooks*"

In class, when they were exploring a reading text in the textbook which was about the development of computers, the students appeared uninterested and inattentive. So Jian admonished them in Chinese:

你们至少了解一下计算机的发展历史也是好的嘛, 不一定是英语, 汉语也行。

[It would be better if you can learn something about the history and the development of computers. If you cannot do it in English, at least you learn something in Chinese.] (Jian)

Jian then talked about the applications of technology in Chinese. For example, he explained what the English abbreviation GPS stands for and introduced this American invention as well as the development of the positioning system in China. What he did here was in accordance with his perspective expressed in his interview, namely that teachers should be responsible for broadening students' knowledge.

6.3.4 The use of authentic texts

Jian was well aware of the potential offered through authentic texts, like English movies, broadcast and songs. As he thought that “*pop songs cater for teenagers' interest*”, he advocated that English songs could be used for English teaching and learning.

Instead of teaching our textbook at the first two lessons of the new school year, I told my students to try learning English through songs. I searched out the song Yesterday Once More²², presented the lyrics on the projector, and played the song. (Jian)

He also gave an explicit description of how he used this song to teach English:

After listening to a section of the song, I explained to them what they could learn from. 'When I was young', the past tense is used; 'I'd listen to the radio', the usages of transitive verb and intransitive verb; 'the radio', the usage of articles - which nouns should be used with 'the' and which ones should not; for example, play the piano, play football. 'When they played, I would sing along', then we have modal verb; 'It made me smile', the usage of 'make', and also the infinitive form with 'to' and without 'to' . . . we can see that most of English grammar can be found in this song. So if students are interested, a song with beautiful melody and good lyrics can be a good material for English learning. (Jian)

Jian attempted to use authentic texts to help his students learn English, with an emphasis on words and grammar.

Nevertheless, apart from the textbook, Jian never used any other English texts in the observed lessons. The reason he explained is that “*textbooks are enough for students to learn*”. He also noted that his limited use of multimedia was constrained by the textbook-based teaching and learning although “*multimedia is available and the internet is accessible in every classroom*”.

The students are different in terms of their self-discipline. If we often use multimedia, it is impossible to be focused on the textbooks.

²² This hit song by American singers The Carpenters from their 1973 album is very popular in China, especially for English learners.

Interestingly, although the topic of the unit they were exploring was about computer and technology, there was no application of technology in the observed lessons.

The last teacher participant that will be introduced in the following section is a female teacher Bai. Different to the other teacher participants who were admitted to teacher's college to study for their four-year undergraduate diploma and degree before starting their teaching career, Bai only did a two-year program of study before she began teaching. Then she spent her spare time studying and finally got her undergraduate diploma. The following section will provide more details, based on the data collected from interviews and class observation, of her experiences, perspectives and practices of English teaching and learning.

6.4 Introducing Bai

6.4.1 Personal context

Bai first worked at a senior high school in her hometown for five years. After she obtained her undergraduate diploma, she transferred to the Yan School in 1996. Unlike the other two teachers in the Yan School, Bai did not have the experience of travelling overseas. Despite learning and teaching English for many years, Bai admitted that she hardly had any opportunity to communicate with others in English in a real way and so felt she could not speak good English due to lack of practice.

My oral English was ok when I just graduated from college, but without much practice and use, it gradually gets poorer and poorer. (Bai)

In terms of the situation where she could engage herself in the use of English, Bai said she sometimes watched English movies, browsed websites and newspaper, or watched English programs on CCTV9 (the International Channel of China Central Television), but not very often due to her limited time after work. Furthermore, she confessed that she could not understand English movies and TV programs completely because “*the English language used in them is quite different from what I have learnt*”. Moreover, despite the fact that she was only in her early forties, Bai felt that she was “*less capable than the younger teachers, especially those who just graduated from university, of learning new knowledge and skills, like computer skills*”.

During the period of the study, Bai was teaching two Senior One class groups. She had 49 students in one class group and 54 in the other, most of whom were aged 17. In her

view, students nowadays were quite different from those in the past because they do not depend entirely on their teachers to obtain knowledge as a result of the wide application of technology. This, she thought, was a challenge for teachers.

If we teachers just deliver English knowledge, students won't be interested in the class. Generally, if you only keep to textbooks, approximately thirty or forty percent students won't like this subject [English]. (Bai)

According to Bai, most of her students (80-90%) were learning English just for exams. As “*what they have learned cannot be used in real life or in their future work*”, “*they are not highly motivated to learn English*”. She asserted that “*if English is taken out of the college entrance examinations, there must be a decrease in the number of students who learn English*”.

Accordingly, “getting good marks in the PMET” is the priority of her expectation of her students’ English learning. However, she also noted that “*learning English is not only about getting high marks in the PMET but about the benefits for their future life and work*”.

The following section will present the interview and class observation data associated with the research questions.

6.4.2 Literacy and L2 literacy

Bai defined literacy as “*the ability to read and express both in oral and written forms*”, and she was aware of the young generation’s multiliteracies development.

Kids nowadays are better developed in their literacy than those twenty years ago. They start to learn Chinese characters and read stories since they are in kindergartens. They also have more channels to access a large amount of information they want to learn. (Bai)

Similarly, Bai interpreted L2 literacy as the ability to read and express in both oral and written form in English as well as “*the ability to employ more tools to access information in English and read it*”.

However, Bai supposed that “*students’ minds have been imprisoned by the exam-oriented education since they were young*” and, therefore, their English competence was constrained by such exam-focused teaching and learning. For example,

Some students can understand the main idea of reading passages and do comprehension exercises as required in exams, but they cannot tell about them in their own words in English. (Bai)

Regardless of appreciating what L2 literacy involves, Bai felt that she needed to stick to exam-centred teaching practice in listening and reading but “*have no specific time for speaking practice*” because speaking is not tested in the PMET. She noted that the only opportunity for her students to speak English was “*reading passages in the textbooks aloud and answering some related questions in English*”.

In addition to examinations, Bai thought that the students’ English competence was another factor that impacted her teaching.

If I speak in English in class, my students cannot understand me at all. So I have to repeat my words in Chinese. (Bai)

Therefore, Bai acknowledged that “*there is little communication with the students in English*”. Vocabulary and structures were prioritized in her teaching as she believed that “*it is essential to lay a good foundation first*” and she always referred to her students’ limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge when talking about their language skills.

According to Bai, rote-learning was an efficient way to learn vocabulary and grammar.

Students have to make great effort to learn such basic linguistic knowledge as vocabulary and grammar, and the traditional way of learning, like rote-learning, is necessary. (Bai)

Aiming to prepare the students for exams, Bai said she was always focused on teaching linguistic knowledge from textbooks rather than involving her students in class activities or tasks in which they could practise using English in a natural way, like group discussion, because she could hardly finish the content of the textbooks. Instead, “*the class activity is just checking if her students have mastered the basic language knowledge, like dictating new words*”.

The class observations showed that Bai spent over 10 minutes per lesson checking her students’ pronunciation and spelling of new words and the memorizing of phrases. The students who failed to do a satisfactory job had to stand for ten minutes as punishment. Therefore, whenever she checked their work, the students looked stressed and lowered their head to avoid being called. However, there was no opportunity for the students to practise using these words or phrases to construct meaning. For example, when checking the answers to word exercises in the textbook, Bai just cautioned her students by saying:

你不要抄上答案就完了，要会翻译，会在句子中使用这个词。 [You should not just copy the answers but should know how to translate the sentences and how to use these words in sentences.] (Bai)

In addition to exercises in the textbook, hand-outs were provided to students with more words and grammar exercises (see Appendix L), such as filling blanks and multiple choice exercises, but Bai did not engage her students in any oral or writing practice.

When teaching reading using passages in the textbook, as shown from class observation, Bai was meaning-focused at the beginning. She was trying to improve her students' reading skills by assisting them read using different strategies, such as skimming to get the gist and reading carefully to obtain detailed information. However, instead of letting the students answer the comprehension questions, Bai answered most of the questions herself. She also translated every sentence of the reading passages into Chinese and had her students underline some key phrases and sentences to learn by heart after class. Moreover, she did not provide the opportunity for her students to practise other language skills, in spite of her mention of students' ability to express themselves both in oral and written form in English when interpreting L2 literacy.

6.4.3 The teaching and learning of culture

Bai did not use the term culture in the interviews and she merely noted that she would refer to some knowledge related to the topics of the lessons in the textbook.

When we learn the unit about the Olympic Games, I talked about the mascots and the history of the Olympics. (Bai)

Bai indicated that there was higher expectation and requirements on English teachers nowadays in terms of language skills, the ability to teach textbooks according to students' competence and needs, and the ability to access information with the use of technology. However, there was no mention of the knowledge related to target culture as a must for English teachers. Accordingly, as class observation data indicate, cultural teaching and learning was not included in Bai's lessons.

6.4.4 The use of authentic texts

Bai was well aware of the inauthenticity of the English learned at school because it was *“mostly intended for examinations and most of what students have learned cannot be*

used in real life". She also acknowledged that "*students find most of the texts in the textbook uninteresting*", but "*this is textbook and we have to use it*".

In order to arouse her students' interest, Bai stated that she used multimedia to show pictures and sometimes flash animations. Moreover, she often "*use[d] PowerPoint to make it easier for the students to take notes [of important grammatical points]*". However, she seldom played videos in class because "*the video files are normally big and it takes too long to watch, and students' attention will be distracted [from textbook learning]*". Thus, as shown from class observation, she did not expose her students to a wide range of authentic multimodal texts due to their limited contribution to tests.

Although we have multimedia facilities to present audio and visual texts, they are of little help for students to pass English exams but are just used to entertain students. (Bai)

After class, Bai said that she "*encourage[d] the students to watch English movies or read newspaper and magazines in English*". However, according to Bai, "*few students do this because they are burdened with lots of homework of different subjects*".

Bai also referred to a website named 'Jiaxing English Teaching and Learning' that she thought helpful for students' English learning. However, for the most part what Bai described on this website was not authentic texts because it was set up by a Chinese company and the resources on it were closely related to textbooks and exams.

In line with what she said in the interview, class observation shows that Bai used PPT to assist her teaching in most of her lessons, presenting pictures, vocabulary, grammatical items as well as the teaching procedure. However, she did not apply multimedia technology to expose the students to any authentic text in class.

The above sections discussed three teacher participants' perceptions of L2 literacy teaching and learning as well as their teaching practice observed in their classes, the following section is going to talk about the student participants' views on and experience of English learning. In this way, we are able to have a further understanding of L2 literacy teaching and learning in this case study school.

6.5 Students' perspectives and experiences of English learning

When the focus group interview was conducted in the Yan School, it was the last school day. Five Senior Three students at the age of 18, including four girls, Na, Jin, Yang, Bing, and one boy Peng from different classes, were happy to stay longer after school to get involved in the interview. They looked relaxed because of the coming New Year holidays and were willing to share their real thoughts and experiences of learning English.

Some students (Yang and Bing) said honestly that they did not like learning English and all five students agreed that it was difficult to learn English. They stated unanimously that *“learning English is just for exams at this stage”*. Peng pointed out directly that *“The Chinese educational system decides that we are learning for marks”*. Some students identified their futures as existing in China and they had no need to venture beyond. For example, Jin said she would not find a job in which English was used and Peng thought that he did not have to use English in the future because he could read translated works or turn to interpreters for help.

Speaking of the difficulty in English learning, three of the students (Bing, Na and Yang) found it hard to *“remember words and learn grammar”*. Jin said that *“we classmates all speak in our native language, and there is no English at all.”* Peng even noted that *“the teacher speaks English and then switches to Chinese”* and he referred to the difficulty in oral and written communication.

We seldom practise expressing orally in English, so we cannot express ourselves effectively. And it is the same when we need to write. I cannot express my own idea in English.

Moreover, Peng also pointed out that the English language that they have learned is not authentic and they were not able to communicate with English speakers in English.

What is learned in class, even if we learn English well enough at school, if we go to America, people there cannot understand us and we cannot understand them either. (Peng)

Peng also talked about his experience of using English in real life when he was in junior middle school.

When I was in junior middle school, over 100 students from Singapore came to my school for a visit. My family was selected for a boy's home stay. He was one of the three kids who could not speak Mandarin. I found it hard to communicate with him. I could not understand what he said at all. Finally, I had to call my English teacher.

Since he taught English, I supposed his English was good enough to communicate with the boy in English. However, he could not understand the boy either. The boy had to speak very slowly, and in the end my teacher understood him. From then on, I feel that our English teaching is too impractical because we are still unable to use it in our daily life. (Peng)

All the students confessed that their speaking and listening were not good due to very limited practice, as explained by Jin, *“If speakers in the recorder speak a little bit fast, I have no idea what they are talking about. Also when a new word comes out, I will be totally lost what is said.”*

Due to the exam-focused English learning, they thought the most beneficial learning materials, in addition to textbooks, were those that could help them pass exams, such as written exercises and reference books, although they were more interested in listening English songs and watching English movies.,

After class the students also accessed a limited range of English texts by themselves, such as exercise books, reference books, English-learning newspaper, English movies and songs. However, although they often listened to English songs, Yang and Na admitted that *“for most of the time, I just appreciate the melody of songs but ignore their words”*. Sometimes they watched English movies, but Peng said *“I seldom have any opportunity to use what I have learnt from English movies. After all, English movies are just watched for fun.”* And he talked about his experience of using the language he learned from a movie in speaking.

Once I communicated with my teacher using a few simple sentences that I learned from a movie (I cannot remember what they are now), but she told me that the grammar was not used correctly. So I never use them any more. (Peng)

In summary, the students in the Yan School had few opportunities to be exposed to authentic texts in class and their access to authentic texts outside the classroom was also very limited. Their perception of the main purpose of learning English which was to pass exams resulted in their focusing on learning vocabulary and grammar. They had few experiences of using English in an authentic manner so that they had little knowledge on how to communicate in English in social and cultural contexts.

Based on the data collected from both case study schools and presented in Chapters 5 and 6, the following chapter will discuss the findings of this study, which are about the tensions between what has been expected of English learning and teaching at school and what actually happened in EFL classrooms in case study schools. The discussion

of the tensions can help to understand the social and cultural context of English teaching and learning in China, and this will enable the research questions to be answered.

CHAPTER 7 The Findings

7.1 Introduction

This study explored Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions and practice of L2 literacy in the context of a phenomenological study, providing an in-depth, holistic understanding of the experience and perspectives of classroom EFL teachers and students at two case study sites – the Ying School and the Yan School in China. Exploration with L2 literacy teaching and learning revealed tensions between what was expected and what was possible for both teachers and students, given the Chinese culture and context of teaching and learning. This chapter will discuss the tensions that I found between what the curriculum documentation NECS says about English teaching and learning and the actual on the ground experiences of teachers and students in the classroom. Moreover, the research questions also allowed me to see the tensions faced by the teachers interviewed, and the discussion of such tensions will be included in this chapter.

7.2 Teaching and learning of the target culture and Chinese culture

The first tension identified in the study was about the teaching and learning of culture in the English classes. Culture is an integral component of language teaching (Kramsch, 2006) as language learners need to use the language that suits the occasion, the topic and the person with whom they are speaking in order to communicate appropriately (Byram, 2008). The ultimate objective of English learning at senior middle school level described in NECS is to develop students' ability to communicate in English effectively and appropriately (MOE, 2003), which necessitates the learning of the cultures where English is used as the first or native language. However, this study found that culture teaching and learning in the two case study schools did not target the cultures of English-speaking countries, but instead involved cultures of a variety of countries, including Chinese culture.

Such a tension is firstly reflected in the currently used curriculum documentation of NECS. The information provided in this document shows that culture as portrayed in NECS is predominately focused on factual knowledge of different countries rather than

targeting English-speaking communities. For example, it is required in the curriculum documentation that “students should be helped to be exposed to a wide range of cultures of different countries to broaden their vision” (MOE, 2003, p.12). Chinese culture is also a part of English teaching and learning at school as students are expected to “deepen the understanding of Chinese culture through the comparison between Chinese and foreign cultures” (MOE, 2003, p.12). With NECS as the guideline, the currently used textbook series *NSEFC* also embodies the concept of including Chinese culture as well as cultures of a variety of countries in the English learning class. The aim of interweaving national culture and foreign cultures together is to show “the consideration of the fact of the world being globalized and the expectation of the students to learn more about Chinese traditional culture” (*Teacher’s Handbook 6*, 2007, p. II). Therefore, Chinese ideas, sentiments and values are embedded in some texts of this series of textbooks in the name of English-speaking people. For example, as discussed in Section 3.3.3 in Chapter 3, there is a letter in the textbook which is about a grandfather trying to persuade his grandson named James to stop smoking, but it is actually a Chinese way of preaching. A typical example of the inclusion of cultures of non-English-speaking countries is the use of the picture of the Louvre Museum of Paris on the cover of one textbook.

The inclusion of Chinese traditional culture in the English class reflects to some extent a fear of the influence imposed by foreign cultures, particularly western countries, on the younger generations’ values and views. China has a history of being invaded by western countries and becoming a semi-colonial state, and this has significantly impacted China’s attitude towards western cultures. As stated in the curriculum, “foreign cultures have an impact on shaping students’ worldview, philosophy of life and values”, and therefore, it is important for teaching and learning materials to “reflect Chinese traditional culture and to help students learn about the essence of foreign cultures” (MOE, 2003, p.40). This is also the reason why moral education is required in the curriculum to be infiltrated into English teaching. Moral education is described in the curriculum as being important for students to establish a correct outlook on life, world view and values. Situated in this social and historical context, it is not difficult to understand why English teaching did not target the cultures of English-speaking countries but also included Chinese traditional culture as one of components. Additionally, given that there are Chinese culture and also a variety of cultures with

English spoken as the first language, it is not a simple task for EFL teachers to immerse their students in English culture.

Culture is an integrated component of language learning, and different texts, especially authentic texts, may help teachers and students understand more clearly about how language is used in social and cultural contexts. In terms of the texts used in English classes in the case study schools, this study found that both the official documentation and the teachers themselves expected to engage the students with multimodal texts but in actual practice the teachers were still focused on paper-based texts, mainly textbooks, in their classes. The following section will discuss this tension.

7.3 The use of multimodal texts and paper-based texts

As identified in Chapter 2, advanced technologies have changed the way people obtain information and communicate with each other. “The privileged status of print as the almost exclusive basis of literacy has diminished” (Healy, 2003, p.154) and people are frequently exposed to semiotic resources including visual, audio, spatial, and gestural modes of meaning in their daily life (Kress, 2000). Many of the younger generation, described as “digital natives” (Prensky, 2010), have been engaging with electronic products since they were born. Therefore, what they need to learn is more than just decoding and encoding of printed words. NECS also suggests using a variety of multimodal texts in EFL classrooms. In addition to textbooks, it is suggested that teachers should make full use of modern technology to develop English teaching and learning resources. For example, teachers are supposed to employ computer and multimedia facilities to provide students with various visual and audio texts, such as recordings, videos, and network resources, to promote their English learning in class.

This study found that there was a tension between the teachers’ awareness of the need to use multimodal texts and their actual focus on paper-bound texts. The teacher participants in the two case schools all talked about the influences of multimedia technology on accessing information and making communication. However, the comments that most of the teachers made on L2 literacy development highlighted students’ ability to read paper-based texts and to answer comprehension questions correctly in exams, but their ability to make meaning from a variety of multimodal English texts was not the focus. For example, Ren commented that *“doing cloze and reading comprehension exercises is effective and practical for students’ English*

learning and exam preparation". Data from the class observations also showed that only one of the teachers, Long, played a video clip in class while other teachers merely used the textbook as well as printed vocabulary and grammar exercises or test papers in class.

One of the reasons for the limited variety of texts used in class is that the teachers were required to teach the prescribed textbooks rather than having the freedom to teach what they preferred, regardless of the students' English levels. Moreover, the paper-based format of the final examination is another significant factor that impeded the use of multimodal texts in class. After three-year's senior high school study, students would have to sit an exam and complete test papers, the results of which would decide if they have the opportunity to receive further education and which tertiary institute they could be admitted to. In order to get prepared for this high-stake exam, students needed to do large amounts of paper exercises (see Appendix L for an example). The teachers were committed to helping the students with such preparation and they would not do what might disadvantage their students for this exam in class. Additionally, the use of multimodal texts in class was also bound by class size and the availability of technology. With over sixty students in one class, but only one computer available, it was not convenient for the teachers and students to use multimodal texts.

One issue around using paper-based texts is that the teachers always worked with textbooks, but provided few opportunities for the students to be exposed to authentic texts. Even though most of the teachers were conscious of the benefits of using authentic texts in English learning, the prescribed textbooks were always the priority and they had to finish teaching them as required by the local department of education. Further discussion of this will be provided in the following section.

7.4 Employment of textbooks and authentic texts

Authentic texts are defined by western scholars as the texts that are produced by native speakers for communicative purposes in their own community (Harmer, 2001; Mishan, 2005). As authentic texts embody social and cultural aspects of the context where the language is used (Kramsch, A'Ness & Lam, 2000; Rogers & Medley, 1988), it is beneficial to expose language learners to authentic texts to learn about the target culture. This study found that although most teachers realised that authentic texts were useful in learning English, there were few opportunities for teachers to expose their students

to more authentic texts in their classroom because they needed to teach the prescribed textbooks. Therefore, a tension emerged between the necessity of employing authentic texts to teach English and the teachers required dependence on textbooks in class.

One of the reasons for the focus on textbooks in class is that textbooks were the prescribed materials by the Municipal Department of Education for English teaching and learning at school. EFL teachers in different schools in Lu City were all required to teach the same prescribed textbooks that were published by the People's Education Press. The teacher participant Yi complained that they "*had no choice in which teaching materials to use*" and had to use the textbooks, although she thought the textbooks were beyond most of her students' English level.

Another significant reason for using textbooks is that students would be tested about their learning of textbooks in the high-stake exam – the Provincial Matriculation English Test (PMET) as well as in some regular exams during their school years. With the main responsibility of "preparing students to pass standardized tests and enter better schools" (Li and Ni, 2012, p.157), some teachers even considered authentic texts as a distraction to English learning because authentic texts may not give the rules, patterns and structures that students need to pass exams (Tao, 2009). For example, Bai mentioned that she seldom played videos in class because she thought watching videos would distract the students from textbook learning.

Additionally, for EFL teachers, most of whom did not have the experience of going to English-speaking countries, it would be more demanding and challenging for them to use authentic texts in class. As argued by Hu (2002b), "it requires a high level of proficiency in the target language and strong sociolinguistic competence in the target language culture which they [teachers] lack" (p.99). Also, Shen, Yuan and Ewing (2014) also point out that Chinese language users are unfamiliar with text genres, cultural nuances and sophisticated vocabulary in authentic texts like those on overseas websites, and this might lead to their misunderstanding the materials. Data from this study collected from both teachers and students also verified that some teachers were lacking proficiency in comprehending some authentic texts. For instance, Bai confessed her lack of proficiency in comprehending such authentic texts as English movies and TV programs, which might discourage her from employing these authentic texts in class. Therefore, teachers' proficiency and competency in English emerged as a barrier to providing the students with authentic resources. Compared with utilizing a variety of

authentic texts, the teachers felt safer and more comfortable teaching English from prescribed textbooks. If they were more confident in their own understandings of authentic texts, the teachers might have felt more able to use authentic texts.

Last but not least, class size was another important factor that impacted the use of authentic texts in class. There were over fifty students in each of the observed classrooms in the Yan School and even more students in the classrooms of the Ying School, mostly around sixty-five. All six teacher participants were responsible for teaching two classes. In the classroom, students were sitting in rows, facing their teacher in front. Considering the big size of the classroom to accommodate the large population of the students, those sitting at the back row could not see the screen in the front properly. The large number of the students also made it difficult for the teachers to provide the students at different English levels with proper authentic materials. It would greatly increase the teachers' workloads if they had to prepare the teaching materials themselves. In contrast, it was much easier for teachers to use the textbook as everyone was supplied with it and the teachers did not have to spend extra time and energy on teaching materials.

As mentioned previously, the examination was a significant factor that led to the use of paper-based texts, especially textbooks, rather than multimodal authentic texts. Therefore, it is important to take a further look at the exam-valued educational tradition in China and the tension it creates with the expectation of the new curriculum in English teaching and learning.

7.5 The required government curriculum and high-stake exams

This study found that the education system of China still places considerable value on high test scores for both students and teachers (Li, 2009; Min, 1997; Wang, 1996), although the official curriculum attempts to reduce the domineering impact of examinations in China. Students have been striving for high scores to receive better tertiary education in the future, while teachers as well as schools are judged according to the results that their students achieve in the exams.

With China's developing communication with other countries in the world, it is significantly important for schools to develop effective English language users. The issues and implementation of NECS which incorporates Western notions of language

and literacy aims to develop students' ability to communicate in English properly and effectively. NECS, structured as an outcome-based curriculum, presents the outcomes of students' English literacy development in five areas, respectively linguistic knowledge, language skills, learning strategies, sentiments and attitudes to study and life, and culture awareness which includes the learning of both target culture and Chinese culture and values.

However, data indicated that high-stake exams still played a decisive role in what actually happened in classrooms. The emphasis on examinations embodies Chinese traditional values on learning and literacy. Examinations have long been used to evaluate people's academic achievements in Chinese society and good scores in exams open doors for better and further education and for professional success. Accordingly, the unchanged educational system still drives teachers and students to pursue high scores in high-stake exams. This is also supported by the data of this study. One teacher participant, Jian, rightly stated that it would be impossible for teachers to make any revolutionary change if there was no significant change had occurred to the exam-oriented education system.

In this exam-valued educational context, teachers and students' attention was unavoidably paid to what was to be tested in the PMET. For example, the teachers were mostly focused on teaching linguistic knowledge and developing students' reading comprehension ability. However, other language skills, especially listening and speaking, were given less attention because of their low or zero percentage in the test paper. As commented by the teacher Bai, the students did not have opportunity to practise communicating in English in class.

Speaking is not tested in the PMET, so we don't focus on this respect. We don't have specific time for speaking practice. Students only read passages in the textbooks aloud and try to answer some questions in English to practise their speaking. (Bai)

Moreover, although both Guo and Ren considered the policy decision that listening test would be removed from the PMET had exerted negative influence on students English learning, they had to admit that "*listening and speaking practice has to be cut off when course hours are limited*" (Ren). Such comments again reveal the instructive role that this high-stake exam played on English teaching and learning.

In addition, the teachers' paying little attention to culture teaching and learning is also an evidence of such exam-oriented teaching and learning. They made such decision on behalf of the students so that the likelihood of them passing the exam was enhanced. Therefore, even though developing students' culture awareness is one of the outcome areas in the curriculum, the teachers did not spend much time on this learning area as culture did not feature in examinations.

The previous discussion of the tensions emerging from this study has depicted the situation of the EFL teachers' English teaching in two case study schools. The teachers were caught in a dilemma. On one hand, they expected to expose their students to rich English language resources and engage them with the culture of English-speaking communities; on the other hand, they had to stay with the textbooks and focus on teaching vocabulary and grammar for the students' sake to get high scores in high-stake exams. Culture in English lessons was not only about the culture of the target language, but about the cultures of non-English-speaking countries and Chinese culture due to social and historical reasons as well as because of the teachers' own educational background and experience. However, normally the teachers would not spend limited course hours talking about culture because it did not feature in exams. As the students' results in the high-stake exams were closely related to the students' future, the teachers' performance assessment and also the schools' reputation, it was difficult to achieve the ultimate outcome of developing students' ability to communicate in English properly and efficiently as described in NECS.

The understanding of such a situation that the EFL teachers were faced with can help our understanding of L2 literacy teaching and learning in the case study schools in China. The next section is going to look more closely at the findings and discuss the research questions.

7.6 The Research Questions

How do EFL teachers in Chinese senior high schools perceive English L2 literacy in the contemporary context?

While traditional definitions of literacy have focused on reading and writing, the definition of literacy today is more complex. Research in the western academic area, as presented in Section 2.2 of Chapter 2, highlights the impact of technology and the

development of economy as well as a social practice perspective on the definition of literacy and L2 literacy. Literacy is not only focused on reading and writing but includes multiple ways to make and create meaning in socially-, historically- and culturally-situated contexts (Kern, 2000; Luke & Freebody, 2000). However, this study found that the EFL teachers in the two case schools were not familiar with the western term literacy. Their perceptions of literacy were partly informed by the translated term “识读能力”, literally meaning reading ability, or “读写能力”, meaning reading and writing ability.

The teachers' perceptions of L2 literacy were also greatly influenced by Chinese traditional values, beliefs and practices of literacy and learning. Traditionally, learning is perceived “as a knowledge-accumulating process” (Hu, 2002b, p.97). During this process, teachers, as the knowledge providers and transmitters, would instil the knowledge to students while students need to learn the knowledge through memorizing some classic literary works and repeated mechanical drills. Such practice of learning Chinese was also observed in the EFL classrooms in the case study schools. Further discussion will be provided in the following sections to shed light on the impact of the Chinese traditional beliefs and practices of literacy and learning on the teacher participants' perceptions of English literacy and their teaching.

Reading literary texts

Chinese scholars usually read a lot of classic literary works repeatedly or learn them by heart to develop their literacy skills and knowledge because literary texts, which have been widely considered to embody valuable knowledge, wisdom and truth, are valued as important learning materials. Most of the teachers in this study also referred to reading literary texts when interpreting their understanding of L2 literacy, reflecting a traditional practice of learning. There is a Chinese old saying “熟读唐诗三百首，不会作诗也会吟” *shu du tang shi san bai shou, bu hui zuo shi ye hui yin* [if you have read up 300 Tang poems meticulously, you can write poems yourself]. This saying also demonstrates Chinese beliefs and practices associated with literacy and culture of learning. As described by Jin and Cortazzi (2006), “literacy in Chinese is acquired with well-defined practices of learning including demonstration, modelling, tracing, repeated copying, and memorising” (p.9). Data from this study indicate that such

traditional practices as meticulous study and memorisation of literary texts to develop literacy in Chinese was integrated into English learning. Both Long and Yi mentioned rote learning as a necessary and efficient way to learn Chinese. In the observed classes, Long selected some English texts written by famous writers for his students to read and memorize. Yi and Bai asked their students to learn the sentences in the textbooks by heart. Yi also required her students to copy each new word five times as homework. While reading and memorizing literary texts was regarded by the teachers as an efficient way to acquire knowledge and develop language skills, they also adopted a traditional teaching approach in their lessons, which will be discussed as follows.

Instilling knowledge

The notion of 灌输 guanshu [feeding/instil], a word that was frequently used by one of the teacher participants, Yi, encapsulates another key value within traditional Chinese scholarship. This word represents a transmission mode of teaching, which was regularly observed in the classrooms of all the teacher participants in both schools. This teaching approach, also known as the ‘duck-stuffing’ approach, emphasized teachers’ role in delivering knowledge but without considering whether students can digest the knowledge or not. Students acted as passive knowledge receivers in the learning process, which was at odds with the student-centred pedagogical practice promoted by NECS. It is also interesting to note that a student from the Yan School also used this word 灌输 [feeding] to describe her English teacher’s teaching. This suggests that with a long history of Chinese education being rooted in this learning method, it would be hard to not have it in teaching and learning practice. The layout of the classroom with students sitting in rows and facing their teacher in front also disclosed that the teacher was the focus of the class from whom the students learned the knowledge. While the teacher participants spent most of the class time delivering knowledge, there was not much interaction between the teacher and the students, especially for the communicative purposes. In most cases, only those students whose names were called by the teachers had opportunity to speak in class but normally they just translated sentences their teacher said or gave answers to word or grammar exercises orally. The big class size also made it difficult for the teacher to interact with their students or to engage every student in class activities. Under such circumstance, giving a lecture seemed to be the most feasible and manageable approach in EFL classroom.

In addition to lecturing about the English language, moral education is also required by the curriculum documentation to be included in EFL classroom because in moral education it is around the government's design for Chinese students not to lose sight of Chinese culture. Therefore, despite the fact that students are learning the English language and culture, there is a strong push by the government to maintain the Chinese way while learning how English works. Further analysis of this issue will be provided in the next section.

Moral education

Data from this study revealed that in some teachers' opinion moral education also constitutes L2 literacy education. For example, Yi perceived that cultivating students to be morally good as an essential part of literacy education while Long's view was that English texts he provided for his students had to be helpful for students to establish an appropriate outlook and values.

In China school education attaches great importance to students' moral transformation in addition to their academic learning because they are expected to grow to be good citizens through their school education. As early as 2500 years ago, Confucius argued that literacy development included both intellectual development and the cultivation of moral qualities (Scollon, 1999; Hu, 2002b). Correspondingly, a teacher's responsibility is traditionally conceived as 教书育人 *jiaoshu yuren* [teaching the book and cultivating people]. These traditional values are also evident in the new curriculum as discussed in Chapter 3. The Ministry of Education's (2001) *Guidelines on Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (for Experiment)* also notes that the curriculum reform lays an emphasis on moral education, which is combined with specific subject content to assist students form appropriate values and outlooks on life, and views of the world (Huang, 2004). Therefore, the EFL teachers were also responsible for students' moral education in addition to teaching English. This would be not easy for the teachers to combine moral education with English teaching in the EFL class where teachers needed to teach the language and the culture related to the target language.

To conclude, the teacher participants' perceptions of L2 literacy were greatly impacted by Chinese traditional ideas and literacy practices and beliefs about learning, such as reading and memorizing literary texts, teachers instilling the knowledge to students,

and incorporating moral education into English teaching. The next section will discuss to what extent the teachers' understandings of literacy and L2 literacy as well as their own experiences of education affected their teaching practice.

To what extent do these perceptions of English L2 literacy impact the structuring and enacting of the EFL teachers' teaching practice in the classroom?

In an attempt to answer this question this study found out that on one hand, the EFL teachers' teaching practice was greatly impacted by their perceptions of literacy and L2 literacy which were grounded in the traditional Chinese interpretation of literacy in the exam-valued social and educational environment. Accordingly, as shown by observation data collected from the two schools, English L2 literacy development appeared to be cocooned within traditional Chinese practices in the classroom. The teachers were the authority figures who dominated the class and provided students with meticulous explanations of linguistic knowledge from English texts. The students were expected to listen attentively to their teacher and exactly follow the teacher's instructions to learn what was required to get prepared for the exams. These practices reflect a traditional perception of how a person grows to be educated and literate, that is, he or she has to master the delivered knowledge and perform excellently in examinations.

As the teachers commented in their interviews, and as borne out by the observation data, the teachers mainly concentrated on teaching vocabulary and grammar and developing students' reading skills that were closely related to what the students would confront in their examinations. The sections in the textbooks associated with speaking and listening were completely ignored in teaching practice by all the teacher participants in this study. Although the curriculum documentation suggests an outcomes approach and on face value mirrors competencies associated with the functional use of language, the way the textbooks were used in class was not for functional literacy or communicative purposes. For example, Long was the only teacher who referred to the functional items in the textbook, but he laid the emphasis on the grammatical aspects of the items rather than providing an opportunity for his students to use them to accomplish the speaking task as required in the textbook.

However, on the other hand, some of the teachers' perspectives on L2 literacy were not be reflected in their practices. Data disclosed that, although all the teachers were well aware of the great changes occurring to the way that people access and process information in contemporary society, in class the resources that the teachers employed to teach English were restricted to paper-based texts. Being the only prescribed English textbook series for high schools in Lu City, *NSEFC* was always the priority in each of the teachers' classes while reading, viewing and interacting with multimodal texts was not part of the learning environment. For example, Guo said that he encouraged his students to go online to read news on some English websites and occasionally printed the articles from these websites for his students to read. However, there was no evidence of reading such texts in class. There was no evidence either of the use of social media networks in the classrooms. As discussed in Section 7.4, in addition to the reason that the textbooks are the prescribed teaching materials, the exam-oriented educational system, teacher's experience and proficiency in English as well as the large class size and accessibility of technology all contribute to such textbook-focused teaching and learning. Therefore, apart from the teachers' perceptions of L2 literacy that impacted the structuring and enacting of their teaching practices, the social and cultural contexts where the teaching and learning of English occurred also had a significant influence on teaching practices in the classroom.

In order to develop students' ability to use English properly and efficiently, it needs to be possible for EFL teachers to help their students understand the social and cultural aspects of English texts in addition to linguistic knowledge of the English language as culture and language cannot be separated (Byram, 1997; Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). The next section will discuss what tasks or activities the participant teachers used to engage their students with learning language and culture.

How do these EFL teachers help their learners to explore the linguistic, cultural and social aspects of English language texts in their learning of English as a foreign language?

Both the interviews and class observation data indicate that for the most part the teachers concentrated on linguistic aspects of the English language while the knowledge associated with how to engage with the cultures of English-speaking countries or the social and cultural contexts of English texts were seldom mentioned. All the teachers

in this study prioritized the teaching and learning of vocabulary and grammar. As addressed by Guo, “*Students can only develop their language skills after laying a firm foundation in linguistic knowledge*”. Long believed that the students had to master foundational knowledge and get as much as language input by reading and memorizing English texts before they could attempt speaking and writing. Yi vividly compared vocabulary to the bricks of a building, without which students could not write or speak. Data from class observation also indicate that all of the teacher participants devoted a large proportion of class time to teaching words and grammar. This reflected a Chinese traditional belief in learning that “being creative can only happen later after precise mastery of basic forms” (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p.9).

In addition, the examination was a significant factor that impacted the teachers’ focus in class, as discussed in previous section. Both Guo and Long mentioned that they would refer to previous PMET to show students how language structures were tested in exams. Within the exam-valued social and school context, teaching what was to be tested to prepare students for the high-stake exam was undoubtedly the teachers’ top priority. It is also interesting to note that the students agreed with much of what the teachers were saying and that they understood that it was the exam that drove it all. They also acknowledged that textbooks were very helpful for their English learning, especially in their preparation for high-stake exams.

Another potential reason for teachers’ focusing on linguistic knowledge is that teaching grammar was “manageable, economical and purposeful” because “grammar is finite and more or less stable” (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, p.54). This is also supported by data of this study. Compared to the diversity of the cultures of the English-speaking countries, it was easier for the teachers to deliver grammatical knowledge. It was particularly true when the teachers had over fifty or even sixty students in one classroom to manage. As the teachers did not have much experience of engaging with English speakers or English texts in real life circumstances, they would feel more comfortable and confident to teach grammar. Guo, for example, noted proudly that his students liked his grammar lesson because he generalized the grammatical knowledge to make it easy and systematic to learn.

However, despite the fact that all teacher participants devoted a large proportion of class time to teaching vocabulary and grammar, most of them were aware that vocabulary should be learned in contexts, especially Jian who was against the practice of checking

students' vocabulary alone. Instead, he advocated that words should be learned and remembered in a sentence or a discourse. Evidence could also be found in the teacher participants' classes, such as Ren's and Long's, that they were trying to teach the words in contexts. Therefore, whilst traditional Chinese practices and skills were very much in evidence in the teaching and learning of linguistic knowledge, there was some evidence to show the employment of meaning-focused strategies. Ren, for instance, made up a short paragraph, referring to the plot of *Robinson Crusoe*, to illustrate how the word 'bare' could be used with different meanings.

Compared to the focus on the linguistic aspects of English language texts, much less attention was paid to the social and cultural aspects of English texts in both case study schools. The evidence from the interviews and classroom observation showed that the teachers involved in this study did not appear to consider culture as an essential part of English teaching and learning. This is consistent with Huang's (2003) argument that EFL teachers in China only regard culture as an adjunct to English teaching and learning. Some of the teachers in this study even described teaching culture as a distraction from the focus on exam preparation.

The teachers did not concern themselves so much with culture teaching and learning partly because the requirements and purposes described in the curriculum documentation remain ambiguous. As discussed in Chapter 3, NECS includes developing students' culture awareness in five outcome areas, but there are vague terms and descriptions used in the document. For example, students are expected to develop their cross-cultural communicative awareness and possess world awareness but there are no explicit definitions for the terms 'cross-cultural communicative awareness' and 'world awareness'. Therefore, the ambiguous descriptions of the outcomes related to culture learning area leave culture teaching and learning less valued and cannot provide sufficient support to help students achieve the ultimate outcome of being able to communicate in English effectively and appropriately. Moreover, the teachers held a widely accepted perspective in China that, as was disclosed from the review of NECS in Chapter 3, cultural teaching and learning in EFL classrooms is mainly about teaching and learning factual knowledge about countries across the whole world (Xiao, 2004; Zhang, G. & Zhang, H., 2007; Liu, 2011). For example, Ren defined culture as background knowledge, including history, art and literary knowledge like famous writers and their works. However, as the curriculum does not target the cultures of the

English-speaking countries, the teachers could hardly be aware of the necessity of teaching about the target culture. In addition to foreign cultures, Chinese culture is also a component of culture teaching and learning in EFL classrooms, and this has been discussed in Section 7.2 of this chapter.

In order to learn about the target culture, it is a good way to get exposed to authentic texts because authentic texts are believed to embed social and cultural aspects of the language (e.g. Shrum & Glisan, 2000; Kramsch, A’Ness & Lam, 2000). The following section will discuss the opportunities that the EFL teachers provided their students with regard to the use of authentic texts.

What opportunities do these EFL teachers provide for their students to access a variety of authentic texts?

Data obtained from the interviews showed that the EFL teachers in the Ying School normally provided their students with two or three news articles downloaded from the websites once a week as extra reading materials. In addition, Long noted that he occasionally exposed his students to such English texts as “*interesting, entertaining and educational English video clips*” and the articles associated with some big events that students are interested in and concerned with in class. The teachers in the Yan School seldom provided their students with authentic texts, although Jian mentioned that he used an English song *Yesterday Once More* to teach English. Class observation data indicate that apart from Long’s class, there was no opportunity for students to access authentic texts in other teacher participants’ classes. Moreover, although most of the teachers employed multimedia facilities in class to assist teaching, they mainly used the technology to help present teaching notes rather than exposing the students to authentic multimodal texts because of the exam-valued teaching and learning, big class size and teachers’ own experience of using authentic texts.

In addition, the teachers’ perceptions of authentic texts also impacted their use of authentic texts in their teaching. Although it is suggested in the curriculum documentation that teachers should expose students to a variety of resources, there is no clear description of what an authentic text is. Therefore, the teachers did not have a clear and uniform understanding of what authentic texts should be. For example, Guo supposed that the texts in the textbooks were authentic because they were written by

experts, including native speakers. Yi and Bai thought some English texts (e.g. newspaper, magazines, advertisement, posters, travel brochures, online texts) which were created by Chinese people as authentic texts. Nevertheless, most teachers were able to identify literary texts as authentic texts even though most of this type of texts do not reflect how the language is used in the contemporary society. In the textbooks, there are excerpts of famous literary works available (e.g. Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two cities*; O. Henry's *The Gift of Magi*). Long also provided some famous literary texts (e.g. Helen Keller's *Three days to see*) for his students to read and recite. In addition, Long was able to acknowledge that English is used differently in different countries and he accepted the legitimacy of learning different varieties of English.

Interestingly, data collected from student focus group interview indicate that in some instances students seemed more knowledgeable than their teachers with respect to the authenticity of the English language. For example, Li, a student from the Ying School, pointed out that they should learn "*how native speakers use English rather than relying on the textbooks to learn English*" (Li). However, some students were under the same impression as their teachers that the texts produced by Chinese people, especially persons in authority and English education professionals, for English learners were also authentic texts, which reflects a Chinese traditional culture of respecting authorities. As the teachers themselves did not have a proper understanding of authentic texts, they were unlikely to provide their students with effective guidance on the selection of authentic texts. Data also reveal that students had a different appreciation of language and literacy, which stood in stark contrast to that of their teachers. For example, a student claimed that watching English movies or listening to English songs were regarded by his teacher and parents as distractions rather than as a way to learn English. Even so, the students, especially those who were fond of learning English, would access some authentic texts by themselves after class. It was one of the students that introduced the teacher Ren to the American situation comedy *Big Bang Theory*.

Based on the discussion on the research questions presented previously, I found that it is more important and significant to understand the underlying reasons, for example, why the teachers perceived some concepts differently from western academics or why the teachers taught in the way that was not the expectation of the curriculum, than to answer the questions themselves. Further articulation will be provided in the following section as a conclusion.

7.7 Conclusion

This study aimed to answer the questions regarding to the Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions of L2 literacy and their teaching practice, including exploring their understanding and practice of cultural teaching and learning and the use of authentic texts in their teaching. The data collected from the teachers as well as the students who generously helped me with my study indicated that the answering the questions actually raised more questions that I have been able to answer. This discussion opens up further questions about how we as a nation can help our teachers cultivate students so that they can fulfil their personal development and meet the demands of our modernized and globalized society in such a Chinese—specific social and cultural context.

English as a contact language has been increasingly used by Chinese people as the result of China's improved communication with other countries in the world. With the expectation of China playing an even broader role in the international community, there will be an increasing demand for English language users in the future. Therefore, it is crucial for EFL teachers to develop students' L2 literacy to meet their personal and social demands of using English to enhance effective communication. However, this study found that tensions emerged between what were expected of students' L2 literacy development and what actually happened in the classrooms of the two case study schools mainly due to the social, cultural and historical contexts in China as I have outlined. Within the contemporary context which has witnessed great changes in the way to access information and communicate, the EFL teachers' perspectives of English literacy and teaching were still impacted by the beliefs and values that are integral with the Chinese culture of learning and scholarship, because they were brought up and educated in China's social and cultural environment. These values are being maintained in spite of some sense that the new curriculum accommodates western approaches to literacy and multiliteracies. Therefore, the EFL teachers in this study did not apply a multiliteracies approach in their teaching. Moreover, with much emphasis and values still being laid on high stake examinations in Chinese society, the fulfilment of the outcome of developing students' ability to communicate in English effectively and appropriately, as described in NECS, was never destined to be a simple process in China. One of the teacher participants' comments provide a good description of such a

situation in EFL classrooms in China: *“If there is no radical change in exam-oriented education, it is hard to expect any revolutionary change in class”* (Jian).

Given my background of learning and teaching English in China previously, this study was not only about the investigation of the teachers in case study schools but also a reflection of myself who grew up and received education in China and then came to Australia for academic study. In the next chapter I will discuss how my personal experience impacted on this study and also provide some recommendations for EFL teachers, the educational authorities and those who are going to start their study journey in an English-speaking community.

CHAPTER 8 SOME FINAL WORDS

“Research is like one’s personal journey.” (Creswell, 2008, p.1)

I embarked on this journey with passion, curiosity and expectations, trying to alter myself from an EFL teacher in China to an academic researcher in Australia. However, I found it hard to make this shift because it was not like turning the switch on and off to make the change. I realized during the research journey that my previous experience of learning and teaching in China had impacted upon my perspectives. That is the way I looked at my participants and even the way I presented the results of my research.

I realised gradually that this study was more than simply researching my teacher participants in the case study schools, it was also a process of knowing about myself, someone who was brought up and educated in China and then had the opportunity to live and study in an absolutely different environment in Australia. I would not have the opportunity to reflect in this way if I had not had such a journey in Australia. Moreover, the research process itself also equipped me with skills and knowledge that are essential for doing research. Such experience has undoubtedly enriched my personal journey, and, therefore, it is of relevance to discuss my journey as a researcher in Australia with the background of learning and teaching English in China.

Ten years ago, I was an EFL teacher at a senior high school in China. I remember how my students and I were devoted to English learning and teaching for the high-stakes exam. The focus of the learning and teaching was on knowledge and skills to be tested in the exam, what we might call a traditionally structured model of teaching. However, I came to recognize that the teaching approach being used by the teacher participants was very similar to that which I used before. What they were doing was so familiar to me that I felt as if I was observing my former self.

My reflection on my previous learning and teaching experience initiated me into this study which in turn prompted me to make a further reflection on L2 literacy teaching and learning in the case study schools in China. Similar to my teacher participants, the concept of L2 literacy was new to me when I was first exposed to it. As an EFL teacher, I had never given careful thought to concepts associated with language teaching and

learning and knew little about the English curriculum in China beyond what I had to teach. As far as what I had experienced, we EFL teachers were not provided with effective and practical professional training on the implementation of the new curriculum NECS. I was committed to students' preparation for high stake exams while the concepts such as culture and authentic texts were not within my teaching consciousness. Honestly, I did not know what I did not know. Neither was I aware that I had been deeply impacted and restricted by Chinese traditional notions of literacy teaching and learning. This awareness did not emerge until I embarked on my study journey in Australia where I was able to examine Chinese teachers from an outsider's perspective. As an 'outsider' looking in, I developed a clearer and more complete picture of the reality of L2 literacy pedagogy within schools in China. It was also possible for me to reflect on my own experience of learning and teaching which in some way enabled me to identify the influences that Chinese culture had on my participants' teaching practice. This led me to explore my participants' understanding of L2 literacy and to investigate this phenomenon through the Chinese teachers' lived experiences in the context of their particular teaching situation.

However, I have to admit that at the beginning I always judged my teacher participants against western ideas of teaching literacy, ignoring the social, cultural and historical contexts where they were living and working. When I first analysed my data, my mind kept saying "they were not doing this and they were not doing that", but once I started talking about these teachers I realized that I used to do the same thing and it would be unfair for them if I judged them in this way. They were working within a particular contextual framework where both teachers and students were judged by the results of exams. I was also struggling with breaking established views and accepting different ideas during my study. How could the teachers be expected to change their perspectives and teaching practice when changes were made in the official document NECS but little appropriate support like profession development was provided for the teachers. Moreover, the structure around teaching and learning did not change despite the new curriculum. There were still over fifty or sixty students in one classroom, the teachers were still in the position where they knew that their students had to be successful in the high-stake exams for their future development, and the teachers themselves were shaped by the Chinese traditional culture of learning. Given these facts, they were undoubtedly struggling with fulfilling the ultimate outcome required by NESC, which

is to develop students' ability to communicate in English effectively and appropriately, even though they worked really hard to do as best job as they could. Despite these unchanged contexts that greatly impacted the teachers' English teaching, there is an important fact that cannot be ignored, that is, the students nowadays are quite different from those ten years ago in terms of the accessibility to a wide range of English texts and the availability of the opportunities to use English outside of the classroom. Most of my student participants, especially those who were fond of learning English, had the experience of accessing authentic texts independently, such as English movies, songs, novels, websites, etc. Some of them even already had the opportunity to step into an English-speaking community to use English in a real way. They were aware that the English they learned from textbook in class was not authentic and they were far away from being able to communicate in English in real life situations. As an increasing number of Chinese students will seek education abroad, they have the desire to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to use English for communicative and academic purposes. Therefore, teachers nowadays are actually under greater pressure than before, considering the long-standing exam-oriented educational system and students' actual needs in this globalized society.

In addition to being a process of knowing and understanding my participants as well as myself, this research is also a process of learning and improving myself. Firstly, I developed my own English literacy during this journey. Living in Australia has provided me with the opportunity to be immersed in an environment where I used English on a daily basis. It was interesting to discover how differently English is used in real life in comparison with what I learned and taught at school in China. I also benefited significantly through having face-to-face conversations with my supervisors and other academic colleagues. They not only gave me valuable advice on my study and inspired me throughout the journey, but they also helped me appreciate the culture of living and studying in Australia. This has benefited my intercultural development, given that culture and interculturality are a significant element of this research. Therefore, I am able to have a better understanding of literacy teaching and learning in different cultural contexts, and in this way, it ensured that this study was contextualized.

Furthermore, studying in Australia enabled me to learn how academic studies are conducted in the Australian context and how to write using academic English. Being deeply impacted by Chinese traditional education, I had been used to accepting what

books and experts said without thinking critically. Being cocooned in the traditional Chinese classroom for a long time, it was challenging for me to break up the inherent notions that I learnt before in order to be able to see the phenomena of language teaching and learning from a different perspective.

Academic writing was another significant challenge for me. Despite the fact that I had been learning English for over 20 years, I was unfamiliar with the conventions associated with academic writing in a western context. A Chinese way of thinking was always reflected from my English writing. For example, I repeatedly but unconsciously put the important point at the end of a paragraph or a section rather than at the very beginning, which was not in accord with the structure of English academic essays. Besides, I frequently wrote very long sentences which my supervisor said would be hard for readers to follow. My supervisor joked that she was struggling with reading my work as much as I was with my writing. This made me think of the other times when I wrote my theses for my Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in English in China. My supervisors did not give me such feedback on my writing. As the supervisors were all Chinese, I could only assume that they were comfortable with my Chinese style of writing.

The differences in academic study in China and Australia need further investigation because with the increased number of Chinese students studying overseas, the discrepancy in expectations of academic study could prove problematic. I believe that I am not alone among international Chinese students in terms of the challenges that arise during the study journey in western countries. It is, therefore, necessary for those who intend to study beyond China to be prepared in their L2 literacy before they embark on their study in western contexts so that they are able to adapt to the life and academic study in an English-speaking community. It can also be argued that there is a need to draw the attention of EFL teachers, schools and even policy makers in China to this issue as it has been an increasing number of Chinese families choosing the option to send their children abroad, especially to English-speaking countries, to receive education in tertiary and even secondary schools.

Based on the findings of this study and also on my own experiences as I endeavoured to make English real and use it within a different culture of learning from Chinese culture, a number of recommendations are provided for EFL teachers, schools, policy makers and also students if they intend to start a study journey in a country where

English is the medium of instruction and socialisation. As I experienced, there is a big difference between my Master's study in China and my doctoral study in Australia when I had to think differently, write differently and understand differently. The language and culture was also quite different. I expected to, and was expected to quickly absorb the Australian way of doing academic work, but I was caught in the situation where I was used to a Chinese way of doing what I was told to do but I had to follow the Australian way of doing my work myself. My supervisors helped me with the instructions and supported me with their feedback but never told me what to do. Such a big difference sometimes made me feel like I was groping in the dark. Accordingly, Chinese students who plan to study abroad need to be prepared for the culture differences in the way people live, think and understand the world so that they will not feel as murky as I did.

Adopting a “language as social practice” perspective

To help Chinese students cope with the culture differences, Chinese government, schools and teachers need to adopt a “language as social practice” perspective, perhaps by embedding such a perspective in the school curriculum or in a teachers' education program. Such perspective which puts culture at the very core of language teaching and learning (Kramsch, 1993) is going to assist people understand more clearly the changes that are going to occur when they shift from their culture to another culture. Learning linguistic knowledge, language learners are able to produce grammatically correct and meaningful speech while culture knowledge can enable them to “choose the language that suits the occasion, the topic and the person with whom one is speaking” (Byram, 2008, p.79). This perspective sees language not as code but as social practice. Presenting knowledge related to history, literature, habits and customs should be discussed within the social and cultural contexts of countries where English is used, and knowing how to engage with native English speakers in their social and cultural contexts should be essential components of English learning. Situating language knowledge with the ability to use language “in culturally appropriate ways” (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000, p.3) enables language learners to develop intercultural communicative competence.

Expanding the opportunity to engage with authentic texts

Authentic texts, which are created by native speakers for communicative purposes in their community, provide opportunities for English learners to develop a language in a social practice perspective. As was evident in my research, there were limited prospects for students to engage with authentic texts. Being aware of the value of learning English from authentic texts and knowing what constitutes authentic texts, teachers can provide students with as many opportunities as possible to engage with authentic texts in class or provide effective guidance to help their students access authentic texts independently after class to broaden their appreciation of English speaking communities. Moreover, nowadays students encounter diverse modalities of texts in their life rather than merely relying on traditional media to access information. Therefore, it would be more helpful for teachers to assist students get equipped with the ability to cope with the full range of texts they are exposed to in their daily life.

Developing critical literacy skills

Although critical literacy is not the focus of my study, I feel it necessary to bring forward this recommendation because, as I discussed previously about my own study experience, developing critical literacy skills is very important for successful academic study in western countries. Data collected in this study revealed that the teachers neither looked at the textbooks critically nor tried to develop their students' critical literacy skills. This can be attributed to Chinese traditional beliefs in authority. Chinese students and also myself previously were used to believing what books and teachers say without questioning them. However, people nowadays are living in a society where they are constantly bombarded by competing and conflicting texts. These texts are produced to represent particular point of view while silencing others and influence people's ideas (Luke & Freebody, 1999). Thus, learners are in sore need of the skills to critically analyse the texts they are exposed to.

Providing teachers with professional support

It is worthwhile pointing out that although policy makers have good intentions to develop students L2 literacy by introducing the new curriculum, the problem is that there is no appropriate support provided for teachers to really implement the curriculum. Therefore, given the fact that the teachers were still working in the unchanged educational system and greatly impacted by Chinese traditional idea of learning, it is

hard for teachers to make any change just with a new curriculum documentation in hand. The Department of Education and even schools could take the responsibility for teachers' professional development by providing effective and practical training as well as necessary resources to help teachers put the requirements of the curriculum into practice. However, this cannot be easy to fulfil as a lot of work and large financial support is needed. Additionally, examinations still play a significant role in students' education in China. Even though teachers are provided with professional development around how to use the curriculum, they still have to prepare their students for the elements that to be tested in exams. Thus, it will be challenging for teachers to really shift their focus from exams to the implementation of the curriculum.

Whilst there are limitations to this research, these limitations in themselves provide opportunities for further research. This research was carried out in two urban schools in Eastern China, and the findings are limited to the context of the study. With the difference in geographical and economic contexts between this study and other schools within China, the research if carried out in different contexts may have different outcomes. Therefore, continued research associated with L2 literacy teaching and learning could be encouraged in China. Additionally, time constraints only provided a snapshot of the teachers' teaching practices in this study rather than a panoramic view of their teaching in a longer period. It is possible that the teachers might teach differently with different topics. Therefore, a longitudinal study would provide a greater variety of teachers' teaching practices to investigate. Moreover, this research is a view of findings at a moment in time, and with the continuing changes in the structure of the high-stake examinations, further research is required to investigate possible changes in classroom practices as the emphasis on exams as well as the components of tests are reviewed. Last but not least, critical literacy is a topic that deserves further research as it is missing in traditional Chinese education but grows to be increasingly important in this information explosion era. As a critical orientation is applicable to visual, electronic texts and the hybrid multi-media and multimodal texts of everyday life (Luke, A. & Luke, C., 2001), it is worthwhile to have a close look at how critical literacy teaching is integrated into L2 literacy teaching and learning at schools in China.

My journey has been long and arduous but fruitful. I have experienced the full gamut of emotions: depression, disappointment, frustration and also joy, satisfaction and pride. I have developed an appreciation of two very different cultures of learning in China and

in Australia. These differences result from diverse historical, social and cultural factors in the two countries. I believe that my research can be helpful for both Chinese educators and western scholars to understand L2 literacy education in China. Moreover, I have gained a profound sense that I have developed my abilities to think, analyse and discuss ideas and issues within an academic context. I believe that it is not only the findings of the study themselves that are significant, but more importantly, my growth during the journey is a valuable experience for those who have the intention to study in Western academic contexts.

The end of one journey is the beginning of another. The knowledge and skills that this research journey equipped me with, will allow me to be more confident to start the next journey whatever it may be. I am also expecting to apply what I have learned and experienced from this journey to my future career and if I return to China and work as an English teacher or lecturer, I would provide learners with a more authentic environment, including learning materials and the introduction of social and cultural aspects of the English language, to help them develop their English literacy. Sharing my passion, knowledge and experience with other English teachers could have an impact on their perspectives of English literacy development. I am also aware that further research in L2 literacy in the Chinese context will add to the understandings of English teaching and learning and enable educators and researchers to have an impact on the way such teaching is enacted in schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: A page of content of Student's Textbook (Modules 2 and 6)

CONTENTS						
Unit	Topics	Functional Items	Structures	Reading	Writing	Workbook
1 Art p1	A brief history of Western painting and Chinese art Famous artists and works of art	Preference	Subjunctive Mood (1) (I wish I could/did/would ... If I did ... I would do ...)	A short history of Western painting The best of Manhattan's art galleries A letter to the school council	Persuasive writing: letter of suggestion	p41
2 Poems p9	Different types of poems Reading, writing and listening to poetry	Intention and plans	Subjunctive Mood (2) (If I had done ... I would have done ...)	A few simple forms of English poems I've saved the summer A few more poems	Creative writing: simple poems	p48
3 A healthy life p17	Health problems: smoking, HIV/AIDS, and drugs Attitudes towards HIV/AIDS	Prohibition Warning Permission	The use of "it" (1)	Cigarette smoking HIV/AIDS: are you at risk? Successful AIDS programme in Yunnan	Persuasive writing: letter of advice	p55
4 Global warming p25	Global warming Pollution The importance of protecting the earth	Agreement and disagreement Blame and complaint	The use of "it" (2)	The earth is becoming warmer – but does it matter? What can we do about global warming? Clean up your butts and bags	Persuasive writing: poster	p62
5 The power of nature p33	Volcanoes Crater lakes Cyclones Floods	Emotions (joy, fear, anxiety, surprise)	Revising the -ing form	An exciting job The Lake of Heaven Trapped by the flood	Descriptive writing: description of a tourist attraction	p69
<i>Appendices</i>		Notes to the texts Grammar Words and expressions in each unit Vocabulary	Irregular verbs Changes in international phonetic symbols for English			p76 p86 p89 p95 p102 p105

Appendix B: A page of reading passage in Student's Textbook (Module 6)

Unit 3 A healthy life

Reading



ADVICE FROM GRANDAD

Dear James,

It is a beautiful day here and I am sitting under the big tree at the end of the garden. I have just returned from a long bike ride to an old castle. It seems amazing that at my age I am still fit enough to cycle 20 kilometres in an afternoon. It's my birthday in two weeks time and I'll be 82 years old! I think my long and active life must be **due to** the healthy life I live. 5

This brings me to the real reason for my letter, my dear grandson. Your mother tells me that you started smoking some time ago and now you are finding it difficult to give it up. Believe me, I know how easy it is to begin smoking and how **tough** it is to stop. You see, during **adolescence** I also smoked and became **addicted to** cigarettes.

By the way, did you know that this is because you become addicted in three different ways? 10 First, you can become physically addicted to nicotine, which is one of the hundreds of chemicals in cigarettes. This means that after a while your body becomes **accustomed to** having nicotine in it. So when the drug leaves your body, you get **withdrawal** symptoms. I remember feeling bad-tempered and sometimes even in pain. Secondly, you become addicted through habit. As you know, if you do the same thing over and over again, you begin to do it **automatically**. 15 Lastly, you can become **mentally** addicted. I believed I was happier and more relaxed after having a cigarette, so I began to think that I could only feel good when I smoked. I was addicted in all three ways, so it was very difficult to **quit**. But I did finally manage.

When I was young, I didn't know much about the harmful **effects** of smoking. I didn't know, for example, that it could do terrible damage to your heart and **lungs** or that it was more difficult 20 for smoking couples to become **pregnant**. I certainly didn't know their babies may have a smaller birth weight or even be **abnormal** in some way. Neither did I know that my cigarette smoke could affect the health of non-smokers. However, what I did know was that my girlfriend thought I smelt terrible. She said my breath and clothes smelt, and that the ends of my fingers were turning yellow. She told me that she wouldn't go out with me again unless I 25 stopped! I also noticed that I became **breathless** quickly, and that I wasn't enjoying sport as much. When I was taken off the school football team because I was **unfit**, I knew it was time to quit smoking.

I am sending you some advice I found on the Internet. It might help you to stop and **strengthen** your resolve. I do hope so because I want you to live as long and healthy a life as I have. 30

Love from

Grandad

How can you stop smoking?

It is not easy to stop smoking, but millions have managed to quit and so can you. Here are a few suggestions.

- **Prepare yourself.** **Decide on** a day to quit. Don't choose a day that you know is going to be stressful, such as the day of an exam. Make a list of all the benefits you will get from stopping smoking. Then throw away your last **packet** of cigarettes.
- **Be determined.** Every time you **feel like** smoking a cigarette, remind yourself that you are a non-smoker. Reread the list of benefits you wrote earlier.
- **Break the habit.** Instead of smoking a cigarette, do something else. Go for a walk, clean your teeth, drink some water, clean the house; in fact, do anything to keep your mind and especially your hands busy.
- **Relax.** If you start to feel nervous or stressed, do not reach for a cigarette. Try some deep breathing instead. Do some relaxation exercises every time you feel stressed.
- **Get help if you need it.** Arrange to stop smoking with a friend so you can talk about your problems, or join a stop-smoking group. If you feel **desperate**, you might like to talk to a doctor or **chemist** about something to help you, like nicotine chewing gum.
- **Keep trying.** Do not be **disappointed** if you have to try several times before you finally stop smoking. If you weaken and have a cigarette, do not feel **ashamed**. Just try again. You will succeed eventually.

Comprehending

1 Fill in the chart with information from the reading passage.

	Information from the reading passage
Different ways people can become addicted to cigarettes	
Harmful physical effects for smokers	
Effects that a person's smoking can have on other people	
Effects that smoking can have on sporting performance	

2 Discuss these questions in groups to check your **comprehension**.

- 1 What kind of person do you think James' grandfather is?
- 2 What other information could have been included?
- 3 What do you think can be done to protect non-smokers (especially women and babies) from those who smoke?

3 Make a summary of the advice on how to stop smoking. Be sure to use your own words and no more than five sentences.

Appendix C: The cover of the textbook Module 6



Appendix D: Information Letter for School Principal, Teacher Participants and Student Participants

Information Letter for Principal

We invite your school to participate in a research study looking at how Chinese EFL teachers make sense of L2 literacy in the contemporary context. This study is part of my doctoral degree in education, supervised by Dr. Lindy Norris and Dr. Greg Thompson at Murdoch University in Western Australia.

Nature and Purpose of the Study

With the development of information and communication technology as well as the improved communication among countries in the world, the definitions of literacy and L2 literacy have gone beyond traditional understandings. These broadened definitions of literacy and L2 literacy are now common place in western education contexts.

The aim of this study is to investigate how Chinese EFL teachers conceptualise L2 literacy and how this impacts the structuring and enacting of teaching practices in English language teaching in China.

If you consent to have this research study conducted in your school, it is important that you understand the purpose and procedure of the study. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to have the researcher conduct the study in your school.

What the Study will Involve?

To participate in this study, teachers must be teaching English in Grade 1 or Grade 2 at Senior Middle School in China and they will be asked to do the following:

Undertake an interview lasting for approximately 1 hour.

Be observed 4-5 classes.

Provide the learning materials used during the class observation, in addition to textbooks.

Students must be 18 years old or over and they will be interviewed in a focus group of 5-6 students for about 90 minutes about their experiences of learning English and using English in their life.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study

The participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The participant may withdraw from the study without discrimination or prejudice any time. All information is treated as confidential and no names or other details that might identify teachers, students and your school will be used in any publication arising from the research.

Privacy

Your school's privacy is very important. Your school's participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner. A pseudonym will be used in this research and in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study the data will be kept in a de-identified format, in a locked cabinet in Murdoch University.

Benefits of the Study

It is possible that there may be no direct benefit to your school from participating in this study.

While there is no guarantee that there will be direct benefit, the knowledge gained from your teachers and students may help others in the future. The study may attract more attention from policy-makers, schools or other teachers and this may result in reflection and reconsideration of L2 literacy and how students' L2 literacy can be developed in the contemporary context in China.

Possible Risks

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

If you have any questions about this project please feel free to contact either myself, He Yuanqian on mobile: 13181722323 or email y.he@murdoch.edu.au, or my supervisors, Dr Lindy Norris, on ph. (61-8) 9360 2849 or email l.norris@murdoch.edu.au, or Dr Greg Thompson, on ph. (61-8) 9360 2091 or email g.thompson@murdoch.edu.au. My supervisors and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

If you are willing to consent to get your EFL teachers and students involved in this study, please complete the Consent Form.

Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

Information Letter for Teacher Participants

We invite you to participate in a research study looking at how Chinese EFL teachers make sense of L2 literacy in the contemporary context. This study is part of my doctoral degree in education, supervised by Dr. Lindy Norris and Dr. Greg Thompson at Murdoch University in Western Australia.

Nature and Purpose of the Study

With the development of information and communication technology as well as the improved communication among countries in the world, the definitions of literacy and L2 literacy have gone beyond traditional understandings. These broadened definitions of literacy and L2 literacy are now common place in western education contexts.

The aim of this study is to investigate how Chinese EFL teachers conceptualise L2 literacy and how this impacts the structuring and enacting of teaching practices in English language teaching in China.

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and the procedures you will be asked to undergo. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

What the study will involve?

To participate in this study, you must be teaching English in Grade 1 or Grade 2 at Senior Middle School in China.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

Undertake an interview lasting for approximately 1 hour.

Be observed 4-5 classes.

Provide the learning materials used during the class observation, in addition to textbooks.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study without discrimination or prejudice any time. All information is treated as confidential and no names or other details that might identify you will be used in any publication

arising from the research. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

Privacy

Your privacy is very important. Your participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner. Your name and identifying details will not be used in this research and in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study the data will be kept in a de-identified format, in a locked cabinet in Murdoch University.

Benefits of the Study

It is possible that there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study.

While there is no guarantee that you will personally benefit, the knowledge gained from your participation may help others in the future. The study may attract more attention from policy-makers, schools or other teachers and this may result in reflection and reconsideration of L2 literacy and how students' L2 literacy can be developed in the contemporary context in China.

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Once we have analysed the information from this study we will email a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback in 6 months.

If you are willing to consent to participation in this study, please complete the Consent Form.

Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

Information Letter for Student Participants

We invite you to participate in a research study looking at how Chinese EFL teachers make sense of L2 literacy in the contemporary context. This study is part of my doctoral degree in education, supervised by Dr. Lindy Norris and Dr. Greg Thompson at Murdoch University in Western Australia.

Nature and Purpose of the Study

With the development of information and communication technology as well as the improved communication among countries in the world, the definitions of literacy and L2 literacy have gone beyond the traditional understandings. These broadened definitions of L2 literacy are now common place in western education contexts.

The aim of this study is to investigate how Chinese EFL teachers conceptualise L2 literacy and how this impacts the structuring and enacting of teaching practices in English language teaching in China.

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and the procedures you will be asked to undergo. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have, and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

What will the Study Involve?

To participate in this study, you must be 18 years old or over.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be interviewed in a focus group of 5-6 students for about 90 minutes about your experiences of learning English and using English in your life.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study without discrimination or prejudice any time. All information is treated as confidential and no names or other details that might identify you will be used in any publication arising from the research. If you withdraw, all information you have provided will be destroyed.

Privacy

Your privacy is very important. Your participation in this study and any information will be treated in a confidential manner. Your name and identifying details will not be used in this research and in any publication arising out of the research. Following the study the data will be kept in a de-identified format, in a locked cabinet in Murdoch University.

Benefits of the Study

It is possible that there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study.

While there is no guarantee that you will personally benefit, the knowledge gained from your participation may help others in the future. The study may attract more attention from policy-makers, schools or other teachers and this may result in reflection and reconsideration of L2 literacy and how students' L2 literacy can be developed in the contemporary context in China.

Possible Risks

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Once we have analysed the information from this study we will email a summary of our findings. You can expect to receive this feedback in 6 months.

If you are willing to consent to participation in this study, please complete the Consent Form.

Thank you for your assistance with this research project.

Consent Form

[Interpreting English Language and Literacy in China: EFL Practitioner Perspectives]

Student Participant

1. I confirm that I meet the criteria for participation in this study:

I am over the age of 18 years.

2. I agree voluntarily to take part in this study.

3. I have read the Information Letter provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, of the procedures involved and of what is expected of me. The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained the possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.

4. I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to give any reason.

5. I understand I will not be identified in any publication arising out of this study.

6. I understand that my name and identity will be stored separately from the data, and these are accessible only to the investigators. All data provided by me will be analysed anonymously using a pseudonym.

7. I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.

8. I consent for this session to be audio taped.

9. I would like to be contacted at the following email address

_____ for the purpose of this project.

10. I would like to receive a copy of the feedback from the study.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date:/...../.....

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date:/...../.....

Appendix F: Interview Protocol

Interview questions for teachers:

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. What motivated you to become a teacher? Why is having a good education important for students within the context of contemporary Chinese society?
3. Why are you an EFL teacher? According to your experience, what changes have happened to English teaching in the 21st century? How do you feel about these changes?
4. Can you explain your understanding of literacy for me? Is being literate nowadays different from being literate 20 years ago? Why? What are the differences?
5. What do you want for your students as a consequence of learning English?
6. Do you think your students are learning English just to pass examinations and get into good universities or because they want to really be able to speak and write in English?
7. What do you do to develop your students' L2 literacy?
8. What learning materials do you usually provide your students to learn English in class? How and why do you use them?
9. Do you know what learning materials your students use to learn English outside of the class? How do they access additional learning materials?
10. What do you think are the best activities to promote your students' English learning? Why? Which aspects of English learning do these different activities promote?
11. What activities do you think your students enjoy? Why?
12. So what do you do to continue to develop your own capacity to use English? How do you engage in using English in different contexts beyond the classroom and in your personal life?

Appendix G: Class Observation Guide

- ❖ What is the topic of the particular class?
- ❖ What is the purpose and focus of this class?
- ❖ How does the teacher use the textbook? What additional learning materials are used? How are they used and what are the purposes of using them?
- ❖ Are there any social and cultural aspects of English language that come up in this class?

If yes, are they delivered directly by the teacher or is there any other way? How are students involved in social and cultural aspects of English? How much time is being spent on it?

If no, what is mostly discussed in this class and how? How much time is being spent on it?
- ❖ Are there any opportunities that students are provided to use English in an authentic way and how?
- ❖ Are teachers' instructions and teaching content in class in accordance with the teacher's interpretation of L2 literacy? If there is, what are they? If not, what are the contradictions?
- ❖ Does the teacher do most of the talking? Which language is being used by the teacher, when and for how long? And why?
- ❖ What class activities are students engaged in and for how long? Are they for language practice or language use?
- ❖ How much opportunity do students have to really use English and for how long?
- ❖ What modes of communication are used and how?
- ❖ What technologies are used in class and how are they used? (Both by the teacher and by students)
- ❖ Draw a diagram of teacher/ student interaction pattern in class.

Appendix H: Focus Group Interview Protocol

Interview Questions for Students

1. Do you like learning English? Why or why not?
2. How good are you at using English? Is your speaking and listening better than your reading and writing? Why or why not?
3. According to your experience of learning English in senior middle school, are there any learning materials used besides textbooks? What are they and how are they used?
4. Are these learning materials provided by your teachers or are they accessed by yourselves? How can they be accessed?
5. What learning materials do you think are most beneficial to your English learning, both inside and outside of class? Why do you think so?
6. What do you learn English for, besides exams? Do you think what you have learnt in class can help you achieve your purposes? Why or why not?
7. Have you really used English in your lives? If yes, tell me your experiences and how you feel about that?

Appendix I: The Templates for Keeping Note of Interviews and Class Observation

	Date	Time	Venue
1st interview			
2nd interview			
Questions areas	Teacher participant's responses		
Purposes For students' learning English			
Literacy and L2 literacy			
Culture			
Authentic texts			

Intended outcomes	What is suggested	What the teacher did	What the students did

Appendix J: Sample Pages of the exercise book used in the Ying School

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

vi. / vt. 转化; 转换; 改造; 变换
 adj. 适当的; 正当的。
 n./vt./vi. 交换; 交流; 调换;
 n./vt. 赞助人; 倡议者; 发起; 倡议

III. Translate the key phrases into English.

1. _____ 尤其是, 特别是
 2. _____ 轻松; 不紧张; 从容
 3. _____ 用完
 4. _____ 由.....构成
 5. _____ 服从, 向 ... 鞠躬
 6. _____ 测试; 试验
 7. _____ 发出; 放走

IV. The main grammar of this unit is ---subjunctive mood.
Find out three sentences containing *subjunctive mood* from the texts.

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Make sentences with *subjunctive mood*.

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

探究与落实

I. Fill in the blanks using the words and expressions in this unit.

1. The Cinquain is a simple form of poem _____ 5 lines. It _____ a strong picture in just a few words.

2. A list poem is a list of things with a _____ line length and repeated phrases. Some _____ while others do not.

3. Haiku is a Japanese form of English poetry that is made up of 17 _____. It is very _____ with English writers. It can give a clear picture and create a special feeling using the _____ of words.

4. Nursery rhymes are a common type of children' s poetry. The language is _____ but imaginative. They rhyme, have strong _____ and a lot of _____. They may not make _____ and even seem _____, but they are easy to learn and recite.

II. Word spelling

1. In the last 20 years, Korea has been t _____ into a major industrial nation.

2. At the end of the game players traditionally e _____ shirts with each other.

3. I found it hard to c _____ my feelings in words.

4. Pharaohs in ancient Egypt built pyramids over their tombs, hoping that they would be remembered f _____.

5. I think the English article which was t _____ into Chinese by him is second to none.

61

6. Teenagers should learn to behave a _____, especially on formal occasions.
7. We've got a general idea of what we want, but nothing c _____ at the moment.
8. The company's head office is in New York, and it has _____ all over the world.
9. A wealthy s _____ came to our rescue with a generous donation.
10. Some people go back for their education to acquire another degree or d _____ to update their professional knowledge.

III. Choose correct phrase to fill in the blanks. Change the form of the phrase if necessary.

be likely to, enter for, in particular, bare minimum, choose from, make sense, let out, run out, in exchange for, look back, try out, stay up

1. At the sight of the snake, the frightened girl _____ a cry.
2. We have cut down our expenses to a _____.
3. We _____ this new crop on a large area last year.
4. She promised the children that they could _____ for their favorite TV program tonight.
5. Why did she do such a thing? It doesn't seem to _____.
6. Noticing that there _____ be trouble, they slipped away.
7. With their food and drink _____, the lost children began to wonder when they could get rescued.
8. Many students have _____ the competition.
9. I've offered to paint the kitchen _____ a week's accommodation.
10. There are various Christmas presents here for you _____.

IV. Fill in the blanks with proper English translation.

1. 人们不喜欢此译文有着各种各样的理由。
There are _____ reasons _____ people don't like the _____.
2. 这首童谣一定会给孩子们比你想象的更深刻的印象。
The _____ will certainly _____ children a deeper _____ you think.
3. 要是你沒把这个秘密泄露出去就好了。
If only you _____ the secret.
4. 这不是英语诗的传统形式, 但深受英国诗人喜爱。
It is not a traditional form of English poetry but it is very _____ English writers.
5. 有那么多诗歌形式可选, 学生们最终可能想自己写诗了。
_____ so many different forms of poetry _____, students may _____ want to write poems _____ their own.
6. 许多人用诗歌来传达某些情感。
Many people write poems to _____.

7. 清单诗的诗句长短自如。

List poems have a _____.

8. 很多说英语的人喜欢亚洲的诗歌, 尤其是中国的唐诗。

Many English speakers enjoy Asian poetry--- Tang poems _____ China _____

运用与拓展

I. 单项选择

1. As the income is increasing, the _____ of family life has been changing over recent years.
A. model B. character C. process D. pattern
2. Giving lessons to a class of 20 students is a fairly light teaching _____.
A. weight B. burden C. amount D. load
3. Mothers holding jobs outside the home should have _____ schedules to make it easier to care for their children.
A. heavy B. smooth C. flexible D. complex
4. There was such a long queue for coffee at the interval that we _____ gave up.
A. eventually B. unfortunately C. generously D. purposefully
- ☆5. The way _____ he worked out the problem isn't the way _____ I told him.
A. /; / B. which; which C. /; what D. that; what
- ☆6. A medical team _____ two doctors and five nurses has been sent to the scene.
A. make up of B. made up of C. consists of D. consisted of
7. If my letter _____ the impression that I was impolite, please forgive me.
A. translated B. conveyed C. concluded D. predicted
8. To the mother's joy, her kid has been able to move to the _____ of the music.
A. rhyme B. rhythm C. syllable D. line
9. --- Our factory is doing less and less trade with other companies. I might lose my job if it is closed down.
--- _____. Your boss will overcome the problem.
A. Take it easy B. Go slowly C. Stay longer D. See you
10. The soldiers are afraid that they will soon _____ oil and food if they are still surrounded.
A. run out B. run out of C. run across D. run away with
11. It's a surprise that the faraway village has been _____ into a famous tourist city in only ten years.
A. divided B. transformed C. made D. exchanged
12. He accidentally _____ he had quarreled with his wife and that he hadn't been home for a couple of weeks.
A. made out B. let out C. took out D. brought out
13. What would you give me _____ my recorder? ----- An MP4.

Appendix K: A supplementary text used by Long: Our Family Creed: The Things That Make Life Most Worth Living

Our Family Creed: The Things That Make Life Most Worth Living

By John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

They are the principles on which my wife and I have tried to bring up our family. They are the principles in which my father believed- and by which he governed his life. They are the principles, many of them, which I learned at my mother's knee.

They point the way to usefulness and happiness in life, to courage and peace in death.

If they mean to you what they mean to me, they may perhaps be helpful also to our sons for their guidance and inspiration.

Let me state them:

I believe in the supreme worth of the individual and in his right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty.

I believe that the law was made for man and not man for the law; that government is the servant of the people and not their master.

I believe in the dignity of labor, whether with head or hand; that the world owes no man a living but that it owes every man an opportunity to make a living.

I believe that thrift is essential to well-ordered living and that economy is a prime requisite of a sound financial structure, whether in government, business or personal affairs.

I believe that truth and justice are fundamental to an enduring social order.

I believe in the sacredness of a promise, that a man's word should be as good as his bond, that character-not wealth or power or position -is of supreme worth.

I believe that the rendering of useful service is the common duty of mankind and that only in the purifying fire of sacrifice is the dross of selfishness consumed and the greatness of the human soul set free.

I believe in an all-wise and all-loving God, named by whatever name, and that the individual's highest fulfillment, greatest happiness and widest usefulness are to be found in living in harmony with His will.

I believe that love is the greatest thing in the world; that it alone can overcome hate; that right can and will triumph over might.

These are the principles, however formulated, for which all good men and women throughout the world, irrespective of race or creed, education, social position or occupation, are standing, and for which many of them are suffering and dying.

These are the principles upon which alone a new world recognizing the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God can be established.

Appendix L: Sample Pages of Handout for Senior 1 of the Yan School

必修二 Unit 3 学案 Computers 2012/12/18

I. Key phrases:

★1. have sth. in common	有共同点	13. compare A with B	把 AB 比较
★2. after all	毕竟, 终究	14. compare ... to	比作, 比喻
★3. watch over	看守, 监视	15. share sth. with sb	和...分享...
★4. deal with	处理, 安排	16. as well as	也...
★5. with the help of	在...的帮助下	17. make up	化妆, 编造, 组成..., 占...比例
★6. from then on	从那时起	18. solve problems	解决问题
★7. in a way	在某种程度上	19. in my opinion	在我看来
★8. so...that...	如此, 以至于	20. win first/second place	赢得第一/二名
★9. as a result	结果	21. go by	(时间) 过去; 从旁走过
★10. serve the human race	为人类服务	22. get together	聚集
★11. provide sb. with sth.	为...提供	23. make a decision	做出决定
12. put... in an order	按顺序排放		

II. Key Sentences:

1. He wrote a book about how I could **be made to** work as a "universal machine" to solve any difficult mathematical **problem**.
2. **From then on**, I grew rapidly both in size and in brainpower. 3. **As time went by**, I was made smaller.
4. **By the time** I was sixteen, my dream **had come true**.
5. Once a year we are **allowed to get together** to play a game of football.
6. We are **determined to** create an even better system.
7. **With the help of** my electronic brain which never forgets anything, **using my intelligence** is what I'm all about.

Exercises I. 单词拼写:

1. He is so smart that he is the only one who can s_____ the problem.
2. Our country sent a spaceship called Chang Er to e_____ the moon.
3. A_____, I have to get home before 4 o'clock, because my parents are waiting for me.
4. The train must stop when we see the red s_____.
5. What t_____ of house would you prefer to live in?
6. Unexpected difficulties a_____ in their experiment, which made them confused(困惑的).
7. The g_____ of computer is to provide humans with a life of high quality.
8. She said she didn't like it, but _____(就个人而言) I thought it was very good.
9. Science and _____(科技) is developing quickly in China.
10. You must bring yourself back to _____(现实). He has left you.

II. 选择合适的短语填空, 使句子完整通顺。

with the help of; so...that; deal with; in a way; watch over; as a result;
from then on; provide...with; after all; have...in common

1. He knows little English, _____, he can't explain to others where he is from.
2. Lily and Lucy are twins, and they _____ much _____.
3. _____ his teacher, he had made much progress in his English.

4. The new teacher is fresh from university, he really doesn't know how to _____ his badly behaved students.
5. Well, the story is too much for Mary. She can't understand, _____, she is only two.
6. His dad died last year; _____ he became always depressed(消沉的).
7. _____, his biology has improved, but there is still a long way to go.
8. We have to take good care of the earth, because she _____ us _____ whatever we need.
9. He was _____ angry _____ he left the room without saying a word.
10. The driver who was hurt in the accident was _____ in hospital all the time by the doctor yesterday.

II. Multiple Choice

1. Most patients _____ in hospital this year than last year.
A. treated B. have treated C. had been treated D. have been treated
2. The policeman's attention was suddenly caught _____ a small box which _____ placed under the Minister's car. A. has been B. was being C. had been D. would be
3. I got caught in the rain and my suit _____.
A. has ruined B. had ruined C. has been ruined D. had been ruined
4. Thank you for reading my comment and I hope it helps _____.
A. in a way B. in the way C. on the way D. by the way.
5. All the preparations for the work _____, and we're ready to start.
A. are completing B. have been completed C. is completing D. has been completed
6. I don't want to buy anything. You go please and I'll just _____ around the streets till you finish your shopping. A. wait B. wonders C. wander D. take
7. My new issue of *Twenty-first Century—School Edition* has disappeared.
—Who _____ have taken it. A. should B. must C. would D. could
8. It is generally believed that a person who quickly understands and learns something has good _____.
A. reception B. head C. intelligence D. opinion
9. Problems _____ because they were lack of communication. A. raised B. added C. showed D. arose
10. The computer is too big and it will _____ too much room.
A. give up B. make up C. bring up D. take up
11. —Timmy, it is raining heavily outside.
—_____, we must finish this work today. A. However B. Anyway C. Therefore D. Though
12. —When shall we meet, at 6:00 or at 6:30?
—_____. A. At any time B. You make the time C. Well, either time will do D. Any time is OK
13. It seems that the young man and the lady have little _____.
A. in common B. on common C. at common D. with common
14. —Will you _____ my clothes while I have a swim?
—With pleasure. A. watch out B. watch for C. watch over D. watch at
15. David has won the first prize in the English contest; and he is so _____ that he feels _____ desire to go to bed. A. exciting; the least B. exciting; the more C. excited; the most D. excited; the least
16. _____ the help of the explanation of the book, we can finally understand the meaning of the passage. A. Under B. With C. By D. After