

**Control, Conformity and Contradiction: Changes in Chinese  
Language and Literacy (*Yuwen*) Curriculum from 1980-2010 in  
China**

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.

## ABSTRACT

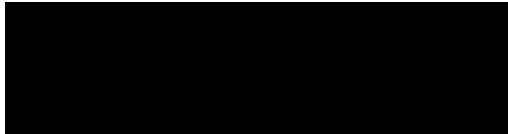
Inspired by the researcher's observations of and queries in the language curriculum as a practicing teacher for the past 20 years, this thesis addresses how the high school Chinese language and literacy (*Yuwen*) curriculum in China is controlled and directed by the social and political dominations from 1980 to 2010 and how the teachers and schools respond to the top-down curriculum change in their teaching practice.

This research project fills a research gap of the lack of a systematic study of the Chinese language and literacy curriculum in Western scholarship by conducting an in-depth analysis of the relevant syllabuses, textbooks and teachers' responses to the curriculum change in China. In doing so, this thesis attempts to achieve two theoretical implications: 1) A test of applicability of the existing literacy and other social theories originated in the Western developed countries to the Chinese context; 2) An empirical study that examines the data obtained in China with a view to enriching and complementing the existing literacy theories. This project is also expected to have impact on the policy makers in China and beyond, like in Australia and the USA where Chinese migrants and international students constitute a substantial learning population.

## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work.  
This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

*Signature:*

*Name: Min Tao*

*Date: 31 August 2016*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Motivation and my personal experience in education

As the title suggests, this thesis is concerned with the changes in the *Yuwen* (Chinese Language and Literacy) curriculum in China since the 1980s. This is closely related to my own educational and working experience – my bewilderment with and reflections on the prescribed texts that I had to teach as a new language and literacy teacher. I started my career as a *Yuwen* teacher in China in the late 1980s. Upon receiving the textbooks, I was perplexed by the fact that they were filled with the works of Mao Zedong, Lu Xun and texts eulogising Mao or other revolutionary leaders. I still remember the first essay I taught for the class of Year 10 in a technical school in Jiangsu Province, China. It was an essay about a pilgrimage-like tour of Jinggangshan (井冈山, Jinggang Mountain), the location of the revolutionary base founded by Mao Zedong and his comrades in the 1920s. I was puzzled, not because such texts were new to me, I had been immersed in various Chinese and translated foreign classics and Chinese avant-garde works as well as newly introduced Western contemporary works. I was wondering why the textbook compilers could not include more inspiring, up-to-date and high quality literary works for our students. I was bewildered and felt powerless because, as a new teacher, I needed to strictly follow the textbooks and the teaching plan designed by the teaching team. I was unable to change the texts. That is, in this very centralised system, I was unable to choose the texts that I deemed more beneficial for my students and had to teach the texts, most of which I felt were dreary, out of date and disingenuous. I realized that it was in vain to continue to struggle with teaching in such a context. I could feel how students perceived my teaching and my texts. I made up my mind to change my career. Four years later, after a very competitive selection examination, I enrolled in a postgraduate course (M.A.) leading to teaching Chinese as a foreign language in 1992.

I then became a lecturer in teaching Chinese as a foreign language in my hometown Nanjing in 1995. I was happy with my change of career (it was not a drastic change as I still taught Chinese but to foreigners). Thus, I did not have to worry too much about the overt ideology embedded in the texts, although the textbooks published in China and elsewhere do reflect values and covert ideological orientations. At least, I believed that I was not longer an agent imparting the state's ideology without any discretion as to what texts to teach and how to teach. But this was not a happy-ever-after ending.

My interest and query in *Yuwen* curriculum was rekindled after I migrated to Australia in 2002. After a one-year pre-service course, I started teaching, firstly at community ethnic language schools and then at a high school in Melbourne. A veteran teacher in China became a new teacher in Australia. My confidence and expertise in teaching Chinese as a first language was challenged as I attempted to interpret the syllabus (then referred to as a Study Design and released by the Study Board of Victoria) and to implement it in my teaching practices. The syllabus and the teaching and learning approaches informed by the syllabus were so different from what I had been trained in China that I was inspired to conduct a comparative study of the syllabuses in China and Australia. This study eventually turned into a conference paper in 2011 and then a referred journal article in 2013 (Tao & Wang, 2013).

The initial research questions for this thesis started to emerge, based on my teaching in China and Australia: Who designed the Chinese or *Yuwen* syllabus and curriculum? Who decided what variety of the language and genres or what texts are to be taught and how they are interpreted? And why? As mentioned before, when I started as a new teacher in China, I felt powerless in a centralised system in terms of texts and approaches. While in Australia too, I have discovered that teachers have very limited discursive power and autonomy in the development of the Chinese language curriculum, at least in the subject of Chinese for background or heritage students. I also felt that I needed to refresh my knowledge not only about the approaches and texts set by local Education Department in Victoria, but also about the various genres of writing in Chinese because the kinds of writings stipulated in the syllabus (i.e. the Study Design) were different from the texts I had become acquainted with during my high school and university study and were regarded differently in China. For example, the syllabus mandated five kinds of writings and their main features. However, in practical teaching, it is very hard to find model texts to fit the criteria described in the syllabus. The concepts and classifications of kinds of writings in the Australian syllabus are based on the corpus of English or European languages texts, and are imposed by default on all the languages other than English (LOTE) syllabuses including Chinese. It is easy for the syllabus developers, but not easy for the teachers. I raised the questions in class during my teacher-training course, in private conversations with senior teachers, and in the seminars organized by the Chinese Language Teachers' Association in Victoria. But the teachers, the majority of whom are of Chinese background, did not seem to care much about it. They were more concerned with how to follow the syllabus and help students achieve success in the VCE exam. In 2004 I left high school teaching and started teaching at universities. However,

these queries remained in my mind and motivated my thinking about the contexts and power configurations in the language and literacy curriculum.

The questions to be addressed in this project became clearer over time. In language and literacy teaching, how do the political, cultural, and ideological changes shape the syllabus and textbooks? To what extent can the experts' preferences shape the curriculum picture? Last but not least, from my own experience, I enquire how teachers accept, resist or re-contextualise the syllabus and the imposed texts. With these questions in mind, I turned my eyes again to the recent past and current *Yuwen* curricula of China.

## 1.2 Clarification of the key terms: *Yuwen*, syllabus, curriculum and textbooks

Throughout this thesis I shall use the following key terms and concepts, which I define in this section.

*Yuwen*: *Yuwen* is a compound word comprising two morphemes: *Yu* (语) and *Wen* (文). *Yu* refers to “language”, *Wen* means “written language”, “literacy”, “article” or “literature”. These understandings are presented in most authoritative and influential dictionaries in China. For instance, in *the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary (Xiandai hanyu cidian 现代汉语词典)* compiled by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, *Yuwen* is defined as 1) language and scripts, the ability to read and write; 2) language and literature (1996). In China's most comprehensive dictionary *Cihai (辞海)*, *Yuwen* is equated with philology. In the most influential Chinese-English dictionary *A Chinese-English Dictionary (Hanying cidian 汉英词典)* compiled by the Beijing International Studies University, *Yuwen* is translated as 1) Chinese as a subject of study or a means of communication; 2) the short form for language and literature. (1995).

*Yuwen* in this thesis refers to Chinese as a school subject. *Yuwen* as a school subject appeared in 1904 with the emergence of China's modern education system (Gu & Huang, 2000). Initially, it was called *Guowen* (国文) or *Guoyu* (国语) meaning the national language. *Yuwen* formally replaced *Guoyu* and *Guowen* after 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party took over Mainland China. To further define the term, I specify that the subject of Chinese as a school subject in this thesis is treated or translated as: Chinese language and literacy, emphasising the essential mission of reading and writing in Chinese. The relationship between literacy and

*Yuwen* is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 in which the theoretical foundation of this thesis is presented. As discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 5 regarding the *Yuwen* syllabus changes, *Yuwen* has been entangled with literature and it was once shortly separated into two subjects: Language (*Yuyan*) and Literature (*Wenxue*). However, the language and literacy stream has become dominant in the official syllabuses. Literary texts always occupy significant position in all textbooks especially at senior high school levels, the language and literacy remains the core of the subject.”

Curriculum: *Yuwen* curriculum in this thesis can be equated with the *Yuwen* subject as a whole. However, a curriculum is perceived as a more dynamic process that involves defining and re-defining the subject. The term “dynamic” here points to two actions: design and implementation. According to Kliebard (1989), a curriculum should take into account the following four dimensions: justifying what should be taught or learned, identifying to whom the subject will be taught, deciding what methods are adopted, and considering how the particular subject is coordinated with other disciplines in order to align with the aims and aspirations of the modern education system. The four dimensions that Kliebard specified essentially belong to the category of design while implementation involves such activities as textbook compilation (which can also be part of the design category), classroom teaching, school assessments and external assessments including streaming and selection examinations.

In China, the education system remains centralised in many senses, as is the design of the curriculum. The curriculum in this thesis refers to China’s national curriculum rather than the individual school curriculum. The study of the curriculum in this project includes an examination of the national *Yuwen* syllabus (design), the compilations of national or provincial textbooks and other localised resources and of their implementation, that is, the teaching and learning at school level, and school and external assessments including national university entrance examinations (implementation). This thesis focuses on three essential aspects of the *Yuwen* curriculum in China: syllabus documents, textbooks and teachers’ understanding and implementation of the syllabus and textbooks at school level: specifically addressing the intended goals, methodologies as well as the resources of the subject and the actual implementation in the teaching practices. Due to the limitation of length, the study of the *Yuwen* curriculum in this thesis does not involve collection and analysis of the primary data regarding assessments and examinations. However, the literature review and the field work data deals with the debates about and teachers’ responses to examinations, in particular



the important role of the university entrance examination (i.e. *Gaokao*) in controlling, actualising and distorting the curriculum for senior high school *Yuwen* in China.

Syllabus: In this thesis, syllabus refers to the constitutional guiding document that defines a school subject. The change or revamp of the curriculum always starts with the revision or change of the syllabus. Before 2004, the syllabus in China was called *Jiaoxue Dagang* (教学大纲), which literally means “teaching outline or guideline”. Since 2004, after the syllabus changes across all of the subjects in primary and secondary education, the term was changed to *Kecheng Biaozhun* (课程标准), which can be translated literally as “curriculum standards”. A typical *Yuwen* syllabus contains the aims and objectives, the significance or rationale for study of the subject, the nature and scope of the subject and subject content, prescribed or suggested texts (this component was dropped in 2004 after the de-centralization of textbook compilation, approval and adoption), and teaching approach and methods of assessment.

Textbooks: The textbook is the carrier of the official knowledge (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Apple, 1990, 1991, 1993), the materialised syllabus. The *Yuwen* textbooks in China contain the model texts of various genres, annotations for the context and meaning of the texts, a comprehensive introduction of the relevant cultural, linguistic and literary knowledge as well as exercises and questions for each particular lesson and section. The new textbooks published after 2004 also provide an extended reading list. Winnie Au Yueng Lai’s observation in the 1980s (Lai, 1995) and my recent fieldwork for this project in 2013 both suggest that *Yuwen* teachers in China regard the textbooks as more important than the syllabus. Some of them, as I was told in the interviews with teachers, did not even check the syllabus; instead, they focused more on the textbooks and the guideline of year for the university entrance examination or other selective examinations.

The *Yuwen* textbooks are of particular importance to the study of curriculum. The significance and uniqueness of the *Yuwen* textbook can be examined in two ways: from its entangled relationship with the traditional pre-modern literacy education in China and in the context of the centralized system of compilation, approval and distribution. *Yuwen* as a modern school subject did not emerge until the early 20th century in China, but this modern subject has a natural connection with traditional literacy education. Chinese traditional literacy education emphasized rote learning and recitation of the canonical classical works,

such as Confucian classics and widely quoted poems. The modern *Yuwen* inherited this tradition of stressing the close reading and reciting of classical and newly canonized modern works in teaching and assessments, and this is reflected in the university entrance examination in which students are required to write out lines of the specified texts. This tradition was also evidenced in my teacher training experience in the late 1980s. We were required to recite around 100 examples of classical works from the textbook for the graduation examination. It can be argued that the impact of the *Yuwen* textbook on students is life-long, shaping their values, literary tastes and language styles. As indicated above, the uniqueness of the *Yuwen* textbooks is inextricably linked with the state's control of and monopoly over its compilation, approval and distribution. The intention of the state and the ruling political party to control the textbook has been very evident, while the measures and intensity vary according to the varying extent of the state's power and strength.

The publishing houses: The Commercial Press (*Shangwu yinshu guan* 商务印书馆), the first modern publishing house, was established in Shanghai in 1897 and started to publish textbooks in the late Qing era (Guan, 2000). The Late Qing and then the Nationalist government (KMT 1928-1949) in Nanjing had the ambition to take over the compilation and publication of textbooks. However, inadequate resources as well as the turbulent situation caused the Qing to fail to implement their plans just as the Japanese invasion caused the KMT to fail, although in the 1930s KMT did tighten its control of the textbook compilation and approval (Keanan, 1973; Peake, 1932). From 1949, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the strong power of the state and its unwavering determination to control the nation's culture and education made possible the centralization of the production and delivery of knowledge. The People's Education Press (PEP) represented the PRC's ubiquitous state power in education and publishing. The PEP, which was established immediately after the CCP took over Mainland China, is a subordinate organization of the national Ministry of Education of the PRC.

The PEP monopolized the publication of textbooks from 1949-2004 (except in the Cultural Revolution era 1966-1977 when the National Syllabus was abolished and no national textbooks were released). PEP's monopoly of compilation and publication of senior high school textbooks was not challenged until 2004, when the new syllabus was released and diversity and creativity were encouraged. Some local provincial education administrators were entitled to publish their own textbooks. This trend was motivated by two factors: one is

the de-centralization of examination system, which started in the late 1980s, and the other is the acceleration of the marketization of the Chinese economy in the 1990s. The local educational administrations wanted to share power and profit with the national educational administration and its representatives such as PEP. It should be noted that textbook compilation, approval and distribution have never been privatized, and remain official. The approving authority remains in the hands of the central government and the distribution is always mandated by the local government administration.

This thesis examines the development of the PEP senior high school textbooks from 1978-2004 and the JEPH (Jiangsu Education Publishing House) textbook published in 2004, with the aim of delineating the change and continuity of the texts over that specific period of time.

### **1.3 Issues, problems and research questions**

As I recorded at the very beginning of this chapter, my teaching experience as a sceptical or critical *Yuwen* teacher in China was characterized by a feeling of powerlessness at the strict top-down educational system featuring the implementation of a highly centralized curriculum, with government imposed texts, textbooks and teaching approaches. While my study of the syllabus, examinations and teaching practice in Australia further strengthened my interest as a language teacher in the curriculum of *Yuwen* as the most important school subject in China, my central concern is the multilayers of power relations in the *Yuwen* curriculum (design as well as implementation). How the top-down power structure works in the formation and implementation of syllabuses, textbooks and teaching practices in the *Yuwen* subject is the major question of this study.

Inspired by Klein's conception and analysis of the centralization of the curriculum and the power relation in the curriculum (1991), The *Yuwen* curriculum in this thesis is examined three sets of power relations external to the *Yuwen* subject in this thesis: its relationship with the education system, its relationship with the dominant state power and government bodies, and its relationship with the macro-social context. These three sets of power relations are not discrete and insulated from each other; they are closely interwoven and sometimes it is very hard to distinguish between them. For instance, a change in the macro-socio-economical milieu would affect writers and readers' tastes and new styles and genres are created.

According to Fairclough (2001), new subjective identities are formed as a result of the

language that is imposed on the students as well as the use of the language. This would be reflected in the language curriculum. The prime example is the replacement of classical Chinese as the dominant written Chinese by modern vernacular Chinese in the media, the press and the language curriculum. This development was part of the whole process of the New Cultural Movement from the mid-1910s and the 1920s. The more liberal social environment might have led to the relaxation of government control of many areas including *Yuwen* curriculum design. However, the official ideology still precluded the granting of the freedom to teachers to choose texts and approaches.

It is understandable, therefore, that in the post-Mao era Chinese language and literacy curriculum demonstrated more diversity and tolerance in terms of themes and genres. The state conceded more space for liberal thinking in the domain of language and literacy and the transformation of the official ideology of the governing political party. To sum up, the language and literacy curriculum should be analysed in terms of educational practice, discursive practice and social practice. The analysis of the syllabuses and the texts in the textbooks in this thesis reveals how the social-political changes shaped the *Yuwen* curriculum and its reaction and compromises.

In addition to the interest in *Yuwen*'s content and context, this thesis is concerned with the internal relationship within the curriculum area: teachers and imposed texts and syllabuses. I left the field as a practitioner of high school *Yuwen* teacher in the early 1990s. But most of my university classmates choose to stay, and I have maintained connections with them even after I moved to Australia. Since Chinese society has undergone dramatic change and the content of the curriculum has also changed drastically, how do teachers nowadays accept or modify the new curriculum in their teaching practices? The texts, the syllabus, and the relationship between the teachers and texts are the central concerns of this thesis. Hence the central questions of this thesis are:

How has the *Yuwen* (Chinese language and literacy) curriculum been controlled and directed by political and social changes? How do the teachers and schools accept or react to the top-down curriculum changes in their teaching practices?

These central questions encompass three sub-questions addressing the three most important aspects of the curriculum: the syllabus, textbooks and actual teaching practice.

Sub-question 1: how does the syllabus change with social and political change?

Sub-question 2: how do the prescribed texts change with the syllabus change?

Sub-question 3: to what extent have the teachers' teaching philosophy, teaching practice, and approaches changed with the new syllabus as well as with the new textbooks?

#### **1.4 Periodization**

This project covers the *Yuwen* curriculum changes for the three decades from 1978 to 2010 coinciding with China's thirty-year post-Mao's reform era. The rationale for the starting point of 1978 is that it is the year when the first *Yuwen* syllabus was released after the post-Mao era. Politically, this year was labelled *Boluan fanzheng* (拨乱反正, Bring order out of chaos), a farewell to 10 chaotic years of the Cultural Revolution launched by Mao Zedong. At the 3rd Plenary Session in 1978 of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Deng Xiaoping, who had twice been deposed by Mao in 1966 and in 1976, established himself as the paramount leader of China. More importantly, the 3rd Plenary Session also marked the beginning of China's "Reform and Opening Up". The periodization ends at 2010 because in this year, the second edition of the new syllabus: the *Yuwen* Curriculum Standards was released which, however, only contained minor rhetorical differences from the first version published in 2003. Also the textbooks released in 2004 accompanying and reflecting the syllabus shift witnessed minimum changes in terms of text selection and organization of each volume of the textbook, genealogically, the two sets textbooks that I collected and analysed in 2012 still claim that they belong to the 2004 version textbooks and approved and sanctioned by the school textbook examination committee in 2004, all of which demonstrated that the curriculum has been stable since 2003.

#### **1.5 Social change and *Yuwen* education**

The reform and opening up in China initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the post-Mao era have brought immense changes to Chinese society. The economic reform has featured the introduction of the private sectors and transformation from a centrally planned economy to a market-based economy integrating into the world economic system. Now China has become the second largest economy in the world, averaging nearly ten percent GDP growth per year – "the fastest sustained expansion by a major economy in history" (World Bank, 2016). The

economic reform has had huge impacts and implications on Chinese politics, culture and education, which have been embodied in the language and literacy education curriculum. As I will discuss in chapter six regarding the textbook analysis, the de-centralization and relaxation of textbook compiling, publishing, and distributing reflects a new power configuration in the field of curriculum design and implementation, that is, the balance between political control and professional opinion, administrative authority and commercial interests.

The transformation of the economy brought up challenges to the political supremacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the governing political party and its political ideology. As acutely observed by Dirlik (1981), the CCP turned China into a socialist nation without a revolution, and the CCP's mission, vision and composition have undergone great change. The former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin proposed the "three represents" theory: the CCP should be representative of advanced social productive forces, advanced culture, and the interests of the overwhelming majority. The translation of the "three represents" into political reality is that the CCP is no longer the "vanguard" of the working class as its party constitution claims; rather, the theory justifies the new composition of the party in which the new emerging middle class and entrepreneurs have been represented and recruited ever since the economic reform (Lewis & Litai, 2003). Thus, the question arises: how does the ideologically transformed CCP in the post-Mao era, as the only governing party in China, represent and justify its legitimacy as government in the national syllabus and its sanctioned textbooks? Relevant is the further question: how are the CCP's policies and ideologies, the new political discourse, the CCP's other leaders, and China's recent history represented, concealed or downplayed in the curriculum? All these issues and questions deserve serious academic research.

The transformation of the economy also restructured the different social groups, and their social status, power and prestige. In Mao's time, the workers, peasants and soldiers were deemed the three pillars of the society, while in the reform and opening up era, intellectual elites, entrepreneurs and the urban middle class have become the beneficiaries of the reform (Lewis & Litai, 2003). As a result, the mainstream values of society have also changed. As Watson (1992, p. 6) argued, "the selfish or illegal behaviour of one era has become the positive entrepreneurial behaviour of another". Also, as the new market economy increasingly integrates into the global market, it requires a more knowledge-based and

competitive labour force produced by the education system. The government education policy first addressed this requirement in the 1990s when the new discourse of *Suzhi* (personal quality) was put forward and later became state education policy. The new values, and new heroes in the textbooks also represent and reflect the change.

The reform and opening up of the society have created a greater public sphere for intellectuals and academics in China. While the party-state still dominates almost all the areas of the superstructure, intellectuals and professional bodies have attempted to gain more autonomy in specific areas. More and more people and groups believe that they are stakeholders and voice their opinions on education and curriculum reform. Hence, how the state controls, and other stakeholders are involved in, the curriculum change is also a very important dimension of research. In China, the inclusion and exclusion of texts and the topics or titles of essay writing in the selective examinations have all become the topic of debates in traditional and new media.

China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 was regarded as a milestone in China's reform and opening up (WTO, 2011). With China's irreversible integration with the outside world, the exchange of merchandise is unavoidably accompanied by an exchange of culture, values and ideas. Again it comes down to the old question which confronted Chinese intellectuals in the middle of 19th century when China was forced by the Western powers to open its doors: how to accommodate Western learning into Chinese tradition without losing Chinese essence or character? The reform is connotative of a controlled change (Lewis & Litai, 2003). Given that the party-state wants to maximize the benefits of opening up while not weakening its authority and legitimacy as government, an examination of how the state selectively controls the in-bound information flow in media and education would be particularly revealing. Important in this examination would be the exploration by language and literature researchers of the treatment in the textbooks and syllabuses of China's traditional and social heritage such as Confucianism, and of the number and nature of foreign translated texts appearing in the textbooks, which indeed is a part of this study's focus.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

This research project examined and analysed the curriculum of the Chinese language and literacy subject in high school, the most "local" subject in China, from globalization and

cross-cultural comparative perspectives by applying literacy study theories as well as relevant social theories. The goals were to test two theoretical implications: 1) A test of the applicability of the existing literacy and social theories to the Chinese context. 2) The empirical data obtained in China enriching and complementing or adjusting the literacy theories which hitherto has been mainly based on the Western developed countries.

I agree with Carnoy and Levin's (1985) and Carnoy and Samoff's (2014) division of the nation states in terms of varying social, political and economic types, which account for the variety of their education priorities. The contested state (Carnoy & Levin, 1985), mainly referring to the democratic capitalist countries, is faced with "Contradictions between the reproductive and the democratic forces that shape schooling." (Chen, 2003, p. 25), while in a transition state (Carnoy & Samoff, 1990) like Mao's China, the role of education is "building of a socialist or communist political economy, the development of a participative citizenry, and the defining of a revolutionary people-nation" (Chen 2003, p. 25). Therefore, language and literacy education faces differing priorities and conflicts, and the approaches to literacy approaches, like social approaches, may result in different repercussions and outcomes.

This research contributes a systematic and in-depth study of the Chinese language and literacy curriculum, which is rare in Western literature. Only two relevant studies exist. Winnie Au Yueng Lai's (1995) PhD thesis is about the Chinese language curriculum in high school in the 1980s in Guangdong Province in China, and the recent book length study, *Perspectives on Teaching and Learning Chinese Literacy in China* which is an essay collection by Leung and Ruan (2012), covering a wide range of perspectives of literacy education in China. While this thesis is mainly concerned with the senior high school Chinese language and literacy curriculum, it combines comparison over time (from 1978-2010) and cross-sectional comparison (two series of textbooks after the partial textbook de-regulation in China) as well as fieldwork data. The aim of the project was to provide a more accurate and in-depth description of the changes in the Chinese language and literacy curriculum and its implementation at the senior high school level.

Lastly, but equally importantly, this research is expected to have an impact on the policy makers both in China and beyond. Although Chinese language and literacy is the most important school subject in China, due to the current political context (censorship) and the limitation of access to the international literacy studies, the researches produced in China in this area generally do not seek theoretical foundations to the traditional discourse. I hope this



project will contribute theoretically to current research as well as practically to the curriculum policy makers in China.

Teaching Chinese as the mother tongue or first language is no longer confined to the territory of PRC, with more Chinese migrants and Chinese international students continuing their Chinese language and literacy studies overseas. The international significance of the Chinese language and literacy curriculum should also be acknowledged, and this comparative study of the curriculum, including texts (and textbooks), syllabus and evaluation for Chinese diaspora could also be informative for the local curriculum authorities in other countries.

### **1.7 Outline of each chapter**

This thesis comprises eight chapters including this introduction chapter. Chapter 2 describes the theoretical foundations of this study – literacy and literacy curriculum theories and in particular, the social approaches to the literacy and literacy curriculum studies.

Chapter 3 traces the evolution of the *Yuwen* subject from the foundation of the People's Republic of China to the conclusion of the Cultural Revolution (1949-1977). The purpose of this review is to identify the major debates and issues such as the relationship between political inculcation and literacy education in the highly centralised and politicalised period of those three decades in order to provide a background for the study of the second three decades (1978-2010) of *Yuwen* curriculum which is the focus of the research reported in this thesis.

Chapter 4 explains the research design and methods. It specifies that this research was qualitative in nature and that qualitative content analysis was employed to process the data.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are devoted to the analysis of the data of three important dimensions of the *Yuwen* curriculum: syllabuses, textbooks and teachers' attitudes towards curriculum changes and their strategies in adapting their personal teaching philosophy of the *Yuwen* study to the institutional constraints.

Chapter 5 addresses the first sub-question: How does the syllabus change with social and political change. In this chapter, five major *Yuwen* syllabus documents and their subsequent revised versions across three decades are analysed. The content analysis reported in this chapter focused on two interrelated aspects of the syllabus documents but with varying

emphasis and units of analysis: major changes in components and changes in key political and educational discourse.

Chapter 6 answers the second sub-question: How do the prescribed textbooks change with the syllabus change? This chapter covers two aspects of this question: first, the change in the mechanism of textbook production and adoption. Second, the analysis of the content of the textbooks, focusing on the authors and themes of the texts.

Chapter 7 responds to the third sub-question: How do teachers teaching philosophy, teaching practice and approaches changed with the new syllabus as well as with the new textbooks? Chapter 7 is based on the fieldwork conducted 2013 in two senior high schools in Jiangsu, with interviews of 18 *Yuwen* teachers. In this chapter, I explore how *Yuwen* teachers of senior high schools in China, as agents in the field of literacy education, cope with the major curriculum changes, with a focus on teachers' perspectives of and their attitudes towards the most recent curriculum change in 2004. My intention was to find out how teachers feel the gap between the actuality of curriculum implementation and the intended outcomes mandated in the syllabus and how institutional constraints hinder teachers from fulfilling the curriculum ideas and their personal teaching philosophy in their teaching.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusion of my research with summaries of the findings reported in the previous three chapters. In addition, the theoretical and practical contribution of this research to the existing literacy and literacy curriculum studies and practice is outlined.

## **Chapter 2: Literacy Studies in the Western Context**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I review two areas of research: the first section presents the review of major theoretical explorations of social approaches on literacy studies in the Western context. Educational and social theorists, such as Michael Apple (1979, 1993, 2003,2007) and Pierre Bourdieu (1986,1991), have illuminated this area of research. The significant work contributed by leading literacy theorists like Luke and Freebody (1997),Street (1983, 2003), Gee (2003, 2007) are reviewed in this section.. The second section of this chapter is concerned with language and literacy curriculum theories and teaching approaches, including language skills, cultural heritage, personal growth and critical literacy approaches in the Western context. The different competing and complementary approaches suggest the varying understandings of the nature, scope and identity of literacy and language teaching in schools.

The theories that I draw on in these two related areas provide a contrastive and comparative perspective and a theoretical framework for the empirical study of curriculum in the Chinese context reported in the next chapters.

Thus, this chapter consists of two sections: Theories and debates on social approaches to literacy and literacy theories including New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Critical Literacy; and language and literacy curricula and approaches, specifically addressing the scopes, contents and nature of language and literacy teaching in schools.

### **2.2 Social approaches to literacy studies**

In this section, I start with the definition of literacy in its popular sense and introduce a much more extended definition of literacy drawn from the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) definition which appeared in the Australian Ministry of Employment, Education and Training White Paper on Education in 1991 and most recent perception of literacy in the Australia National Curriculum of English (Australia Curriculum) implemented in 2014. Based on the discussion of this definition and its theoretical imprints, I examine the social approaches of literacy theories including New Literacy Studies, and Critical Literacy in contrast to the “literacy thesis” advocated by such scholars as Goody (Goody& Watt, 1963) and Olson (1994) in their psychological and anthropological approaches.

### 2.2.1 Various understandings and definitions of literacy

Literacy can be understood in the traditional and popular sense as the basic reading and writing skills, as typically perceived by the general public about such programs as the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in Australia, and the “reading, writing and language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation)” in the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). On the NSW’s government website for public schools,<sup>i</sup> literacy (along with numeracy) is conceived as one of the basic skills expected to be mastered through schooling. To be more specific, literacy is considered to be a skill that should be taught and learned in a language class. However, this narrow and popular sense of literacy was rejected by the NSW Teachers Association as “reductivist and repressive” when the “functionality and utility of literacy” was equated to the school subject “English”. The Association, on the other hand, acknowledged that “in the early 21st Century, any literature review seeking definitions of the subject English will come across definitions of the subject couched almost always in terms of literacy/ies especially in terms of multiliteracies” (NSW ETA)(English Teachers’ Association: NSW: Relationship between English and Literacy Education).<sup>ii</sup>

Although the narrow focus of literacy on the skills, functions and utilities cannot cover what the English subject should cover, English specialists and literacy theorists, at the same time, still use the term literacy (ies) frequently and conveniently as a synonym of the English subject or at least of the core component of this subject (Muspratt, 1997; Sawyer, 2007). The conception of literacy in most recent Australian National Curriculum implemented in 2014 is open to a wide range of approaches and emphasises including the “ fluency in letter-sound correspondences of English” and “the skills and disposition needed to analyse and understand the philosophical, moral, political and aesthetic bases on which many texts are built.”( Dixon 2012, p.20). This conception of literacy reflects a more inclusive and eclectic way of dealing with the definition of literacy as well as the subject English (Dixon, 2012).

Now the question arises: what is the more appropriate and accurate description and definition of literacy (ies)? Is literacy synonymous with reading and writing of the language as opposed to listening and speaking (orality)?

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/7-12assessments/naplan/teachstrategies/yr2015/index.php?id=ll\\_over\\_14](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/7-12assessments/naplan/teachstrategies/yr2015/index.php?id=ll_over_14)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.englishteacher.com.au/AboutUs/OfficialStatements/RelationshipbetweenEnglishLiteracyEducation.aspx>

With regard to the complex relationship between English and literacy, Sawyer (2007) commented that “English” and “literacy” have been notoriously hard to define, partly because the territory of “English” as a school subject is hard to define, and also the concept of literacy itself has been under hot debate and witnessing constant change. Sawyer (2007) referred to the socio-cultural views of literacy, multiliteracies, and critical literacy, some of which I review in some detail in this chapter. In his comprehensive review of literacy as an important component of the English curriculum in Australia, Sawyer (2007) delineated in some detail the trajectory of how literacy is entangled with the English curriculum. He listed an array of literacy studies traditions that are relevant to the English curriculum, although he himself was cautious not to give his own definition, preferring to cite the definition of literacy in the document titled, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP):

Literacy is the ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately, in a range of contexts. It is used to develop knowledge and understanding, to achieve personal growth and to function effectively in our society. Literacy also includes the recognition of number and basic mathematical signs and symbols within text.

Literacy involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing. Effective literacy is intrinsically purposeful, flexible and dynamic and continues to develop throughout an individual’s lifetime.

All Australians need to have effective literacy in English, not only for their personal benefit and welfare but also for Australia to reach its social and economic goals.  
(DEET, 1991, p. 9)

Compared to the notion of literacy as basic reading, writing and language conventions, the multiplicities that are embodied in these quotations imply three dimensions of literacy:

Language components: not only are the reading and writing skills stressed but the contexts and combination of literacy and orality (integration of speaking and listening) are specified. In this sense, literacy is virtually equated with language. “The ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately, in a range of contexts” (DEET,1991,p.9) is a sociolinguistic trademark, or put in another way, literacy that is perceived from the socio-linguistic angle.

Personal growth: The phrases such as “to achieve personal growth and to function effectively” and “to develop throughout an individual’s lifetime” echo Dixon’s “growth model” (Dixon, 1975; Hunter, 1997). I deal with Dixon’s growth model in more detail when discussing the curriculum objectives in the second section of this chapter.

Critical literacy paradigm: In addition to the language components, critical thinking is mentioned, although not specifically defined and explained.

Effective literacy is not only for the individual’s benefit and welfare, but also for Australia to reach its social and economic goals. Obviously, the government is more interested in the relationship between education and the economy, between literacy and economic success. The government’s political agenda and its impact on literacy constitute another dimension of literacy policy study (Sawyer, 2007). It is in line with the argument for the correlation of effective literacy with economic betterment. This line of argument naturally leads to criticism of the government and the general public’s over-anxiety about literacy education (in the narrow sense) (Gee, 2007; Sawyer, 2007)

As can be seen from NAPLAN’s brief definition of reading, writing and language conventions to the ALLP’s more comprehensive but not quite exhaustive array of components of literacy, the list can still develop. For instance, Sawyer adds two more aspects to the “literacies” recipe in the curriculum: “imagination and creativity” and “the systematic study of language” (Sawyer, 2007).

The answer to the definition of literacy is far from conclusive. But how far can we extend the “menu” of the banquet called “literacy”? What is the nature of literacy (ies) and what “ingredients” can be identified by literacy theorists through different theoretical lenses? In what follows, I sketch out the main arguments in the literacy studies.

### 2.2.2 Literacy thesis: Jack Goody, David Olson and the psychological and anthropological approaches

There is no direct evidence supporting a proposal of “back to basics” literacy in Western developed countries. However, the concern about the falling standard of literacy and the insistence on the “basics” and cognitive aspect of literacy, recurrently expressed in the mass media and among conservative political groups, has an academic origin. The “literacy thesis”

is the most conspicuous one. Literacy, according to this school of scholars, is the watershed separating cultured or uncultured, civilised and uncivilised, modern and primitive.

The “literacy thesis” was proposed independently by Eric Havelock and by Jack Goody and Ian Watt in 1963 (Goody & Watt, 1963; Havelock, 1963). The authors attributed to the invention of Greek alphabet the primary casual role for the Greek Enlightenment of the fourth and fifth centuries BC (Halverson, 1992). Goody then modified his initially strong argument linking alphabetic literacy to the culture, yet still held firmly that “ a written record has decisive practical advantages for carrying out a cognitive function” (cited in Olson, 1994, p. 16). “Literacy thesis” is, at the academic and policy level, linked to social progress as well as personal cognitive development.

The concept of “literacy thesis” was criticised for believing in the superiority of literacy over orality, of literate civilisation over illiterate civilisation, of the Western alphabetic writing system over logographic inscriptions. This line of argument of literacy stirred heated and on-going debates (Halverson, 1992; Olson, 1994).

Attempting to refine the anthropological and psychological tradition, Olson also acknowledged the criticisms of the early formulation of this school:

Writing did not always and everywhere lead to democracy, science and logic; some non-alphabetic cultures evolved abstract sciences and philosophies; the evolution of Greek classical culture evolved from particular forms of political debate rather than from poring over written documents. (Olson, 1994, p. 15)

While criticising such cultural universalism and Euro-centralism, Olson still stressed the role of literacy, mainly Western alphabetic literacy, as an instrument of cognitive development in his book *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writings*. Consistent with his claim of literacy’s superiority, in this book, as its title suggests, Olson argued that the writing on paper created an autonomous world of representation. Olson (1994) argued that 1) literacy (reading and writing) arouses awareness of the language itself, hence the emergence of the grammar, logic and rhetoric in Western culture; 2) the link between Protestantism’s honest reading of the Book of Scripture to the scientific reading of the Book of Nature, therefore, contributed to the emergence of theoretical science in the West. As he said at the end of this book, “Once texts are read in a certain new way, nature is

“read” in an analogous new way” (Olson, 1994, p. 268).

Olson’s view, although refined in this book, still cannot evade the criticism of euro-centralism. Almost all the historical data he quoted are based on Western intellectual history; therefore, literacy or reading and writing can only be summarised as Western literacy. Again, he still uses the division of the literate mind and the pre-literate mind to distinguish Western civilization from other civilizations in the world.

The debate over and criticism of literacy thesis can be examined in bigger contexts or larger themes such as: development, literacy and schooling, modernism and post-modernism discourse.

### 2.2.3 Literacies and New Literacy Studies (NLS): the socio-cultural approach

Brian Street, one of the founders and proponents of the NLS school of thought emerging in the 1980s, summarised the new dimensions created by this cohort of scholars:

- A challenge to the dominance of the “autonomous model.” They argued that literacy is culturally and socially situated.
- Introduction of the concepts of “literacy events” and “literacy practices” (Collins & Blot, 2003).

Gee, another NLS scholar, argued:

The traditional view of literacy as the ability to read and write rips literacy out of its socio-cultural contexts and treats it as an asocial cognitive skill with little or nothing to do with human relationships, it cloaks literacy’s connections to power, to social identity, and to ideologies. (2007, p. 46)

Gee and Street’s comments above present a clear break with and critique of the cognitive (or autonomous) tradition, which was castigated by the NLS for seeing literacy as a “vacuum” (Gee, 2003):

The traditional meaning of the word ‘literacy’ – the ability to read and write – appears innocent and obvious. The view of literacy as the ability to read and write situates literacy in the individual person, rather than in society. As such, it obscures



the multiple ways in which literacy interrelates with the working of power. (Gee, 2007, p. 22)

Literacy, culture, identity and power constitute the major themes of the NLS. NLS is concerned with the unequal power relation embedded in literacy teaching and acquisition. According to Gee, the so-called literacy crisis, recurrently proclaimed in Western capitalist societies, masks deeper and more complex social problems. It is more a schooling problem than a literacy problem. He cited a large amount of research to argue that the socio-economic backgrounds of children's families decide their home-based literacy practices, and these kinds of practices, such as bedtime reading, to a great extent, are in line with school's literacy teaching model. Therefore, children of mainstream families are more likely to succeed in school literacy. That is, as the middle class's home-based skills are favoured in school, school becomes a site to reproduce these social differences (Gee, 2007).

Gee was also concerned with cultural models and their implication on the language and literacy class. He believed, "values of mainstream culture are, in fact, often complicit with the oppression of non-mainstream students' home culture and other social identities" (Gee, 2007, p. 127). He suggested that language teachers allow the conflicts to become part of the instruction, draw students' attention and initiate on-going discussion (Gee, 2007, p. 89). As such, the language and literacy class is not just a site where mainstream values are imposed on an increasingly multicultural society; rather, it tries to become a venue where meanings, values, and identities are negotiated.

In spite of its academic impact on this field and abundant outcomes resulting from ethnographical research, the translation of the NLS theory into educational practices or government policies remains limited. Albright (2010) reflected on the failure of radical and progressive education philosophical and literacy approaches in curriculum interventions and education policy formation in the UK and the USA. Albright (2010) observed the subtle change of some personalities in the radical and progressive camp and proposed a more pragmatic change when dealing with policy and curriculum formation.

Street also admitted that the "anti-school" or "interest only" stance of resistance, to some extent, constitutes the barrier for NLS to be incorporated into the mainstream school system (Street, 2003). He listed some successful cases of the practical applications of NLS to curriculum and policy formation. For example, he praised Hull and Schultz's (2001) work,

which intended to link out of school literacies with classroom practice directly, by applying insights from NLS. He also referred to his own and other research (Street, Baker & Tomlin, 2006) that combined numeracy with literacy. The more significant achievement of NLS is Allan Luke and Peter Freebody's practical work on the Queensland curriculum described by Street. It should be noted that both Luke and Freebody are leading figures of the critical literacy approach in Australia, and more importantly Allen Luke held an official post in the Department of Education in Queensland. I will comment on their work in the section 2.2.4 on critical literacy in this chapter.

However, according to Street, the outcomes of NLS attempts to intervene have not been particularly influential and effective in the mainstream school's curriculum (Street, 2003). The study of after school literacy and the combination of literacy and numeracy can only be counted as complementary to the school curriculum. At the policy level, both in the USA and the UK, NLS approaches are out of fashion in higher policy circles. Street (2003) criticised the policy makers' exclusive preference for evidence- and experiment-based scientific approaches, which are deemed to be replicable and transferable to the new context in education.

Street acknowledged that the researchers of the NLS School "find limitations and problems in some NLS approaches, such as the "limits of the local" in educational as well as theoretical terms that require them to go back to the "underpinning conceptual apparatus" (Street, 2003, p. 84). NLS's theories and practices, according to Street, are open to critical perspective and adaptation.

The application of NLS to mainstream schooling, in my opinion, may be restricted by the dilemma of its limitations. On the one hand, NLS promotes the deconstruction and destabilisation of the status quo of literacy education to empower and emancipate disadvantaged groups, in particular students of minority groups and working classes; but on the other hand, the normativity of the texts has its inertia. We cannot deny that some young literacy learners and their parents, as consumers may prefer the texts and ideology ostensibly belonging to the dominant classes. I deal with this issue further in the section on critical literacy.

#### 2.2.4 Critical literacy as a social approach: its theory and educational implications

What is critical literacy? Even two of the most influential advocates in Australia, Luke and Freebody (1997), were reluctant to give a simplified definition in the introduction of their book *Constructing Critical Literacies*. Luke and Freebody (1997) admitted that critical literacy does not refer to a unitary approach, but tries to “mark out a coalition of educational interests committed to engaging with the possibilities that the technologies of writing and other modes of inscriptions offer for social change, cultural diversity, economic equality, and political enfranchisement” (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 1). Parallel to NLS’s ideological vein, critical literacy places significance on the social aspects and power relations embedded in literacy education in the late or high modern capitalist society. Interestingly, critical literacy, like the cry from the conservative camp in Western countries calling for “go to the basics”, also started with an attack on the failure of contemporary approaches to literacy education. In contrast to the conservative camp’s claim of a “literacy crisis”, critical literacy points to longstanding and tenacious problems in addressing the needs of disadvantaged socio-economic and ethnic groups in the education system.

Critical literacy critiques the prevalent quantitative approach and universalism. Luke and Freebody (1997) asserted that the problems of disadvantaged groups cannot and should not be remedied by a quantitative approach which believes that literacy is a set of universally comparable skills, competencies and abilities. Rather, Luke and Freebody pointed to the normative and qualitative dimension of the questions of what kind of literacy practices are appropriate for whom in what kind of social and economical structure that is to be sanctioned through teaching (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 2). It is critical literacy’s concern to intervene in the literacy curriculum in order that literacy teaching addresses the social and demographic change in Australia and other Western countries. Believing that the context of literacy teaching is not a “neutral site”, Luke and Freebody combined a Foucauldian lens of “discourse, power and knowledge” and Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of “field” to analyse the power relations in the field. They claimed:

The social thus is defined as a practical site characterised by contestation over resources, representation, and differences. These disputes over material and discourse resources are disputes over how and which forms of life are to be represented, and whose representations of whom are to “count” with what material consequences for literacy learners. (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 3)

Luke and Freebody did not believe that there exist such things as ideologically freestanding

texts and generic instructional approaches. The so-called better and more precise technologies may not be optimally applicable to heterogeneous student bodies and will result in the exclusion of particular groups.

### 2.2.5 Theoretical foundation of critical literacy

Critical literacy owes its critical spirit and epistemological position to the legacy of the Frankfurt school of critical theory in the 20th century. The Frankfurt school offered an unrelenting critique of contemporary sources and causes of oppression and repression (Willinsky, 2007). Willinsky delineated two ramifications of the extension of critical theory in the educational field: one is critical pedagogy as an education philosophy and political movement addressing the more general teaching and learning practices in the educational field (Kincheloe as cited in Willinsky, 2007), although critical pedagogy is also informed by postmodernism, and anti-racist, feminist, postcolonial, and queer theories. The other ramification of critical theory in education is critical literacy, with the critical study of the literacy and literacy education studies emerging in the 1990s in Australia.

Both critical theory and critical literacy put themselves in the oppositional ground critiquing the logic of the operation of the high modern or late capitalist world. Horkheimer et al.'s (2002) critique of the modern capitalist culture industry as mass deception can be traced in the critical literacy's perception of the "writing and other modes of inscriptions" as seemingly neutral technologies which represent and reproduce unequal material and symbolic relations. According to Willinsky (2007), education is also part of the culture industry, and the Frankfurt school's critical stance of "great refusal" of the culture industry and its operating logic can be transposed to critical literacy. Nonetheless, acknowledging the intellectual lineage of critical theory and critical literacy, Willinsky (2007) distinguished the Frankfurt school's pursuit of the "simple pleasure of intellectual work" by rejecting activist reform programs such as critical literacy's enthusiasm for engaging in the pedagogic practices and curriculum intervention.

Nonetheless, Willinsky expressed his scepticism by questioning Allen Luke's institutional success in implementing "critical literacy" into the state curriculum. Willinsky revealed the dilemma that once the critique becomes a "semiotic toolkit", an "instrumental skill set" and is "transformed into practical agendas", it risks losing the values that the Frankfurt school held so closely.

Critical literacy and its variations, like critical reading, are also influenced by other critical theories in and beyond the education field. Lee (1997) traced the earlier influence of critical pedagogy including Freire and the American critical-sociological work by Michael Apple, which featured an interest in the analysis of the contents of school textbooks and in interrogating the naturalised narratives and explanatory framework of the curricular texts. This line of thinking also inspired this project.

Last but not least, Marxism and Neo-Marxism also made their imprints on critical literacy, particularly Marx's tenets on exchange inform such concepts in critical theories and critical reading as the economy of education, biased reading, engaged reading, and the writer's point of view. Luke and Freebody believed that Marx's concepts of ownership and means of production are still relevant in the post-industrial societies. They linked literacy education to learners' access to the codes and models for the mediational means and codes, situating them in relation to the modes of information and, ultimately, the means of production (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 11). Literacy constructs the modes of production and the social relations in what Castells (1998) termed informational capitalism.

Lee (1997) delineated the various methods that critical literacy borrowed from linguistic analysis including systemic functional linguistics, critical linguistics and social semiotics (Lee, 1997, p. 422). It is worthy of note that systemic functional linguistics has long been accepted as the mainstream linguistic school incorporated in the Australian school curriculum across the subjects of English, English as a second language (ESL) or additional language (EAL) and languages other than English (LOTE). The genre-based pedagogy that builds upon Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics arguably has also contributed to Australia's critical literacy, although genre-based pedagogy is not specifically mentioned in the school curriculum in Australia. Mayes (2006) summarised the contribution of genre-based pedagogy to the Australian version of critical literacy:

Explicitly teaching the literary genres used in society gives disadvantaged students access to the previously undisclosed requirements of secondary school English... Through this access, the individual student is theoretically liberated, and moves from being mastered by power structures to mastering language. (Mayes, 2006, p. 6)

In this sense, genre-based pedagogy follows Halliday's proposition that mastery of the genres and awareness of the ideological forces of genres will lead to challenging the texts and

changing society (Mayes, 2006). Addressing the phenomenon of language of science's "putting off" school children by making them feel the language of science is a "secret language", Halliday and Martin's (1993) attempted to apply systematic linguistic model to unpack the science language at varying levels (They used stratifications to label the "levels" of semiosis"). Martin criticized progressive trends in science pedagogy for placing "undue emphasis on genres such as narrative which have not evolved to construct un-commonsense."(p.134). To sum it up, Halliday and Martin's (1993) are different from "progressive" literacy theorists in that they believed that some genres like science writing have evolved for centuries, it is literacy educators' responsibility to unpack them and help the readers to master the "technology of technicality" rather than to eschew them.(p.139)

Lee (1997) recounted the development of the "genre movement" initiated by Martin and his colleagues, in particular the nexus of literacy and school curriculum. She went on to critique the theoretical and political flaws of this movement's "access politics": the contradiction between its espoused left orientation and its application as "liberal politics", because in effect it is "a de facto endorsement of the official discourse of schooling, a reification both of curriculum and of genres of writing and the assimilation of difference into curricular discourses of the same" (Lee, 1997, p. 417). That is, the genre approach to the study of the nexus between literacy and curriculum perpetuates and reproduces the tacit domination pre-existing in the curriculum sites – genre linguists consciously or unconsciously skew the representativeness of the selected texts or textbooks for a particular school subject. Applying her own empirical studies on geography, Lee found that genre linguists selected "physical geography" as the representation of "natural and scientific" at the cost of the humanistic aspects. Politically, the genre approach is pressured to drop its progressivism by stressing on the "structure" and "rigour" in literacy education and slipping into the conservatism camp (Green, 1987, as cited in Lee, 1997).

Critical literacy overtly acknowledges its debt to Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualisation of cultural capital, field and habitus. Luke and Albright (2007) believed that Bourdieu's trenchant vocabulary is more relevant than ever before in delineating the inequitable and unequal exchange in language and pedagogy, and material and symbolic resources (2007, p. 3). In addition to the notions of various forms of capital that are pertinent to literacy and literacy education, Bourdieu's conceptualisations of field, habitus, distinction and symbolic power are also generative for critical literacy researchers (Kramsch, 2010).

Among Bourdieu's key concepts, cultural capital, field and habitus inspire critical literacy theorists and pedagogues to deepen and expand their reflections on literacy and literacy education. Bourdieu (1986) distinguished three forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1991), is the accumulation of knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisition. Linguistic capital is one of the forms of the cultural capital. Relevant to the language and literacy study, what literacy or what texts, whose texts are valued and selected in the school curriculum, how these texts are read and interpreted constitute a long-lasting debate among linguists, literacy theorists and educationalists.

Field is another core concepts used by Bourdieu (1993). Field is conceived as a social system in which agents strive for the position (distinction). It is governed by certain rules, which in turn shape agents' behaviours and beliefs (Habitus). The capital, in particular the cultural capital can only be realized and valued in specific field.

Bourdieu's concept of "habitus" is powerful in understanding the subject formation in literacy education; it is concerned with what kind of literate subject that literacy education means to construct. "Habitus", in Bourdieu's words, refers to a "system of dispositions, that is, of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action" (Bourdieu, 2002 cited in Hiller & Rooksby, 2005, p. 43). Bourdieu's "habitus" can be a stable system for an individual and a social group, featuring systematicity and unity. "Habitus" is acquired through education and social experience.

The concept of habitus has been well received in the domain of literacy education. Critical literary researchers believe that literacy education is a social process contributing to form the learners' linguistic habitus as well as social habitus. According to Carrington and Luke, linguistic habitus is the individual's or group's "sum total of particular physical and social language characteristics and durable dispositions that mediate pronunciation, accent, lexical, syntactic, and semantic choice" (1997, p. 101). Acting on this conviction, theorists and empirical researchers of critical literacy also attempt to intervene in the literacy curriculum and classroom pedagogical practices (Albright & Luke, 2010).

Habitus must be used in conjunction with another important notion: field. Bourdieu asserted that every field is inhabited by tensions and contradictions, which are the origins of struggles

or competition. Agent(s) in the field act according to their position(s) (the capital possessed by the agents) and the habitus. The field is also a dynamic site where agents take their position and compete for the resources (capital), which also entails the change of the nature of the site itself when the conflict of position and disposition occurs and intensifies. The struggle theory in critical literacy, derived from Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus is reflected in such fundamental curriculum questions as: Whose texts? What texts count? Why? The critical analysis of the authors (attitudes and positions), genres (what kind of genres are valorised) and contexts of the texts are all important questions in the critical literacy approaches.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital illuminates critical literacy's "access politics". Luke and Freebody asserted, "what seems certain is that certified, visibly displayed level of literate practices become the requisite forms of cultural capital, necessary, if not sufficient, for entry into institutional and public life (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 6).

Literacy is a part of linguistic capital, which is a form of embodied cultural capital. But the cultural capital is field specific. Therefore, there can be no universally valued form of linguistic competence or capital, and school acquired literacy can only be converted into embodied and objectified capitals in conjunction with other forms of capitals, say, social capital (Carrington & Luke, 1997).

#### 2.2.6 How the critical literacy approach is implemented and practiced in the classroom

Critical literacy approach's critical stance can be firstly evidenced in the teachers' vision in finding the texts that would not have been selected by traditional approaches. Two cases cited by Morgan (2004) are exemplary of critical literacy's desire to unveil the power relations in the world through words. In the first case Morgan refers to a high school Year 12 English teacher who introduced a journal article to his students. These students were planning to take a vocational pathway rather than university education. The article was about the new style managers and the teacher asked his students to trace the ideology about the management of the workers (Morgan, 1997, pp. 114-16, cited in Morgan, 2004). The second is the case of a primary school teacher asking her students to explore how mothers are represented in Mother's Day junk mail gift catalogues (Luke, O'Brien & Comber, 1994, cited in Morgan, 2004).



Critical literacy teachers, according to Morgan (2004, p. 104), are also engaged with canonical works, but they don't stop at literary appreciation and functional literacy; rather, they aim to enable students to understand the work of the social in texts and discourse by asking the following series of questions when analysing and critiquing the texts:

- Where does this text come from?
  - What kind of text is this?
  - What social functions does this text serve?
  - How does this text construct a version of reality and knowledge? And what is left out of this story?
  - How does the text represent the reader (or viewer or listener) and set up a position for reading? And what other positions might there be for reading?
  - How does this text set up its authority and encourage your belief? And how might its authority be deconstructed and challenged, where its ethical stance is at odds with yours?
- (Morgan, 2004, p. 107).

Morgan (2004) also suggested a variety of approaches of “doing texts” under the banner of critical literacy. This involves, firstly, the purposeful selection of texts of common topic(s) but coming from different fields of disciplines, ideological perspectives, historical times and cultural locations. Through juxtaposing and analysing these neighbouring texts, teachers of critical literacy help students to understand the enactment of social relations and the establishment of identity. Secondly, critical literacy can also be carried out through the writing tasks of reconstructing textual meanings and social relations. Morgan listed a variety of activities, which may well be used (in my opinion) by traditional literacy approaches. The re-writing activities include changing the ending of a story, changing the narrative viewpoint or focalization, changing the gender of the characters, telling stories from another culture, or counter-narratives. The difference between traditional literacy approaches and critical literacy is the use of these activities “in the service of socio-political critique, to expose the consequences of particular forms of textual representation and construction” (Morgan, 2004, p. 109).

#### 2.2.7 Reflection, self-reflection and possible limitations of critical literacy

Mayes's empirical study suggested that high school teachers' attitudes towards critical literacy are not homogeneous (Mayes, 2004). The frontline teachers' attitudes mirror attitudes

represented in the media and academic literature. Teachers do not view critical literacy as binary but complementary to other approaches such as cultural heritage, and developmental and skills approaches (I discuss the common approaches of English teaching in the next section). Teachers are concerned about some aspects of critical literacy, which stops them from encouraging students to take social action inspired or informed by critical textual analysis. Teachers also tend to doubt if high school students are capable of dealing with the intellectual demands of critical literacy. They also worry about the potential downplay of the role of the aesthetic in literacy education (Mayes, 2004, p. 22). Mayes cited a teacher's concern about critical literacy's requirement for students to look at the text from different perspectives, which, according to the teacher, would be beyond the ability of almost any teenager. Epistemologically, teachers tend to believe that students need to first understand the texts before they can question it. That is, the language constituents should not be ignored in classroom teaching.

As a theorist and advocator of critical literacy, Morgan (2004) pointed to the epistemological weakness of critical literacy education in relation to the following concepts: emancipation, ideology, resistance, and human agency. Morgan tended to question the epistemological superiority that critical literacy claimed: if critical literacy means to free people from the ideological control embedded in the discourse, then is not critical literacy's position itself also bound by a certain ideology? If teachers claim they are right, then are students who see the world differently from the teachers wrong?

Morgan also considered the role of "submissive reading" which is "aesthetic reading" in language teaching in contrast to "resistant reading". My concern takes the discussion one step further: can resistance be resisted? This can be evident in students of non-dominant backgrounds: What if the students from non-English or low socio-economic backgrounds are keen to accept the values of the dominant class embedded in the texts and want to be integrated into the dominant social hierarchy? In this circumstance, the critical teachers and their critical stance can also constitute a dominant power in the school and literacy education can be envisaged as a field in which agents or participants contest over the access and distribution of the symbolic and material resources.

### **2.3 Language and literacy curriculum in Australia and beyond**

In the previous section, I have reviewed some social approaches of literacy theories, in

particular critical literacy. In this section, I turn to the curriculum studies of English language and literacy: How literacy studies and other social theories have impacted on curriculum design and change mainly in the Australian educational context. I will explore a series of curricular issues that have puzzled language and literacy curriculum specialists, the media and governments. These puzzles include aims and approaches of teaching language and literacy, institutional and bureaucratic constraints on language and literacy curriculum, boundary and identity of language and literacy as a school subject, as well as language, literacy and general competency. These issues are concerned with the essential pedagogic and curricular questions: What is a language and literacy subject? How to teach the subject? What to teach in that the subject? For what purposes? The rationale for bringing up these essential curricular questions here is to provide a comparative and contrastive framework from an international perspective for my study, reported in the next chapter, of the empirical language and literacy curriculum studies in the Chinese context.

### 2.3.1 Major approaches of language and literacy teaching in the Australian context

It is generally agreed that four approaches are most evident in Australian language and literacy (English) syllabus and classroom teaching, namely, language skills, cultural heritage, personal growth, and critical literacy approaches (Mayes, 2004; Sawyer, 2004, 2007). Dixon discussed the first three approaches in his seminal book *Growth Through English* (1975), identifying their characteristics as follows:

Skills approaches are mainly concerned with the drills of the language and literacy. They are more related to “initial literacy” and “basics”. Cultural heritage stresses the inheritance and passing on of the “high culture”. Personal growth focuses on re-examining the learning processes and the meaning for the individual student of what was covered in English lessons. It has been regarded as a revolutionary change for English curriculum. The key notion of the growth model or approach is the value of the student’s personal experience. Writing is regarded as an activity which shapes the student’s own experience or life. The personal growth model is inclined to take an integrated approach to the skills and to widen the range of the literature including students’ own work (Dixon, 1975; Sawyer, 2004, p. 23).

Dixon’s growth model was revolutionary in multiple senses. Firstly, it widened the scope of the literature. Dixon blamed the cultural heritage model for exclusively stressing “adult literature”, which turns language into a one-way process, while, in contrast, the growth

model's encouragement of the acceptance of pupils' work as embryonic literature carried important implications. It reminds us of the need to encourage each pupil "through making discoveries about himself and about people in general to make small steps towards maturity" (Dixon, 1975, p. 55).

Secondly, the growth model, as its title suggests, specifically advocates the role of life enhancement and life direction that is assigned to language and literacy teaching. Dixon stressed the values and emotional attitudes in literature and pointed out, "pupils can accept and reject; therefore, even as a spectator, the work will influence students' future appraisals of behaviour and feeling" (Dixon, 1975 p. 56).

Thirdly, the growth model has legitimated a wider sense of text types for language and literacy curriculum. Starting from advocating drama in the language class, which, Dixon believed "is the truest form of learning, for it puts knowledge and understanding to their test in action" (Dixon, 1972 p. 43). Dixon, therefore, suggested that the English curriculum should incorporate film and television, radio, and sound recording. The application of this model is evident in current language and literacy curricula in Australia and beyond.

According to Sawyer, the emphasis on language skills, grammar teaching and heavy literature dominated Australia's English teaching during the first half of the 20th century, and this tradition was not mainly directed by syllabuses but by the external examinations, textbooks and English teaching folklore (Sawyer, 2007, pp. 74-76). This tradition did not change until the 1970s when Dixon's growth model started to affect English teaching in the UK, the USA and Australia.

The four approaches are not oppositional to each other but are complementary at different levels; more emphasis may be placed on one or more particular approaches. For example, in the external exams leading to university entrance in NSW and Victoria, the English papers still feature a high percentage of reading and analysis of "classic texts" from Shakespeare's dramas to Hemingway's novels, although the prescribed text lists for senior high schools in Australia also include texts by authors of multi-cultural backgrounds or of a wider range of genres including film.

### 2.3.2 Institutional constraints – the effect of end of schooling examinations on the language and literacy curriculum

The role of the assessments and examinations, in particular, the external or exit examinations, in shaping or manipulating the operation of the language and literacy curriculum and classroom teaching is two-fold. On the one hand, states and governments all over the world mandate the national or official language as the compulsory subject for the exit and admission examinations, which ensures the institutional status of the subject. On the other hand, the examination as a means of differentiating and streaming students inevitably results in utilitarianism in the curriculum implementation, distorting or suppressing the creativity, imagination and critical thinking that were encouraged in the syllabus and accepted or embraced by teachers. As mentioned above, Brock (1983a, 1983b cited in Sawyer, 2007) argued that examinations, textbooks and teaching folklore are more powerful than the syllabus discourse in shaping the landscape of the language and literacy class. The teachers in the English world were acutely aware of this issue (Dixon, 1975). The dilemma of the push and pull force of the examinations also puzzle Chinese teachers as regards to senior high school subjects (see Chapter 7). My interview with classroom teachers in China also reinforced the hypothesis of the dominant role of the examinations in shaping and distorting the intended aims of the official curriculum.

### 2.3.3 Aims, boundary and identity – literacy, personal development and civic capacity

The aims, boundary and identity of language and literacy (in English) are debatable, and constructed and traded-off by social, political and professional forces. Hunter (1997) posited that the modern English classroom emerged neither as a specialised linguistic nor a literary environment. Mass literacy was seen as a basic civic capacity required by the citizens of a modern well-governed state (Hunter, 1997, p. 315).

Dixon admitted that the boundary and identity of English language and literacy as a school subject is elusive. In his seminal book *Growth through English*, Dixon even proposed that there is no content for language and literacy in English (Dixon, 1975). Nevertheless, for English and any other language enlisted as an official or national language for a school subject, the boundary must be drawn in order that teachers are able to implement the ideas presented in the syllabus. The different approaches that I reviewed above also suggest the domains of and proposed activities in the language and literacy classroom.

Hunter (1997) presented a seemingly simplistic but very useful description of what language and literacy class should do. According to Hunter, English should encompass three different

things: rhetoric, aesthetics and ethics. Rhetoric study, in a wide sense, can be viewed as language and literacy study in the traditional sense. Hunter's conceptualisation can be traced not only in the syllabus discourse but also in the question types in the end of schooling examinations, which, in most countries, are deemed as the practical guide for and end product of classroom teaching. For instance, in the end of school examination in the state of Victoria the subject English Standard comprises three sections: reading and response to a literary text, extended written task drawn from the prescribed texts and the use of language focusing on how language and visual images are used to present a view or persuade (VCAA, 2011).

Based on historical genealogical analysis, Hunter attributed the student-centred approach and Dixon's "personal development model" of English, which favoured the development of students' inner self and inwardness competence, to a combination of the Protestant tradition of pastoral care and the emergence of the modern state with its "administrative expertise, financial resources and political will to distribute the means of inwardness to entire national populations" (Dixon, 1975, p. 321). Drawing on Foucault's conception of governmentality, Hunter argued that modernising economies required an instrument to provide their populations with inner composure and outward skills to participate in the new economies, and the Protestant pastoral care was grafted into the language and literacy subject of the modern public schooling for the popular classes. Hunter further argued that the inculcation or cultivation of ethical judgement and inwardness competence is itself a skill imposed by the state for ethical self-management. Thus, language and literacy teachers play a two-faced role: a warm hearted pastoral carer and an impersonal bureaucrat in the modern schooling system. Based on his Foucauldian analysis above, Hunter went on to suggest that the personalist ethic model of language and literacy (English) should give way to a curriculum that more pragmatically focuses on the rhetorical study of the language rather than a subject encompassing things well beyond the range of the intellectual and moral qualifications of the teachers (p. 333).

There should be three major sub-sets of the subject of language and literacy under the title of English if we adopt Hunter's perception. These have been the focus of the fierce debate that has revolved around English as a school subject, namely:

Teaching literacy: The functional aspect of language and literacy education in mainstream education systems. The society and the popular press are concerned if the education system has provided an effective literacy (in the narrow sense: reading and writing skills) education

for the young generation. This constitutes the so-called “technological aspect” of language education.

Teaching literature: The literary or aesthetic aspect of language education. This is a long-standing issue concerning the English curriculum as well as the Chinese language and literacy curriculum as discussed in the previous chapter: how to view the role of literature in the language education. Should literature be viewed only as a type of language, as the systematic functional school proposed, or should literature be taught separately as the vehicle for passing on the cultural heritage and enhancing students’ aesthetic tastes and analytical skills? Should we teach ethics, politics, civics and cognitive skills through teaching literacy and literature? The puzzle is how to defend the boundary of language and literacy education if we believe that ethics, politics and cognition are not unique to a language and literacy subject. It is worth noting that in Australian Curriculum of English (F-10) implemented in 2014, literature is specifically stressed in the section of learning area. Teaching literature is believed to help students “expand the scope of their experience” and “support and challenge the development of individual identity.”(Australia Curriculum 2014).

### 2.3.4 Three subsets of language and literacy through three sets of relationships

My review and discussion of the boundary and identity of language and literacy education (mainly in the English speaking world) is centred on a range of participants involved in curriculum formation and implementation. There are three sets of relationships. The first and foremost is the macro-context of language and literacy teaching: the impact of social, political, educational and cultural change on language and literacy teaching, for example the expansion or change of the themes of the prescribed texts including the incorporation of multi-cultural authors. The second is the opinions of educational professionals versus those of the general public and wider community. The third is the power relations within the language and literacy classroom: that is, teachers as the medium of curriculum implementation who assume the role of passing on the values and cultural heritage of the language community versus students as youth and recipients of the values and knowledge and as potential rebels and critics of a given world.

#### *2.3.4.1 The macro-context of the language teaching on literacy and literature.*

The direct impact of the macro-context of the language teaching is the change of the texts and

themes. The texts are not confined to the great classical works, but extended to contemporary works including multi-cultural authors. For instance in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) syllabus in Victoria, not only Shakespeare and Dickens' works are valued in the prescribed text, but the narratives and experiences of authors with non-Anglo backgrounds, such as Amy Tan, are also valorised in an increasingly demographically and culturally diverse society (VCAA, 2011 and 2012).

Social, cultural and educational changes also expand the territory of literacy. Due to the ubiquitous existence of electronic visual images, e-media and the revolution of information technology, along with traditional inscriptions, the ability to access and use on-line information and critique as well as to produce visual images are all counted as literacy and classified as visual literacy and information literacy (Sawyer, 2007). In the English syllabus of NSW, viewing and representing are added to the traditional four skills or activities of listening, speaking, reading and writings (NSW syllabus). In the Australian Curriculum of English (F-10) implemented in 2014, "listening, reading and viewing" and "speaking, writing and creating" are included in the "communication processes" to address the traditional print texts as well as "visual" and "multimodal" texts (Australia Curriculum 2014 ).

#### *2.3.4.2 The difference between the professional opinions and public opinion or the mass media's biased opinions.*

The claims with respect to what literacy is by the English Teachers' Association of NSW in response to the cry of "literacy crisis" reflect the differences and conflict between the insider and outsider. We cannot ignore the agency of teachers of language and literacy in the negotiation of the boundary and identity of the school subject; that is, teachers of language and literacy are competing for higher prestige in the education field, therefore, the complexification and broadening of the subject would help them as well as the profession to gain higher social capital. This is evidenced in the NSW English teachers' claim that the English subject should not be reduced to literacy in the narrow sense and should involve more items in its teaching menu, such as thinking skills, aesthetic appreciation, and personal development (NSW English Teachers Association).

#### *2.3.4.3 The power relations within the language and literacy classroom*

Dixon's growth model, which was affected by a student-centred education philosophy,



expands the definition of literature to students' talk rather than the sterilised adult literature only model. The inclusion of popular culture and youth culture in the English language and literacy class stems from the development of and commitment to the growth model and a student-centred philosophy in this site (Doecke & McClenaghan, 2004). Doecke and McClenaghan (2004) argued that popular culture is not homogeneous and teenagers are not stereotypical mindless consumers who consume anything that is served up to them. Doecke and McClenaghan believed that discussing, debating and enjoying TV episodes, magazines or comic books help teenagers to negotiate meanings and tastes and to affirm their individual and collective identities. Nevertheless, Doecke and McClenaghan did not advocate that middle-aged teachers should catch up with the latest fashion wave; instead, they proposed that the teachers should lay the emphasis on "the processes of interpretation and discrimination in which students engage whenever they talk about their interests and enthusiasms" rather than prioritise particular texts, or genres of popular culture (p. 53).

The input of high culture and popular culture reflects a more democratic pedagogy and more balanced power relations in the language and literacy classroom (Doecke & McClenaghan, 2004), as the promotion of popular and youth culture in the English class actually challenges the dominant and hegemonic status of "great" texts. Doecke and McClenaghan argued that the merits of the "great" texts such as Henry Lawson's short stories should be valued and assessed in the classroom context and students should be placed in a position where they can articulate their tastes. The validity of students' perspectives on culture and society should also be recognized and considered in the curriculum (Doecke & McClenaghan, 2004). The two interesting case studies that they referred to underpin the idea that the topics and themes that are relevant to students would bridge school life and adolescent cultural life, thereby enhancing their linguistic and thinking skills. The use of the language and literacy subject to learn to identify issues, organize materials, formulate arguments and persuade the audience with a variety of rhetorical techniques is a trade-off between, or integration of, students' existing cultural knowledge and the traditional syllabus of imposed knowledge and skills.

Acknowledging the nature of resistance of young readers in the language and literacy classroom, which is based on students' general attitude of cynical contempt of schooling and the society, Doecke and McClenaghan (2004) called for the maintenance of the dialogue between the teachers and students. While teachers are delegates and representatives of authority, and the upholders of the rules and regulations, students are traditionally deemed as

the recipients of the knowledge, skills and rules of society. Affirmation of the students' intelligence and imagination and the provision of a space for students to articulate their experiences are sufficient justifications of the student-centred approach of the 21st century language and literacy classroom.

#### **2.4. Discussion and summary**

In this chapter, I have reviewed the major schools in literacy studies. The debates and differences on the nature of literacy are centred on the emphasis placed by the different camps, that is: the cognitive aspects versus social and cultural aspects of literacy. My personal view is that cognitive and social and cultural aspects are not and should not be in binary opposition but are complementary. The conflict and debate in the site have arisen from the implication and implementation of the theories in the educational practices and curriculum. There is no denying that the notion of literacy is socially and culturally constructed. Nonetheless, the teaching and learning of reading and writing involves a series of cognitive skills from perception and differentiation of writing scripts at the early primary level to genre and textual analysis at the senior high school level, although the sequence of the acquisition may not be as crystal clear as some curricula suggest. But at any given moment, the opposing values and relations such as personal emancipation vs. state interest, personal development vs. social skilling, and critical education vs. vocational education, should be harmonized and reconciled at the level of pedagogical and social administration (Hunter, 1997).

Politics play different roles in different social and cultural contexts. For instance, instrumentalism in the literacy debate has been accused of aligning with conservative education policy by ignoring or downplaying the social or cultural nature of literacy in response to the recurring cries of literacy crisis in Western countries( Street,1984, Thomson 2004) In this sense, there is political conflict between the radical, progressive camp and the conservative camp. In China, instrumentalism has been invoked by the educationalists engaged in literacy teaching and research as a tool of resistance to the state's authoritative interference in text selection and ideological inculcation (see Chapters 3 and 4).

The boundaries and priorities of English/literacy are also culturally and socially specific. For instance, influenced by cultural studies approaches, gender and race issues are particularly significant in the increasingly diversified societies in Western countries such as the USA,

Australia and the UK (Sawyer, 2007, Dixon 2012). By contrast, in China more recently, the most significant words underpinning the syllabuses have been patriotism, national pride, persistency, and *Suzhi* (qualities of the literate subject and civic capacities).

There are, of course, overlaps between Western and Chinese language and literacy education in terms of the aims, content and identity. Teachers of language and literacy as a social group whether in Western countries or in China all intend to extend the content and territory of their teaching. As indicated in the NSW English Teachers Association's claim, to teach English is not to teach literacy (in the narrow sense) only, but to teach literature, aesthetics, thinking, and, more importantly, to support the growth of young people.

The different approaches and teaching models have different significances in different contexts. For example, the growth model discussed above is open to interpretation depending on the various socio-political environments. Dixon's growth approach, underpinned by a student-centred philosophy, emphasises the respect for the development of young people's inner world and their perceptions and representations of the world. In practice, this approach can be translated into pedagogy in literacy teaching that acknowledges youth culture and popular culture and encourages students to bring their own experience into the classroom in writing.

The growth model can also be a top-down process of socialisation in language and literacy education, with the dominant values of ethics, morality, model behaviours and preferred manners being inculcated through textual practices. Hunter (1997), among other critics of the growth model, suggested that it is not fair to "accord an intrinsic ethical or political privilege to the personal growth focus of modern English as if this were inherently more democratic, critical or human than the focus on civic participation characteristic of the rhetorical tradition" (p. 327). Hunter's argument is based on the presumption that the tradition of reading of literary texts as a means of enhancing students' inwardness competence and ethical judgment is itself part of governmental technologies in modern states. That is, the capacities of aesthetic appreciation and ethical formation are also delivered as skills and competence in self-management imposed by states.

In the Chinese context, the emerging discourse of *Suzhi* (personal quality or competence) in language and literacy education provides a telling example of how literacy education is integrated with expectations beyond the skill model (see Chapter 5 for syllabus analysis). In

general, an eclectic tendency emerges in both in China and Western countries, that is, a more balanced or compromised “menu” of the first language education embodied in the official syllabus. In China, the dominant “instrumentalism” discourse in *Yuwen* education was replaced by the blend of “instrumentalism and humanism” in the most recent Curriculum Standards published in 2003. Literature education is no longer regarded only as a particular genre or text to help language and literacy learning, but indispensable component of *Yuwen* education for its aesthetic and humanistic value. In Australia, the National curriculum of English (F-10) implemented in 2014, “appreciation of literature” is also listed along with “literacy”, “English language” as key components of learning area, this synthesis was fully acknowledged during the consultation and formation process as reported by Dixon (2012) as the lead writer of the National Curriculum of English: “English is built around the three interrelated ‘strand’ or ‘element’ of language, literature and literacy.”(p.21).

To conclude, the review of the literacy theories and the curricula of language and literacy in the English world provided a framework of reference and perspective for comparison and contrast with the language and literacy curriculum in China. In the following chapters, I analyse China’s approaches and definitions of the subject of language and literacy, the social, political and cultural aspects of the curriculum, textbook formation and text selection, and how the teachers as a professional group respond to the curriculum changes.

## Chapter 3: Major Debates on *Yuwen* Education in China after 1949

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review a body of literature that has had a major impact on shaping the identity and developmental directions of the *Yuwen* subject in Mainland China since the foundation of the PRC. The major debates, including those on *Yuwen*'s instrumentalist (functionalist) nature versus its humanist nature, which are still occurring in the 21st century, centre on issues such as the relationship between *Yuwen* and the ever-changing ideologies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Such debates and the subsequent compromises are eventually absorbed into the sanctioned or official version (Apple 1993) of a national curriculum, including the designated textbooks and syllabuses.

The focus of this chapter is to trace and analyse the evolution of the *Yuwen* curriculum from the top-down political manoeuvres to the pursuit of subject autonomy and the extension of the domain of *Yuwen* and, finally, its relation to the character formation of students. The contextual analysis of the *Yuwen* syllabus, the textbooks and the teaching practice in high schools are reported in three later chapters.

This chapter is organised into the following sections. First, I review journal and newspaper articles on the relationship between *Yuwen* and politics. Then, I present the prevalent instrumentalist arguments put forward by the founder of the modern *Yuwen* subject, Ye Shengtao (叶圣陶) and his followers. I argue that the instrumentalist view of *Yuwen* education can, on the one hand, be criticised as a reductionist view of the role of *Yuwen* as purely functional and neutral. That is, the learning process is reduced to the acquisition of reading and writing skills. On the other hand, the instrumentalist view could be interpreted as a resistance against top-down political interference with the content as well as the teaching approach of *Yuwen*. Instrumentalism intends to protect *Yuwen* as an independent school subject. A review follows of the major approach that is opposed to instrumentalism: humanism. I believe that the emergence of the humanist approach is a counter-balance to instrumentalism's long-lasting dominance in the subject area. Lastly, I review the recent debates over the nature of the *Yuwen* subject including the "*Yuwen* for life" slogan and the relevant pedagogical approaches, which are advocated mainly by frontline teachers. This literature functioned as the research background for the analyses of the *Yuwen* syllabuses, textbooks and teaching practices that are recorded in the later chapters of this thesis.

## 3.2 Control and resistance in *Yuwen* education

### 3.2.1 Control

The concept of control is informed by Ji's (2004) work on the party-state's pervasive linguistic control of almost every corner of the social and political life culminating in the Cultural Revolution era (1966-1976). Ji used the term "linguistic engineering" to refer to a systematic control of the language use in order to realize Mao and the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) ideological inculcation and specific political agendas. The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) control of language, culture and education has been prevalent and strict from the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) (Ji 2004). This is very much the case in *Yuwen* education in China. The CCP's control over the *Yuwen* curriculum can be analysed from three aspects, namely, the control of text, the control of institutions including textbook sanction and publication mechanisms, and control through examinations.

*Text control:* the CCP's first layer of control of *Yuwen* education is "text control". This has been evidenced by its ideological inculcation mainly through:

- Releasing and updating the *Yuwen* syllabus that defines the nature and guides the direction of the subject;
- Text selection of the prescribed national or regional textbooks to implement the syllabus designers' ideas.

As I demonstrate in the syllabus analysis in Chapter 5, such key words as Marxism and Maoism (Mao Zedong thought) have occupied the front pages of the syllabus documents of different versions through to the 21st century. The most recent *Yuwen* syllabus versions, like the 2010 Curriculum Standards, the new name for syllabus, play down Marxism as a guiding ideology. However, the change itself matches the CCP's more utilitarian economic-centred direction initiated by China's post-Mao era leader Deng Xiaoping.

Text control is most visible in the dominance of texts in line with the CCP's current ideologies and in the way only official interpretations of Chinese histories have been compiled into the prescribed textbooks. For example, *Yuwen* textbooks sanctioned and released after 1949 featured a large portion of texts extolling the revolutionary histories of the

CCP through the CCP's heroes and leaders. The control of text in the textbooks reflects the textbook compilers' political consideration in terms of authors, themes, characters and other features of the selected texts, which I analyse in more detail in Chapter 6.

*Institutional control:* The second layer of control is through the centralisation and monopolisation of textbook compilation and publication. While the late Qing and the KMT (Kuomintang, the Chinese Nationalist Party) regimes aimed to take over textbook compilation and publication through the Commercial Press (*Shang wu yin shu guan* 商务印书馆) which was established in Shanghai in 1897. Neither regime fully succeeded for the historical reasons alluded to in Chapter 1. By contrast, the PRC's strong state power and its intention to control culture and education since its foundation made centralisation of school knowledge production possible.

The People's Education Press (PEP), which was founded right after the CCP took over power in Mainland China in 1949, is the embodiment of the power of the PRC over education. It is a subordinate organisation of the State Ministry of Education (MOE) in Beijing with its head office only blocks away from Zhongnanhai (中南海), the office compound of the Chinese Central Government (The State Council) and the CCP's headquarters. The PEP used to monopolise the compilation, publication and distribution of the nation's school textbook, a situation which did not change significantly until the late 1990s, when some provinces in China were allowed to publish their own textbooks.

*Control through examination:* In addition to the central command by the party-state of the syllabus, the textbooks and the publishing houses as mentioned above, the institutional and systematic control of examination has proved to be even more effective, in particular, the entrance examinations of all levels: from junior high school to *Gaokao* (高考 the University Entrance Examination), the latter being of national significance. This kind of control is particularly effective in East Asian countries and regions like China and Korea whose cultures historically attach great importance to examinations as an honoured means of social upward mobility (Sung & Apple, 2003).

There are both historical and contemporary explanations for the Chinese people's zeal for, or obsession with, examinations that facilitate the top-down control of the curriculum. As suggested by Ho (1962), in Ming and Qing's imperial China, the opportunities for social

mobility were greater than in Western countries at the same period. The imperial examination, referred to as *Keju* (科举, civil service examination), provided an avenue of upward mobility for poor but capable people. The Confucian belief that social status should be decided by an individual's merits and virtues was the drive behind the competitive imperial examination (Ho, 1962). Ho also argued that the so-called fixed status of the gentry group was not true. Supported by the clan's inheritance or even by the government, poor scholars were able to secure free education to some degree. In contrast, due to a continuous lavish lifestyle and failure in the imperial examinations, some prominent families could sink in a few generations (Ho, 1962). Based on Ho's study, I would argue that it is the egalitarianism embedded in the imperial examination that has passed on to become the trust in and obsession with examinations, in particular *Gaokao*, of modern Chinese people.

The centralised *Gaokao* has been likened to the *Keju* examination not only by common people, but also by some scholars such as Bao (2010), though, since the 1990s, *Gaokao* has been decentralised to the provincial levels in many parts of China. Its function of channelling and streaming students' educational and vocational prospects in contemporary China is still honoured by parents, educationalists and students. It is also widely acknowledged that *Gaokao* is so far the fairest way of facilitating upward mobility for students of lower socio-economic background, although some recent reforms of *Gaokao* have incurred criticism for endangering that fairness. For instance, in recent years, Liaoning Province awarded bonus points to students with a certain level of sports achievements and abilities. This initiative caused parents to demonstrate in protest in front of the Department of Education of Liaoning Province when it was revealed by the media that some sports credentials were manipulated or faked (Luan, Xu et al. 2014).

*Yuwen Gaokao* (University Entrance Examination for *Yuwen*) in China has a unique status. *Yuwen Gaokao* is inevitably likened to the form and content of *Keju* regarding literary accomplishments, writing skills and interpretation of official or "correct" ideology. Popular understanding of *Yuwen Gaokao* is as the continuity and expansion of *Keju* from the Sui Dynasty (581-619) to modern times, as the *Keju* examination was mainly concerned with literary writing (poems and verses) and writing of argumentative essays on governing and administration using Confucian doctrines and ideologies (Bao 2010). Academics have also linked *Yuwen Gaokao* and *Keju*. Yi (2006) advocated conducting more comparative studies of *Yuwen Gaokao* and *Keju*, pointing out that the modern *Yuwen* test could be compared with



*Keju*'s design in setting questions, in particular the set argumentative essay writing (*Baguwen*, 八股文). Zhang (2007) demonstrated the comparability and continuity of *Keju* and *Yuwen*, but also analysed the negative impact of *Keju* on *Yuwen*. Sun Shaozhen, a poet, professor of literature, and the chief editor of the MOE-nominated experimental textbook, went to extremes in his suggestion in the media that *Yuwen* in *Gaokao* should test nothing but essay writing to assimilate the *Keju*'s form (Min, 2007). Although Sun's perception of *Keju* was considered to be biased and ill thought out by Bao (2010), his and other scholars' views about the link between the *Yuwen* exam and *Keju* are very common.

*Yuwen Gaokao* also has the reputation of attracting the attention of the larger society. The topic of the essay set in *Yuwen Gaokao* each year becomes a hot item in the media right after the exam finishes. The best essays written by the candidates are also recommended by the markers of the exam and published in the local newspapers. This constitutes a second wave of discussion. No other examination subject enjoys such attention.

*Yuwen Gaokao* has undergone a few phases in terms of its content and form (Liu 2010) but essay writing always occupies the biggest weight of the paper, ranging from 30% to 50%. In addition to the writing of an essay, which normally occurs at the end of the paper, there have been such question types as reading comprehension (modern and classic texts), giving phonetic symbols for certain characters, literary knowledge (about authors and works) and writing out classic texts and poetry from memory. The content and form has varied with the shift of academic fashions. For instance, Liu (2010) observed that the 1990s saw the introduction and acceptance of objective or factual test questions such as multiple choice questions. This was influenced by the fashion of standard testing at the time. The weight for literacy and literature knowledge accounted for around 33-40% in the exam papers of the 1990s, while the proportion for literacy and literature knowledge dropped to 15% from 1999 to 2000 with the specific requirement for more open questions in the examination preparation guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education (MOE) (Liu, 2010).

In general, the section on non-essay writing reflects, to a greater extent, top-down knowledge control. Academic fashions and preferences at higher levels decide the teaching and learning in the high schools. For instance, when grammar rules are highlighted, grammar is tested in *Gaokao*. Otherwise, grammar is only regarded as the pragmatic use of the language and no specific grammar knowledge is tested. It should also be noted that in periods when the

textbook is linked to the exam and the texts in the textbooks are tested, then textbooks are respected and studied more closely in the schools. However, my field work data also suggest that students and teachers are confused about the relationship between the *Yuwen Gaokao* and the textbooks so they don't take the textbook seriously, as currently (as at 2013) the examination setters deliberately de-link the compulsory textbooks and the examination questions (see Chapter 6).

The essay or composition writing section in *Yuwen Gaokao*, thus, constitutes a culturally and politically important strategic site that provides a platform for the state to articulate and inculcate the dominant ideology, values and intended knowledge. The most obvious way to realise this function is through control, by setting the titles and themes of the essay that accounts (as of 2013) for around 40% of the total mark of the *Yuwen* exam paper. In most provinces, like Jiangsu, the total mark for *Yuwen* is 150, while the essay accounts for 60 of the 150 marks.

The titles and requirements of *Gaokao Yuwen*'s essays from 1951-2012 have been investigated by Sun (2013). Sun (2013) argued that the orientation of the *Gaokao* composition is effectively controlled by the state: the titles and questions are specifically designed by experts appointed by the state in order to underpin and perpetuate the state's dominant ideology. The titles of *Gaokao* compositions that Sun (2013, pp. 65-72) collected from 1951-1965 closely followed and served the prevailing political conditions. Promotion of loyalty to the nation and the Communist Party, admiration of revolutionary leaders and the advocacy of virtues pertaining to diligent, unselfish, dedicated new citizens were overtly manifested in the composition's question design. For instance, the 1952 composition question was a narrative writing about one of the topics of choice: "I embrace my motherland" (*Wo touru zuguo de huaiba*, 我投到祖国的怀抱) or "Anecdotes about a person that I know well" (*Ji yige wo shuxi de ren*, 记一个我熟悉的人). The 1958 and 1960 compositions were both related to the concurrent Great Leap Forward movement initiated by CCP and Mao. The 1958 titles were: "On hearing the announcement of the general line of socialism development" (*Dang shehuizhiyi zongluxian gongbu de shihou*, 当社会主义总路线公布的时候) or "An exciting event during the Great Leap Forward Movement" (*Dayuejin zhong jidong renxin de yijian shi*, 大跃进中激动人心的一件事). The last *Gaokao* before the Cultural Revolution was held in 1965 after which the formal selective entrance examination for high school graduates was abolished for ten years (1966-1976). The topics in 1965 were: "On revolution

and study” (*Tan geming yu xuexi*, 谈革命与学习) and “A Letter for the Vietnamese People” (*Gei yuenan renmin de yifeng xin*, 给越南人民的一封信). Obviously, the composition on the first topic was meant to interpret Mao’s guide to the relationship between the fostering of revolutionary ideology and the development of expertise and academic competence; the composition on the second topic was meant to be an endorsement of China’s involvement in the Vietnam War and Mao’s anti-imperialism foreign policy.

The state also imposes and advocates values and ideology through setting essay questions and rewarding the candidates whose writings conform to the marking criteria. Furthermore, the state and its appointed markers punish those who challenge the promoted ethics, ideology or the examination itself. Sun’s (2013) data included the model essays that were given full marks and the essays that were marked zero in the *Gaokao* of recent years. The former were normally published in the newspapers for emulation, and the latter normally appeared in the Internet leaked by “insiders.” Sun asserted that giving zero to the essays is more a symbolic signal, because these essays went beyond the tolerance zone of the state, not for their writing skills (actually some of the zero-mark essays were quite talented), but because of the rebellious attitudes expressed in the essay. Even the most talented and insightful candidates would make sure to convey political correctness and respectful attitudes to the education system and the markers, and not risk their educational future by jumping out of the straitjacket and expressing their opinions freely in their writing in *Gaokao*.

The impact of *Gaokao* is still powerful, so the forms and content of the *Gaokao* questions have changed the nature of *Yuwen* significantly. It is widely acknowledged that the *Gaokao* questions herald a change in teaching content and methods in high schools as well as the status and usage of textbooks. Lai (1995) reported, in the late 1980s and early 1990s the senior high school’s entrance examinations in general kept in line with the textbooks, although the consistency varied over cities using the same PEP textbook. The teachers surveyed by Lai (1995) claimed that the selected texts in the textbook were tested and the students and teachers could see the link between the textbooks and the examination. Frontline teachers tend to explore the link between the textbooks and the examination and recently published teachers’ reports and my fieldwork data suggest that textbooks are no longer perceived to be as important as before. Instead, the examination guidelines issued by the provincial education administration are more highly valued by teachers. The data also suggest that there has been a change in questions, demonstrating the de-politicisation of the *Yuwen*

*Gaokao*, which has shifted its focus from political dominance to moral and skills control. The impact of this on high school teaching is enormous. Teaching *Yuwen* specifically directed towards *Gaokao* has been widely blamed for the “instrumentalisation” of the subject ignoring students’ full development. The obsession with *Gaokao Yuwen* constituted one of the major concerns in my fieldwork.

### 3.2.2 Resistance

The resistance from within the language and literacy education community has always been tenacious at the different stages of the development of the curriculum, so compromise or accord had to be reached depending on the changes and permutations of the CCP’s policies. The most noticeable resistance was evidenced in the debate over the relationship between *Yuwen* and politics from the late 1950s to the early 1960s. *Yuwen* educationalists have not been happy with the relegation of *Yuwen* as a subsidiary of political education.

Always confined by the macro-political environment, in Mao’s regime the effort to claim and justify the independence and autonomy of *Yuwen* as a school subject had to be elaborated in the context of dominant Marxist and Maoist discourse. The 1961 article “Opposing the transformation of the *Yuwen* class into a political education class” (*Fandui ba Yuwenke jiaocheng zhengzhike*, 反对把语文课教成政治课) by Luo Han, the pseudonym of the vice chief editor of the People’s Education Press, published in the journal *People’s Education*, is most representative. As the title of his article indicates, Luo Han was strongly against the practice of teaching text in the *Yuwen* class for the purpose of ideological inculcation. He cited a few cases where *Yuwen* teachers were concentrating on the context or background of the selected texts at the expense of training the basic reading or writing skills. He believed that this kind of practice was very prevalent at that time. For example, when teaching Stalin’s speech “On the Death of Lenin”, a translated version of which remained in the *Yuwen* textbook until the 1980s, Luo observed that many teachers spent too much time recounting the biography of Lenin as well as the history of the Second International, leaving too little time for exploring the text itself. Luo went on to argue that *Yuwen* education cannot be equated with political education; instead, *Yuwen* should concentrate on the basic skills of reading and writing. Although Luo Han’s argument was straightforward and his voice firm, interestingly, his rationale was still based on the political guidance of the CCP. That is, although he challenged the practice of sidelining language and literacy skills in favour of

political education in the *Yuwen* course, his argument and his discourse were unable to step out of Marxism and Maoism's restrictions. He conceded that every subject should serve the proletarian political agenda, *Yuwen* being no exception. However, to better serve the proletarian political aims and better understand Marxism and Maoism, one must also acquire sufficient skills. For *Yuwen*, such reading and writing skills are essential. He also cited the words of a Marxist writer to endorse his argument to "go to basics" – a call for *Yuwen* to re-focus on the basic reading and writing skills.

The clash between *Yuwen* and political education is echoed in a less confrontational but more traditional discourse: the division of *Wen* (文 literacy or language) and *Dao* (道 moral, ethic, principium or value). The renewed debate over *Wen* and *Dao* was sparked by an article in 1959: "Wen and Dao – My opinion on the aims and tasks of *Yuwen* education" by a high school teacher Liu Peikun in Shanghai (Liu 1959). The article was published in the *Wenhui Bao* (Wenhui Daily), whose readership was mainly the intellectual circle. Citing the well-known essay *On the Teacher* (*Shi shuo* 师说) by Han Yu (768-824), the Tang Dynasty essayist, which identified the entangled *Wen* and *Dao* relationship, Liu argued that *Dao* in the new context is political and moral education, while *Wen* is literacy and literature cultivation. He believed that consequently *Wen* should provide the basic reading and writing skills and the nurture of literature that are the core content of *Yuwen*, and only after mastering these and acquiring literary attainment can political education and moral development be achieved more efficiently and effectively.

The debate over *Wen* and *Dao* is a reflection of the oscillation of the CCP's education policy in the bigger political context. The call for a refocus on the quality of literacy education and rectification of the over-emphasis on the political and moral interpretation of texts can be understood as a concerted campaign to correct the implications of "the Great Leap Forward" (GLF). The CCP and Mao's all-encompassing industrialisation campaign proved to be too ambitious and radical given China's economic and technological level at the time. The GLF was also alleged to have caused the great famine in China during 1958-1961. The GLF had a great impact on education including *Yuwen* education. Li and Gu ((Li and Gu 2000) listed "four sins" of *Yuwen* education during the Great Leap Forward period:

- The text selections were manipulated to accord with the political tenets and GLF ethos;
- Delivery of the texts became a political campaign and political education;

- The prevalent pompous and showy writing style echoed GLF's ethos;
- Failure of the anti-illiteracy campaign.

In 1958, the Ministry of Education submitted a report to the CCP's central committee requesting it to pay attention and take action to address the decrease in the quality of language and literacy education in primary and secondary schools (Li & Gu, 2000, p. 302). The CCP's education working conference held in 1959 specifically instructed the local education administrations to choose *Yuwen* as the key subject to enhance teaching quality. This is the macro-context of the "Going to basics or resuming quality of literacy" movement protesting against over-emphasis on political content in the literacy subject.

Liu Pei Kun's article was accompanied by a newspaper editor's commentary, with the direction of the debate channelled by the *Wenhui Daily* (Wenhui Bao, 文汇报). Those who favoured *Wen* over *Dao* included influential intellectuals, the most significant being Chen Wangdao (陈望道), the first Chinese translator of the *Communist Manifesto* and the founder of modern Chinese rhetoric. At a seminar of *Yuwen* educationalists in Nanjing in 1961 Chen argued (Chen 1989) firmly that the CCP's ethos is to seek truth based on the facts and reality and that we should follow Marxism and Leninism without always needing to cite Marx or Lenin's words. According to Chen, *Yuwen* is *Yuwen*; the first priority of teaching *Yuwen* is to teach *Wen*, the language, and to acknowledge its alignment with Marxism and the CCP's policy and ideological basis. The Vice Minister of Education Lin Liru also became involved in the debate in the form of an interview with the newspaper and expressed his "personal" point of view by criticising the trend of overemphasising the "political content" at the cost of language teaching (Gu & Li, 2000).

The debate over *Wen* and *Dao* was summarised in an official editorial commentary in 1961 that aimed to conclude another campaign initiated by the *Wenhui Daily* on how to improve or deliver quality literacy education. The impact of this article on the teaching and learning of *Yuwen* was far-reaching (Gu & Li 2000, p. 236). In this editorial, the author applied the strategy of self-protection by conceding that language and literacy is meant to serve a political aim. At the time of the writing, the ultimate aim of the CCP and China was to turn China into a modern socialist country. The author further argued that to realise this goal, the youth and the whole society are obliged to improve their literacy in order to be literate in science and technology. In this sense, according to the author, to deliver a quality class by a

*Yuwen* teacher is to contribute significantly to the “glorious” socialist project. In sum, enhancing the quality and re-focusing on basics (basic knowledge, basic language skills) were the central themes and thrust of the article and as well as of the newspaper.

The CCP’s political control and domination has been ubiquitous. The debate regarding political (ideological) education versus literacy quality, together with the call for going back to basics are reflections of the resistance of teachers, educationalist, and linguists involved in language and literacy education. An understanding of the resistance should be placed in the macro-context of China’s experience of educational re-adjustment in the wake of the failure of radical educational reform as well as the failure of the *Yuwen* pedagogical experiment during the Great Leap Forward movement starting from 1958. The debate also created a discursive space for syllabus and curriculum design, especially regarding the nature and aims of *Yuwen* and the relationship between *Yuwen* and the state’s dominant ideology and political agenda.

### **3.3 Instrumentalism (functionalism)**

As discussed above, the debate on the contradiction of *Yuwen* and politics has to be relegated to the CCP’s ideological box: even those who argue that literacy or reading and writing skills are the key or core component of the *Yuwen* subject still concede that literacy is meant to serve politics. Nevertheless, the tradition of seeking autonomy or relative independence for the *Yuwen* subject can be traced a long way back to the instrumentalist or functionalist argument proposed by the founder of *Yuwen* as a modern school subject, Ye Shengtao (叶圣陶).

As early as 1942, Ye Shengtao proposed the instrumentalist argument. In his preface to Ye’s collection of *Yuwen* education essays, Lü Shuxiang (吕叔湘) (1980), one of the most eminent linguists in China, commented, “looking through all Ye Shengtao’s *Yuwen* education thought, one of the two most important influential and consistent ideas is the instrumental argument, that is, *Yuwen* is an instrument, an indispensable instrument for life” (Ye, 1980, as cited in Ma, 2007).

Ye blamed the old education in imperial times for producing only “living bookcases”, eloquent “human parrots” and all kinds of “officials” of different levels and teachers of

Confucian doctrines, but never being able to produce ordinary citizens who can use the language and literacy to cope with everyday life. He went on to argue, “language is a kind of tool; at each individual level, it is a tool of thinking, a tool of expressing one’s thinking... at the inter-personal level, it is a tool of communication.” He emphasised, “language is a tool, this is the foundation of *Yuwen* education, and this is a pre-condition for conducting and improving *Yuwen* education” (Ye, 1980, as cited in Ma, 2007).

Ye’s instrumentalist argument had a long-lasting impact on *Yuwen* education in China. This school of thinking has been utilised to resist the pervasive encroachment of CCP’s political domination and ideological control. The instrumentalist discourse has been significantly evident in the above-mentioned debate over politics and *Yuwen* education and evidenced in the major syllabus documents well into the 21st century. More detailed discussions can be found in Chapter 4 regarding the evolution from 1978 of syllabus documents.

Instrumentalist thinking can be interpreted as a strategy of self-protection from the encroachment of party-politics and an attempt to defend language and literacy education’s territory. However, the resistance itself became a new kind of domination in the field: the domination of experts, particularly given Ye’s status in *Yuwen* education and the official post he held as Vice Minister of MOE, director and chief editor of PEP after 1949 and as a famous realist writer after the 1920s.

The instrumentalist argument has obvious drawbacks, and it incurred criticism from theorists as well as practitioners. The biggest issue with this approach is the fossilisation of teaching practice with its overemphasis on skills and technologies at the cost of the mental, cultural and spiritual development of students. Guo (1999) attributed the fossilisation of *Yuwen* teaching to the domination of linguistics in *Yuwen* education in the past decades. He believed that traditional literacy education is holistic literacy, integrating culture, literature and philosophy with literacy, while the linguistic approach reduces *Yuwen* education to a fast-track training based on linguistic formulae rather than extensive reading and accumulation of, and immersion in, culture; the latter, according to the author, is the distinctive feature of traditional literacy education.

The technologisation of *Yuwen* education is another target for castigation by some scholars. Wang Shangwen, a professor at Zhejiang Normal University, is regarded as one of the representative figures in the camp attacking the instrumentalist approach. Wang (1997)



stressed the role of the mother tongue in the personal development of students, citing Ernst Cassirer's assertion that the human being's conceptions, intuition and perception are inseparable from the words and language forms of the mother tongue. Wang viewed instrumentalism as objectifying the language or mother tongue. Instead, he advocated a *Yuwen* of humanism with "soul", "heart" and "mind" rather than of an instrument, a formula and a pattern. In this article, Wang also blamed the approach of proliferating the teaching and learning instruments, that is, the myriad reference and exercise books designed to assist students to cope with the questions in the examinations. Wang's criticism of the "examination oriented" *Yuwen* education echoed the unprecedented attack on *Yuwen* education from the wider society in the 1990s.

Unlike the debate in the professional *Yuwen* or educationalist circles, the criticism was mainly from "outsiders", in particular, writers. The debate that took place in the wider society was initiated by the writer Hong Yuping's article published in *Beijing Literature* with a dramatic title totally negating the value of *Yuwen* education in China (Hong, 1998). A famous writer and former Minister of Culture, Wang Meng (王蒙), also contributed to the discussion. Ironically, Wang found that he could not complete the *Yuwen* homework for his grandson and that the compilers of the *Yuwen* textbook who had selected one of his essays had totally misunderstood what he had tried to express in the text.

Han Jun is a prestigious *Yuwen* teacher in Beijing who was also actively involved in the debate over the nature of the *Yuwen* subject. Han (1993) ambitiously attempted to pinpoint ten deviations of *Yuwen* education in China, of which two are worth mentioning here as they had impact on the later curriculum and syllabus changes. The first deviation concerns the relationship between the linguistic approach and the literature approach in *Yuwen*. He believed that the linguistic approach has too long been dominant with the consequence of the instrumentalist or utilitarian orientation of the subject, while he himself favoured literature and believed that literature is the highest form of language use. The second deviation is related to the first: the preference for the technical side of *Yuwen* over the "soul" and "spirit" dimension.

Again, discontent with the instrumentalist approach and thinking nurtured the humanist approach in *Yuwen* education, although the boundary of this is yet to be clearly defined. What is consensual is that the emergence of the humanist approach should balance the domination

of instrumentalism and should aim to rectify any unexpected consequences in pedagogical practice, which include over-technologisation and examination-oriented pedagogy. Such consequences not only provoked reflection from insiders such as Han Jun and Wang Shangwen but also invited criticism from outsiders such as writers and social critics, who believed that they are equally entitled to have their say in the development of the curriculum and that they are also stakeholders of this subject.

### **3.4 Humanism**

The humanist approach does not constitute a homogenous camp. As mentioned above, humanism emerged in the context of growing discontent with the ossification and technologisation of *Yuwen* education attributed to the instrumentalist approach. The first person who raised the opposition between humanity and science in *Yuwen* education was a curriculum researcher and senior teacher in Shanghai, Chen Zhongliang. Chen (1987) published a journal article titled, “Is it a humanity or a science?”. This article attracted wide attention in the circle of *Yuwen* education. This was the first time that the dominance of the instrumentalist approach was cautiously questioned if not criticised. The author took a fairly eclectic stance and suggested that the old generation of *Yuwen* teachers who were immersed in traditional literature and literacy training should attempt to embrace modern and scientific methods. At the same time, he also proposed a humanist spirit for *Yuwen* education. In his words, *Yuwen* ideally should be a scientific art and an artistic science. Chen’s article did not provide further theoretical depth for *Yuwen* education, his thinking and language being inspired by the debate between the scientific nature and the humanistic nature of linguistics in China by a young linguist, Shen Xiaolong (1987). Chen should be credited with borrowing humanism or the humanist discourse and applying it to *Yuwen* education, thereby opening a discursive space for literacy study.

The pro-humanist approach argues that the nature of mother tongue or literacy education is humanity. Followers of this approach are strongly against the word “tool” or “instrument” being employed to characterise the nature of *Yuwen*. Han (1993) took a more radical stance in advocating humanism in *Yuwen* education. He asserted that the failure of *Yuwen* education for the past decades should be attributed to the prevalence of scientism and the absence of humanism. Han (1993) also complained that linguistics had been too involved in *Yuwen* education and had resulted in *Yuwen* education incurring criticism from the wider society.

The emerging accusations of scientism never convinced the instrumentalism camp. One of the three leading figures upholding the instrumentalist approach, the linguist and publisher, Zhang Zhigong (张志功) (1996) argued that it is not fair to say that *Yuwen* has fallen into scientism. What is blamed for being scientism, according to Zhang, is actually not scientific; rather, they are elements that are experiential and intuitive in nature. *Yuwen* education needs a scientific spirit and scientific research methods to enhance its efficiency.<sup>iii</sup>

The binary opposition of instrumentalism and humanism, the attempts at reconciling this opposition, and the ramification of the issues were also evident in the debate between instrumental literacy and literature teaching in *Yuwen* education. The 1950s was a time when literature was separated from language as high school subjects (Institute, 2001). Then literature was incorporated into *Yuwen* again. This resulted in confusion about the status of literature in the *Yuwen* subject: should literary works be marked as literature and taught differently, if not separately, or be perceived simply as other genres of language? The essentialists of the instrumentalist camp argued that *Yuwen* incorporates a literature element but the *Yuwen* subject is not literature; *Yuwen* only teaches language used in different contexts and presented in different forms. It is the language forms, not the content, such as plot, aesthetics or emotions presented in the texts, which are the objectives of teaching (Han 1961).

Humanism has easily found sympathisers and supporters in the long oppressed literature advocates in *Yuwen* education. They believe that values, aesthetics and criticism are best embodied in literary works and the teaching of literary text, but these qualities and characteristics have been purposely downplayed or avoided in the instrumentalist approach. The emergence of the humanist approach extends the territory of *Yuwen* education and expands the aims and objectives of *Yuwen* education. Emotions, aesthetics and character formation (*Suzhi Jiaoyu* 素质教育) have all been included in the *Yuwen* education syllabus since the early 21st century (a detailed discussion of syllabus evolution appears in Chapter 5).

Both instrumentalist and humanist approaches have been established in the official syllabus and then in the curriculum standards since the late 1990s. However, frontline teachers never stop exploring the meaning and nature of their profession. A new thread of thinking emerged

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<sup>iii</sup> The other two doyens are Ye Shengtao and Lü Shuxiang, both of whom expressed their concern about the low *Yuwen* competence of students and the low efficiency of *Yuwen* education.

from the classroom teachers around the middle of the 1990s: a new slogan for *Yuwen* was proposed: “*Yuwen* for life”, an idea that coincides with Dixon’s (1975) “English for development”, both stressing literacy’s nurturing function for students’ life development.

### **3.5 *Yuwen* for life**

The *Yuwen* for life approach emerged against the backdrop of growing discontent in the wider society with *Yuwen* teaching’s overemphasis on the examination. The specific slogan of “*Yuwen* for real life” was first advocated in the middle of the 1990s by a number of prestigious senior *Yuwen* teachers, such as Li Zhenxi and Dong Xuwu.

To make *Yuwen* relevant to life is the core of this approach. As the name suggests, the *Yuwen* for life approach opposes exam-oriented education, which has been criticised for separating school education and pedagogy from students’ personal life. It embraces the general education philosophy of promoting students’ development, social life and youth experience. There is no evidence, nor has any reference been found, that advocates of this camp were inspired by Dixon’s development theory. Their theoretical foundation can only be linked to new thoughts about education advocating the relevance of education to students’ lives, which started in China in 1996 and culminated in the middle of 2000. What these education theorists drew on are western educational philosophers such as the isolated comments and more systematic theories of Rousseau, Dewey and Husserl about the relationship between education and life. The most quoted words from Dewey are “education is not preparation for life, it is life itself.”

*Yuwen* for life has also followed the trend for the democracy of education in China since the 1990s. The approach stresses students’ subjective initiatives in language and literacy learning; it is opposed to a one-way inculcation of knowledge and skills in a *Yuwen* class. Instead, *Yuwen* teachers are required to facilitate students’ emotional development in literacy and language learning.

Li Zhenxi’s article (Li, 2004), “Let *Yuwen* approach life and let life embrace *Yuwen*”, illustrates his division of *Yuwen* into *Yuwen* for examinations and *Yuwen* for life (Li, 2004). In advocating *Yuwen* for life, Li provided the following prescriptions of how to make *Yuwen* relevant and applicable to students’ lives:

1) Teacher's analysis and interpretation of the texts in the class should be relevant to students' real life in contemporary society. They should match students' level of understanding. Li cited an example: when teaching Liu Baiyu's *Three Gorges of Yangtze River*, a lyric prose, the teacher can engage students by reminding them of the current degradation of the Yangtze River due to rapid industrialisation and pollution. In this way the teacher can go further to inspire students to discuss environmental issues in China, including water preservation.

2) *Yuwen* training should be relevant to students' life. Again here, as a frontline teacher, Li (2004) advocated that the tasks in and after the *Yuwen* class should aim at their applicability and practicability to life rather than to the examination. Thus, the tasks or questions should come from life and be addressed to cope with life problems. Both the question types and the way of addressing these questions including the language style should be in accordance with actual use in real life. As to language use, Li found that most of his students were accustomed to using formal language in a diary entry for submission in the *Yuwen* subject; he tried to convince them that everyone should express him/herself in his/her own words in the diary.

3) Regarding *Yuwen* education and the fostering of the competence of self-reflection, Li acknowledged the special role of the *Yuwen* subject in delivering values, culture and ideology. However, he stressed that inculcation of values through *Yuwen* should take into account students' cognitive levels and their backgrounds. To achieve this end, such competences as self-reflection and self-correction should be fostered in *Yuwen* teaching.

Li also advocated that *Yuwen* teachers can consciously and purposely empower students in their everyday life, school and class community and wider social life. He listed an array of student exercises that he successfully used in his classes for this purpose, such as collective writing, compilations of histories of his classes, proposals for the end of year class celebrations, and political and cultural commentary about recent events.

As the *Yuwen* for life approach emerged from the frontline *Yuwen* educationalists, its advocates including Li Zhenxi admitted that *Yuwen* for life is more a pedagogic practice than strictly a literacy theory. Tan (2012) argued that the meaning of life is complex and hard to define, citing the Chinese education philosopher Tao Xingzhi's understanding of life and education. Tao, a student of Dewey, proposed the integration of life and education as well as Dewey's tenet that education is life itself. However, Tao was not content with the "life" defined by Dewey; he believed that the "educational life" defined by Dewey is only a

simulation of real life. Tao argued that a bird's life in a cage is not that in the sky, so Tao's revised version of "life" is a more radical social and pedagogical practice that integrates school education directly and thoroughly with work.

Tan argued that life is multi-faceted and diversified; everyday life only represents one aspect of the student's whole life. School life, classroom experience and the whole school education itself also constitutes a very important aspect of a student's life; therefore it is hard to artificially define which life is the more authentic, with even the virtual life on the internet becoming increasingly pertinent and indispensable to students' individual experience (Tan, 2012). Thus, Tan (2012) was opposed to equating education with everyday life and warned that the outcome may be fragmentation of systematic teaching if too much emphasis is placed on the everydayness of *Yuwen* teaching.

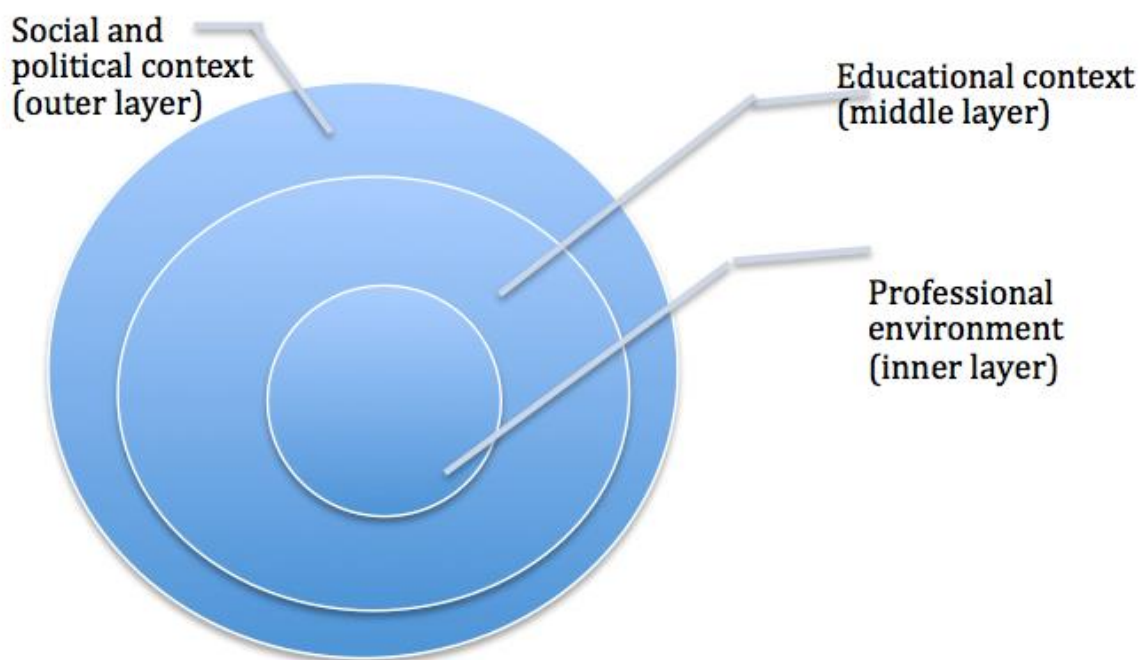
Tan's worry about fragmentation and its harmful effects is echoed by other teaching practitioners when dealing with literary texts. Fang Xiaofeng, a high school teacher in Guangxi, expressed her concern about the increasing popularity of the *Yuwen* for life approach in dealing with literary texts, in particular the classic texts whose backgrounds are far removed from students' contemporary life (Fang, 2014). She insisted that the difficulty of understanding and appreciating these classic texts pre-exist, and cannot be avoided or resolved by superficially resorting to students' personal life experience, cognitive levels or their emotional experiences. Relying too much on students' own experience may result in the misinterpretation of authors' true intentions. Likewise, due to temporal, spatial and cultural distance and social and class differences, students may raise questions that challenge the heroes, themes and morality of a particular text. If teachers cannot help students to appreciate and understand the texts by transcending the limit of their own personal experience, then literature education as part of language and literacy education should not be counted as successful.

Besides the theoretical difficulty discussed above, in practice, the "*Yuwen* for life" approach has been resisted by teachers, parents and students. It emerged as a correction of the trend of "*Yuwen* for examination". Ironically, in reality, it is the desire for good examination results that hinders the *Yuwen* for life approach from being fully implemented in classroom teaching. This was also evidenced in my fieldwork in Jiangsu in 2013.

### 3.6 Discussion and summary

The debates cited above testify to the power relations, both external and internal, current in the field of *Yuwen* or language and literacy education. The multi-layer relations are illustrated in Figure 3.1 below .

**Figure 3. 1** The three layers of contexts of the *Yuwen* curriculum design and implementation



Political control and dominance constitute the first layer of power relations, evidenced in the effect of top-down state ideological and institutional control. Conflict and resistance came with the formation and growth of the instrumentalist approach, initiated and upheld by three leading figures: Ye Shengtao, Lü Shuxiang and Zhang Zhigong, who were also called the “San Lao” (three seniors) in *Yuwen* education. Instrumentalism emerged as a rational demand for the independent status for language and literacy education in the highly political context of the early 20th century.

The second layer of power relations centred on knowledge control, a concept which developed in the clash between the long dominance of instrumentalism and the emerging humanism. It also involved extended criticism of the instrumentalism of *Yuwen* education from the higher level of knowledge institutions, such as universities and research institutions.

The humanist approach emerged from the discontent with, and criticism of, instrumentalism’s

perception of literacy as purely a series of transferable objectified skills ignoring the aspect of students' emotional and cognitive development in literacy and language learning.

The instrumentalist camp envisaged an independent space for *Yuwen* education in which literacy (reading and writing) can be taught and delivered as a neutralised (maximally free from political interference) and isolated (transcending social and historical contexts) skill. Instrumentalism also accumulated its own professional or academic hegemony in *Yuwen* education, embodied in authoritative figures (such as the three seniors mentioned above) and the control of textbook compilation and publication. The PEP's monopoly of textbook compilation and publication did not receive a serious challenge until the early 21st century with the beginning of the decentralisation process.

The decentralisation of textbook publication and compilation created a new space for the humanist approach and the literature camp to strive for more discursive and institutional power, as in the case of the JEPH (Jiangsu Education Publishing House) textbook series which competed with the stronghold of instrumentalism, the PEP. In Chapters 5 and 6 I deal with the conflict between the literature and the linguistic positions concerning the new textbook series that is currently used in high schools.

The inner layer is the professional circle of *Yuwen* subject, which I report in Chapter 7 in the fieldwork.

Research on *Yuwen* is restricted by two conditions. The first is *Yuwen*'s very nature, since, as the name "Chinese language and literacy" suggests, it is confined by its Chineseness. As a result, the research in this area lacks an international perspective and very few studies have made reference to the literacy and literacy education theories of other countries. My thesis enlists the theories and practice of curriculum study and literacy studies in Western countries (see Chapter 2) to provide a global perspective and illuminate the issues and debates in *Yuwen* education in China. I also suggest modifications to theories that are mainly based on the educational practices in the Western societies in order to enhance their applicability to the Chinese educational environment.

The second condition that confines the research in this area in China is the current authoritarian political system. There are still some areas that researchers have to avoid due to political censorship and very few researchers have applied western social theories to the field



of literacy education to reveal the power relations in this subject area.

## Chapter 4: Scope and Methods

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and explains the scope of data, the design and the methods of this research. Firstly, I record the aims of my research and the power configuration of the production and implementation of the *Yuwen* curriculum in China. I provide the three research questions that were identified in Chapter 1 and explain how I addressed these questions in my research design. The main body of this chapter is devoted to explaining and justifying the research design and research method including data collection and analysis. I specify that this research is qualitative in nature and qualitative content analysis was employed to process and analyse the data concerning the major syllabus documents, the textbooks and the interview transcripts with teachers. In the latter half of this chapter, I briefly summarise and justify the methods adopted to process the data.

This study provides a trajectory of how the Chinese language and literacy as a national subject evolved for the three decades. It essentially adopts two kinds of data collections : textual documents and interviews that represent the historical curriculum changes and the participants' (teachers) voice and reflections of the curriculum changes and implementation.

### 4.2 Aims, research questions and research design

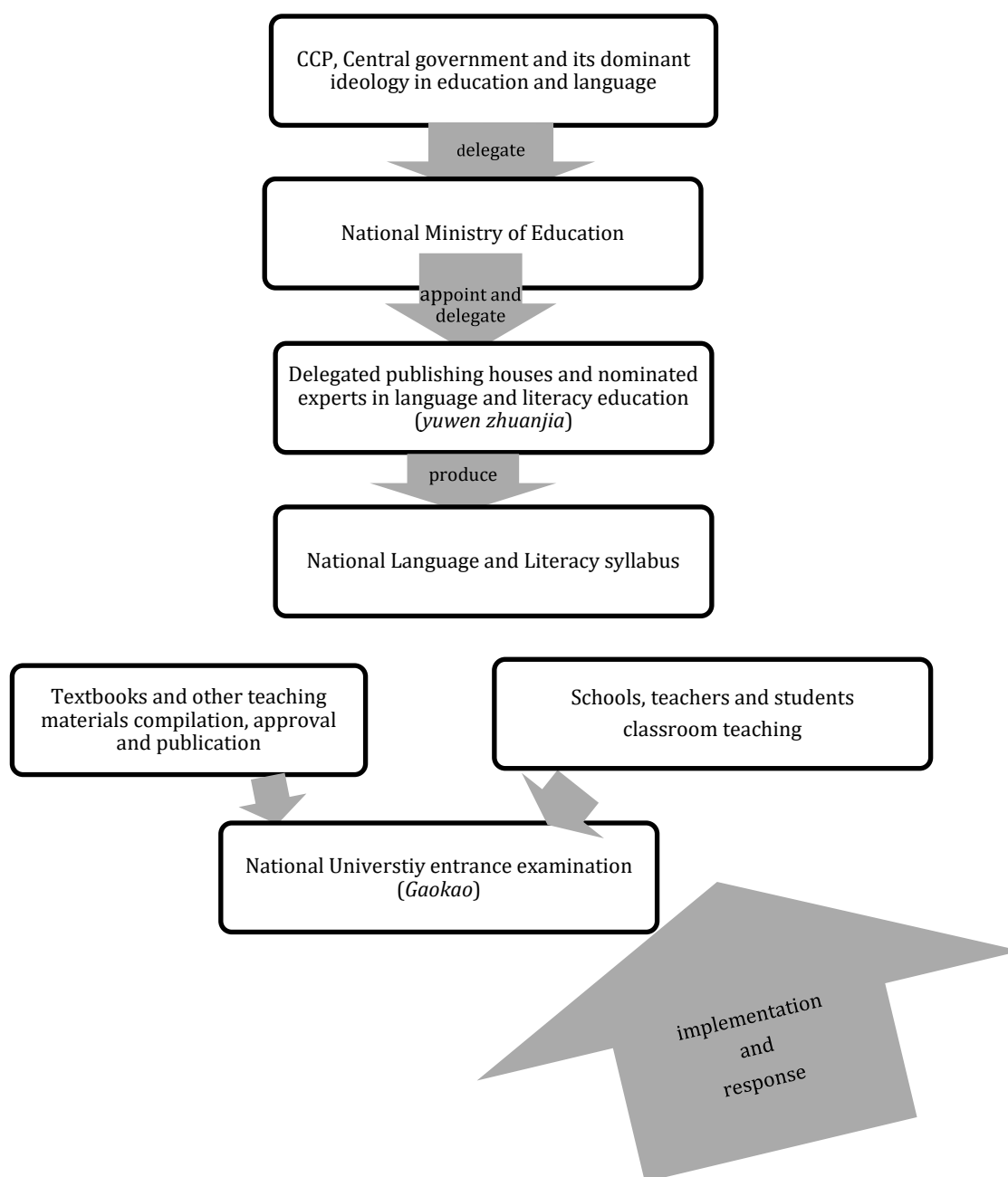
#### 4.2.1 Aims

This study explored the changes in the key components of the Chinese language and literacy curriculum (*Yuwen*) of secondary education in Mainland China since the 1980s, with a focus on the recent changes after the new curriculum standards were released in 2003. The study also sought to discover how these changes were brought about by the key players representing the power configuration in this curriculum domain.

The chart below delineates *Yuwen*'s curriculum dynamics featuring the top-down initiation and implementation process.

As the chart demonstrates, the state and its delegates are situated at the top of the flow chart and the schools, teachers and students are on the bottom having limited administrative and discursive power in the curriculum design, re-design and implementation.

**Figure 4.1** Power configuration chart of *Yuwen* curriculum production and implementation



#### 4.2.2 Research questions

The central questions of this thesis are:

- How has the *Yuwen* (Chinese language and literacy) curriculum been controlled and mediated by social and political domination?
- How have the teachers and schools responded in their teaching practices to the top-down curriculum changes?

These central questions can be further divided into three sub-questions to address the three most important aspects of the curriculum: the syllabus, the textbooks and the actual teaching practice. Regarding the syllabus which functions as the guiding document of the curriculum defining the nature, aims and teaching approaches of the subject, the sub-question is: how has the syllabus been changed along with social and political transformation? Regarding the prescribed textbooks, which are assumed to be the embodiment of the syllabus, the sub-question is: how have the prescribed texts been changed along with changes in the syllabus? Regarding the teaching practice, the sub-question is: to what extent have the new syllabus and the new textbooks changed (or not changed) teachers' teaching philosophy and teaching practice? Table 4.1 provides the research questions and the corresponding research data categories.

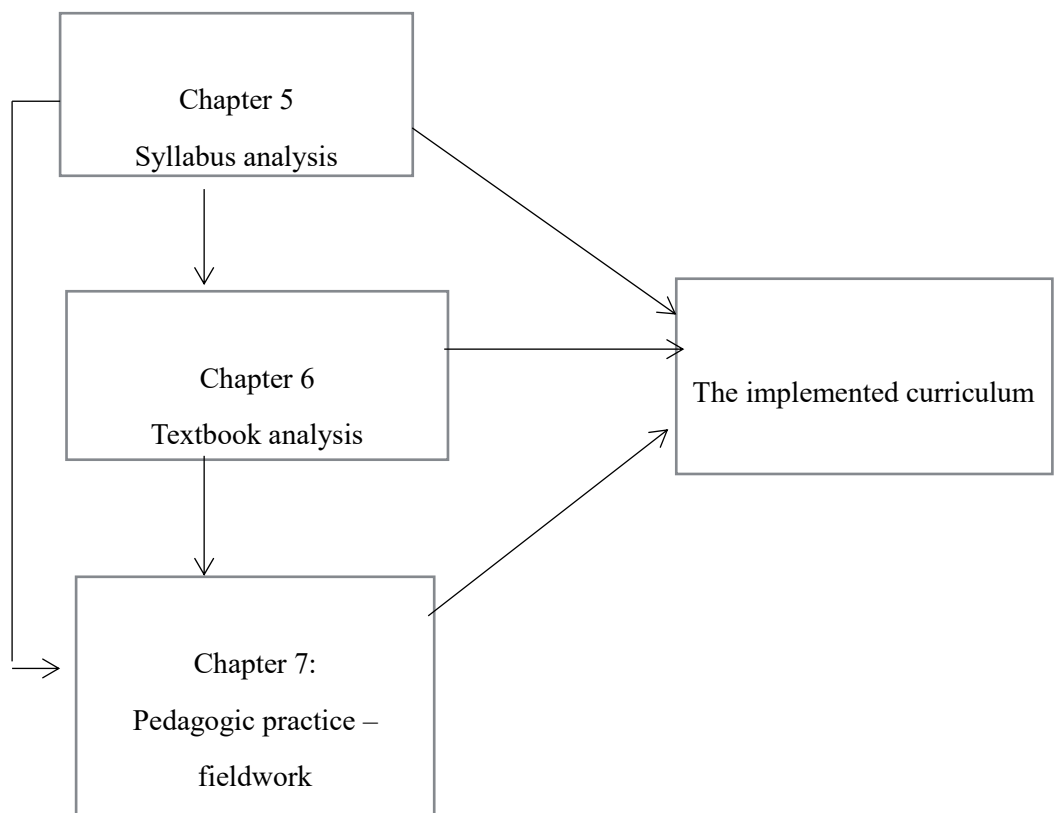
**Table 4.1** Research questions and corresponding subject and data

Research questions	Subject and data
How has the syllabus been changed along with social and political transformation?	Selected syllabus documents, published government documents
How have the prescribed texts been changed along with changes in the syllabus?	Selected textbooks
To what extent have the new syllabus and the new textbooks changed (or not changed) teachers' teaching philosophy and teaching practice?	Transcripts of interviews with <i>Yuwen</i> teachers of two schools in Jiangsu province

#### 4.2.3 Research design

Figure 4.2 illustrates the research design. The design is firstly concerned with each individual key component in the three text boxes on the left of the diagram. Secondly, the design is also meant to explore the dynamics or interaction among the three key components of the curriculum, as the arrows in the diagram show: syllabus guides define the textbooks, and both syllabus and textbooks control the teaching practices.

**Figure 4.2** Data range and research design



The data collected for each box will provide evidence for questions such as: To what extent do textbooks follow or deviate from the aims, objectives and approaches dictated in the syllabus, and why? How do teachers' practices comply with the syllabus and textbooks' true intentions and why? The interpretation of each box and the delineation of the interactions among the three boxes eventually present a big picture of the subject, which is the text box on the right hand of the diagram. The three arrows pointing to the big box on the right indicate that the detailed study of the three components contributes to the big picture of the status and development of *Yuwen* subject.

#### 4.2.4 Research methods

This section illustrates why qualitative content analysis was employed and how it was conducted in addressing the research questions. The section is divided into three parts, each addressing why and how qualitative content analysis was applicable to the syllabus analysis, textbook analysis and fieldwork data analysis.

Content analysis was initially synonymous to quantitative research methods. For example, Neuedorf (2002) in his content analysis guidebook defined content analysis as “systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (p. 1). Neuman also put content analysis in the category of quantitative analysis (Neuman, 2011, p. 361). However, Neuman (2011) also mentioned that there are qualitative or interpretive versions of content analysis. Denscombe believed that content analysis is used to process the qualitative data “as a way of *quantifying* the contents of that text.”(Denscombe , 2010, p.281). The various versions of qualitative content analysis have their own advantages and applicability. This research employed qualitative content analysis for the reasons listed below.

First, since the topic of this research was to explore the impact of social and political change on the language and literacy curriculum and the reactions and responses of the teachers and schools to these top-down curriculum changes, my interest was in both the texts and contexts. Neuman (2011) pointed out that qualitative content analysis is complementary to the quantitative analysis in that interpretative or qualitative content analysis examines the larger contexts of the text or document’s “creation, distribution and reception” (p. 362). The focus of researchers’ applying interpretative qualitative content analysis is on the texts, but they are equally or even more interested in the social meaning that the texts carry. In this sense, qualitative analysis of the texts is more appropriate for this project. In my syllabus and textbook analysis I addressed such questions as: who wrote the syllabus and who selected the texts in the textbooks? While I counted the numbers and statistics for certain categories in the texts (syllabus and textbooks), I situated the texts and their content features in the larger social contexts.

The second reason why the interpretative content analysis was favoured for this thesis is that interpretative content analysis is more suitable for latent content analysis and more complex coding tasks (Ahuvia, 2001). Technically, coding the data on *Yuwen* syllabus and textbooks required special expertise. It required not only knowledge of the genres and text types, but also knowledge of literary history. Such knowledge cannot normally be achieved through simple training as for a quantitative coding task. For example, as the literature review of this thesis suggested, the meanings of the texts, in particular the syllabus documents are virtually impenetrable to “outsiders” in the sense of language and subject. Therefore, such a “cultural” object justifies the “thick description” (Ahuia, 2001, Neuman, 2011) and interpretation from social and historical perspectives. For example, the instrumentalism in the *Yuwen* syllabus

debates required exploration in more detail in the Chinese context as well as against the background of the delineation of the flux of the curriculum history. Likewise analysis of the textbooks demanded that the coder possess the expertise in the genres and a wide range of knowledge of literature, including classical Chinese literature.

The third point that justifies the application of interpretative content analysis is that it allows space for non-frequency analysis of the text (George, 1959). In the analysis of the syllabus changes, for example, I used both frequency and non-frequency analysis of the syllabus documents. For the syllabus documents in the 1980s, the frequencies of the key political words signifying Mao era's ideological domination were counted, inferences were made. For the syllabus documents from the 1990s onwards, I applied the concept of "presence or absence" as the content indicators for inference. For instance, *Suzhi* (national or personal quality) as a new concept was introduced in the 1990s in China and became prevalent in education and mass media. The presence of *Suzhi* was analysed in depth in the social and political contexts after the 1990s along with other CCP and government guiding documents. The inference was made that the ultimate aim of the *Yuwen* curriculum had shifted from "Mao's literate subject" to the modern literate citizen through *Yuwen* education.

Finally, with regard to the trustworthiness of in-depth qualitative analysis, I resorted to what Ahuvia refers to as "public justifiability" (Ahuvia, 2001) instead of interrater reliability (the degree of agreement among raters) that is commonly conducted in quantitative content analysis. That is, the analysed syllabus documents and even the selected textbooks can be submitted along with their coding for external reviews and future publications. Logistically and technically, this is feasible given the volume of the texts I analysed.

It should be noted that purpose of coding is for numeric summary in qualitative analysis rather than for quantitative analysis.

### **4.3 Textual data collection and analysis**

#### **4.3.1 Primary data**

Primary data for each chapter are distinctive comprising *Yuwen* syllabuses and *Yuwen* textbooks.

##### *4.3.1.1 Primary data regarding the Yuwen syllabus*

Five major syllabuses and one Curriculum Standards at the senior high school level from 1978-2003 were collected and analysed. The details are shown below in Table 4.2 including the titles and the years of release.

**Table 4.2** The evolution of *Yuwen* syllabus editions from 1978-2003

Title of the syllabus	Year of release
Chinese language and literacy syllabus for high school of 10-year full time school (draft of trial version)  《全日制十年制学校中学语文教学大纲（试行草案）》	1978
Chinese language and literacy syllabus for high school of 10-year full time school 10 (trial version)  《全日制十年制学校中学语文教学大纲（试行草案）》	1980
Chinese language and literacy syllabus high school of 10-year full time school (trial version)  《全日制十年制学校中学语文教学大纲（试行）》	1986
Chinese language and literacy syllabus for full time senior high school (revised trial version)  《全日制普通高级中学语文教学大纲（试验修订版）》	1996
Chinese language and literacy syllabus for full time normal senior high school (revised trial version)  《全日制普通高级中学语文教学大纲（试验修订版）》	2000
Curriculum standards for senior high school Chinese language and literacy (experimental version)  《普通高中语文课程标准（实验）》	2003

The official website of the People’s Education Press (PEP) lists most of the *Yuwen* syllabus documents. I also purchased a hardcopy of the *Collection of Yuwen Syllabuses from 1902-2000* published by PEP in 2013 (*Kecheng jiaocai yanjiusuo*, 2001).

Government documents mainly published by the Ministry of Education of PRC or provincial education authorities regarding syllabus and curriculum are accessible through the Chinese government’s official websites, in particular the Ministry of Education website and PEP website.

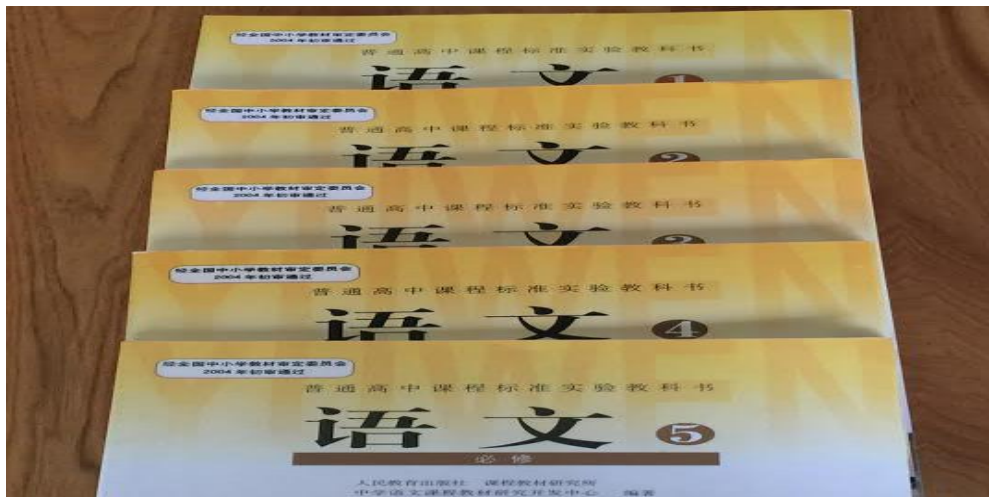


#### 4.3.1.2 Primary data regarding the Yuwen textbooks

I requested my contacts in China to purchase the two series of textbooks in 2012 and 2013 in Beijing and Nanjing:

Senior High School *Yuwen* Series, 2nd edition, published by People's Education Press (PEP), 2007, for the compulsory semesters of *Yuwen* study in senior high school: volumes 1-5; and Senior High School *Yuwen* Series, 4th edition, published by Jiangsu Education Publishing House (JEPH), 2008, for the compulsory semesters of *Yuwen* study in senior high school: Volumes 1-5, as illustrated in Figures 4.3 and 4.4.

**Figure 4.3** PEP senior high school *Yuwen* textbook



**Figure 4.4** JEPH senior high school *Yuwen* textbook



#### 4.3.2 Secondary data

The secondary data for syllabus and textbooks include journal articles, theses, and treatises

regarding syllabus, textbooks and curriculum.

The journal articles and doctoral and master's theses published in Mainland China were accessed and downloaded through the platform of CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) incorporating a number of very important databases including journals, doctoral dissertations, master's theses, statistics (census), yearbooks, reference works, conference proceedings as well as newspapers. The University of Sydney (USYD) library has full access to most of these databases.

Secondary data regarding the literacy theories and language and literacy curriculum studies were also collected from USYD library collections and on-line databases. Inter-library loan service was also used to seek books that were not available at the library of USYD. Two monographs (Gu & Li, 2000, Li & Gu, 2000) on Chinese language curriculum studies published in China were purchased by the USYD library at the request of the researcher.

#### 4.3.3 Content analysis of the syllabus documents

The content analysis of the syllabus documents centred on the notion of the presence, absence, under-presence or over-presence of a number of variables. I used the following categories to depict the syllabus changes with the social and political transformation in China:

- 1) The major components of the syllabus and the content of the major components.
- 2) The change of the key educational or political words or phrases such as “Mao” or “Maoism” (*Mao Zedong Sixiang*), “*Suzhi*” or “*Suyang*”(素养, qualities). The content analysis was linked to the wider context of *Yuwen* education.

Two types of qualitative content analysis were employed to analyse the texts: conventional and summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Conventional content analysis requires the researcher to be immersed in the data or texts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I read the five major syllabuses closely to identify the structural changes or continuity in a chronological order. The major constitutional parts such as “aims”, “objectives”, “nature”, “approaches” and “appendix” (mainly used in the prescribed texts) became the units of analysis. Based on the data that these units provided, I was able to further explore how a particular component changed or even disappeared and why a new component emerged. For

instance, I found that the appendix as the “prescribed text list” disappeared in the syllabuses released after 1996. This “absence” in the syllabus can be interpreted as a form of the decentralization of textbooks or prescribed texts occurring in the 1990s.

In addition to the “macro-units” of the major components of the syllabus, I also applied summative content analysis to define and quantify the “key words” in order to explore their meanings in the context. As I specified above, I counted the frequency of the “key words”, but my purpose was to infer the underlying meaning of the usages of these words. For instance, the result of counting strong political vocabulary in the syllabuses in the 1980s, such as “Mao Zedong”, “Chairman Mao”, or “Maoism” showed that these words gradually disappeared from the 1978, 1982, 1986 *Yuwen* syllabuses. I linked the over-quotation of Mao in 1978 as the common strategy of “self-protection” of *Yuwen* syllabus writers in the wake of the Cultural Revolution period and the gradual disappearance of Mao’s quotations as a trend of the de-politicization of the *Yuwen* syllabus.

#### 4.3.4 Content analysis of *Yuwen* textbooks

*Yuwen* textbooks are texts, but they are different from normal texts in two senses: The compilers of the textbooks are not the authors of the texts selected and textbooks are normally the collective works embodying the society’s dominant ideology as well as the prevailing literary or aesthetic tastes.

The researchers of textbooks take different perspectives with varying focuses. The analytical framework for the textbooks and the variables of texts to be analysed are dependent on the research question(s). There are a number of variables or angles that can be adopted to analyse the textbooks, such as illustrations, the main characters of the texts, the story lines, or the presentation of gender. These perspectives can all provide valuable insights into the textbook compilers’ ideological and aesthetic orientation. There is a large body of textbook studies adopting these approaches to textbook analysis (Sleet & Grant, 1991; Sutherland, 1981; Waker & Barton, 1983).

My research question was concerned with how the senior high school textbooks reflect the syllabus change. Hence variables such as illustrations were not deemed to be significant in reflecting the content change that I intended to discover. Instead, I selected two mega-variables for analysis: 1) themes of the texts, and 2) the authors of the texts. I considered that

the analysis of the changes in the data of these two variables would powerfully answer such questions as: whose texts (authors) and what texts (themes) are present, over-present, under-present or absent?

#### 4.3.4.1 Coding of the authors

I designed ten categories to code the authors in the textbooks, with the coding based on a) the textbook's introduction of the authors, and b) opinions of widely circulated literary history books in Mainland China. Table 4.3 below lists the codes I designed.

**Table 4.3** Coding of the authors in the textbooks

A	Current and late party-state leaders and four deemed the great revolutionary mentors in China: Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin
B	Revolutionary writers
C	Canonical writers or prominent figures of the 20th century
D	Writers emerging after the 1980s
E	Writers of pre-modern era
F	Scientists, popular science writers
G	Journalists
H	Foreign authors
I	Authors of non-Mainland China. This category includes writers who write in Chinese but are based in Hong Kong, Taiwan and other regions or countries.
J	Scholars of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in China

The perceived identity of the authors constituted the coding criteria. These criteria included 1) perceived political implications (if any); 2) perceived literary influence (if any); 3) occupations of the authors 4) era of the writers; 5) nationalities of the authors.

It should be acknowledged that often the identity of the authors was multi-faceted. When more than two identities were perceived, the principle for categorizing was: 1) political implication took the precedence; 2) The opinions of the above-mentioned literary history books were accepted.

For instance, it is universally known that Mao Zedong was China's and CCP's leader, but he was also a well-known poet, thanks to his political status. Given his political influence, I put him in category C when one of his poems was selected with other poets. Likewise, Engels is

widely acknowledged as a social scientist and political philosopher, but in China, he has been eulogized as one of the four revolutionary mentors, so I put him in category A when an extract of his essay was selected. Categories C and D are mainly differentiated by the era of the authors, not by achievements, but writers emerging after the 1980s could still become canonical like the Nobel Laureate in Literature, Mo Yan, so they would be categorized as C.

#### 4.3.4.2 Coding of the themes

In total 23 themes were identified across thirty years of the selected texts in the two series of textbooks to be analysed. Not all the themes appear in all the versions of the textbook. The themes are listed in Table 4.4 below.

**Table 4.4** The coded categories of themes

Themes	Code
Inculcate of CCP's dominant ideology or the party state's important policies	A
Extol revolutionary leaders' noble sentiments and lofty moral character	B
Praise the achievements and new heroes after 1949	C
Praise the virtues of common people	D
Praise the heroes in pre-modern China	E
Eulogize the heroes of the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the Republic	E1
Praise the cultural elites	F
Promote equity, freedom and civil rights	G
Reflect on the ebb and flow of the history	H
Depict the scenery and express feelings (about life, ideal, nostalgia (home sickness))	I
Describe the scenery and express feelings (for the new China after 1949)	J
Disclose and condemn the social reality of China before 1949 and beyond or critique the Western societies in particular the capitalist society of the 19th century.	K
Extol the good life, good deeds and good feelings after 1949	L

Love and romance	M
Eulogize the heroism of communists members, soldiers and supporters	N
Introduce Chinese traditional thoughts and values (Confucianism, Daoism etc.)	O
Promote and eulogize patriotism (Chinese historical patriotism, Modern Chinese patriotism and patriotism of other countries)	P
Promote science and technology	Q
Promote world peace and condemn war crime.	R
Be concerned with the growth of youth (inter-generational communication, future work and study)	S
Be concerned with the world around us, raise environment awareness	T
Be open to foreign literature and culture, raise the awareness of cross-cultural communication	U
Promote Chinese linguistic, literary and cultural knowledge	V

The themes of some works could or should be very evident, for example, in political editorials or argumentative essays such as Mao Zedong’s many political commentaries, while other themes may be implied or ambiguous. Coding of the themes in this section was based on: 1) themes claimed by textbook compilers in the textbooks and other teaching references books; 2) alignment with the aims and goals claimed in the syllabus or stated by the textbook compilers. For instance the “Youth and Growth” theme was a new theme proposed in the JEPH textbook series and a number of units in the texts were specifically clustered under this theme; 3) the researcher’s in-depth interpretation linking the social context where ambiguity arose.

For instance, Mao Zedong’s poem *Qin Yuan Chun-Changsha* (沁园春.长沙) was selected in both PEP and JEPH versions as the first text in the first unit. However, in the “ Study and Practice” section of the PEP version, the compilers reminded readers of the feelings and emotion embodied in this poem, and, on the same page, stressed Mao’s identity as a “great statesman, distinctive poet and calligrapher” (Yuan, Gu, & Wen, 2007, p. 5). However, in the JEPH version, the readers were only advised to understand the feelings of all three poets in this unit under the title of “ Sing for the Youth”, and there was no mention of revolution or

any political connotation (Ding& Yang, 2008, p. 10). In this case, the researcher's understanding of and sensitivity to Mao's status in contemporary China was decisive in categorizing this text (poem) as Category B (Extol revolutionary leaders' noble sentiments and lofty moral character) rather than category S (Be concerned with the growth of youth (inter-generational communication, future work and study) as the JEPH textbook would suggest.

#### **4.4. Data from fieldwork, interviews and analysis**

The fieldwork addressed such a question: how were the intended aims and approaches of the syllabus implemented or distorted in the teaching practices? The fieldwork was conducted in the form of in-depth semi-structured interviews. Although the years of teaching experience was taken into consideration of recruiting the participants and the three interview questions (see Appendix 2) also addressed the historical changes of the syllabus and textbooks, it should be noted that in comparison with the documentary data covering three decades (1980-2010), the interview data are provided by contemporary teachers and can only be used for illustrative purposes at its best.

##### **4.4.1 The sites and profiles of the two schools**

The interviews were conducted with language and literacy teachers of two schools in Jiangsu Province, where the new textbook series was published by the local provincial educational Publishing House (JEPH: Jiangsu Education Publishing Houses) in response to the new curriculum enacted in 2004. One school was located in the provincial capital city Nanjing and the other in Taizhou city. The rationale for the selection of these two schools was: 1) they both used the nationwide PEP textbooks before 2004 and were currently using JEPH textbooks; 2) the researcher started to communicate the contact persons in these two schools from 2010 and visited one of the sites in 2010, the professional connection has been established since then. .

J School: a senior high school located in suburb J (District) of Nanjing Municipality, the capital city of Jiangsu Province. The population of this suburb is more than one million according to the 2010 census.<sup>iv</sup> It should be noted, unlike other traditional urban districts,

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<sup>iv</sup> The data is from the local Census Bureau.

District J had been a county, which means that until 2000 most of its population were rural residents engaged in farming. District J has been arguably one of the most economically dynamic districts in Nanjing Municipality due to the rapid development of industrialization and urbanization, and many universities have relocated campuses and developed new campuses from downtown to the J District. Also, a considerable number of industrial parks have been set up in this area. As a result, the demographic landscape with its infrastructure and transportation has changed dramatically, with people from the city as well as farmers, relocated willingly or unwillingly, from the traditional villages to the new residential blocks built in this area. J school, established in 1934, is ranked a four star senior school and was in a dominant position in J area until the early 21st century, with two new competitors entering this area: a senior high school from downtown with more than a 100 year history and a national reputation established a new campus in this promising area; the other competitor is a privately founded school established in 2003

J school has a student population of around 4000, including classes for Tibetan students from Qinghai province as part of the state's commitment to educational assistance for the ethnic minorities in remote areas in China. There are 40 teachers in the Chinese department.

**Figure 4. 5** Entrance of J School



T School: is located in downtown Taizhou city, which has a population that increased from 0.5 million to 0.8 million as a result of the city's expansion. T School is a 3 star senior high school which is normally regarded as inferior to its big brother the T1 school, a four star



school with better faculty, more resources and the advantages of being entitled to enrol students across the Taizhou municipal area with a population of more than 4 million. The T School mainly enrolls students whose families reside in the urban area of Taizhou city and has a Chinese department of more than 20 teachers.

#### 4.4.2 Design of the interview

In the fieldwork, I collected the data in relation to *Yuwen* teachers' perception of the official curriculum changes and their pedagogic practices in adapting to the changes as well as the evolution of their self-perceived role in the curriculum implementation under the current educational and socio-political contexts.

The interviews were conducted with *Yuwen* teachers in two high schools in Jiangsu Province, where the new textbook series was published by the local provincial education press, the Jiangsu Education Publishing House (JEPH), in response to the new curriculum enacted in 2004. The edition of JEPH textbook that they used and I analysed in Chapter 6 are the same: the revised 2004 version of the *Yuwen* textbook for senior high school and reprinted ever since. In the semi-structured interviews, the participants were encouraged to draw on their life experiences including their career advancement, and learning experience as students and student-teachers in addressing the issues raised in the interviews.

I entered the sites two days prior to the days the interviews were scheduled. The “contact person” in the staff rooms introduced me to the teachers and I started to observe some teachers' work and proceeded with some informal chats about their work. By introducing myself as a former *Yuwen* teacher in China and outlining my current teaching role in Australia, I started to gain the trust of and build rapport with the participants. All the interviews were conducted in the library or meeting room in the schools. My initial warm-up contact with participants and my interest in the teachers' work and insights turned into more interactive communication during the interviews, so that most of the teachers interviewed were willing to reflect on their teaching experiences and give more in-depth insights into the curriculum and textbooks. In retrospect, most of the successful interviews (when participants were relaxed and eager to give their stories and opinions) were indeed processes of “mutual sharing of experiences” (Neuman, 2011, p. 450).

#### 4.4.3 Recruitment of participants

The participants were recruited from the Chinese departments of two senior high schools. The principals of the two schools granted approval for the fieldwork. After the fieldwork had been approved, a letter (in Appendix 5) was sent to the principals of the two schools and circulated among the potential participants. Also, the age and gender ratio were considered.

#### 4.4.4 Ethical approval and compliance

Ethical approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the University of Sydney prior to the fieldwork (see details in Appendix1).

#### 4.4.5 Criteria of the participants and sample size

I recruited a total of 18 participants. Table 4.5 provides the profiles of the participants. The participants were required to have the experience of teaching senior high school Chinese language and literacy (*Yuwen*). The diversity of the teachers' backgrounds and their teaching and administrative roles were also considered.

**Table 4.5** Profiles of participants

<b>School/Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Other duty in school</b>	<b>Year of starting teaching</b>
J school			
PJ1	M	Head of Chinese	1987
PJ2	F		1996
PJ3	M		1994
PJ4	M	Year level coordinator	2003
PJ5	M	Coordinator of subject for year level	1988
PJ6	F		1992
PJ7	F		1987
PJ8	M	Deputy head of disciplinary office	1990
PJ9	F	Coordinator of subject for year level	2004

T school			
PT1	M	Principal	1987
PT2	F	Former head of Chinese department	1988
PT3	F		1991
PT4	F		2007
PT5	M	Head of Chinese department	2004
PT6	F		2006
PT7	M		2000
PT8	M	Year level coordinator	1992
PT9	M	Deputy Principal	1988

#### 4.4.6 Content analysis of the transcribed data

As mentioned above, with the close reading of the transcripts of the interviews, I felt obliged to re-code the data, because some initial assumptions or hypotheses of the language and literacy teaching changed and some coding, such as “resistance” or “conflict” lost its importance when I analysed the data more deeply. Instead, new concepts emerged as themes, such as “teachers’ professional environment and institutional restriction” as immediate contexts in shaping teachers’ pedagogic practices.

As the coding and analysis proceeded, four themes emerged:

- 1) Teachers’ perceptions of the micro-environment of literacy teaching in the institutions and the nature of mother tongue education.
- 2) Teachers’ responses to the key words or major discourse changes in the syllabus (e.g. *Suzhi* 素质 education and literacy education).
- 3) Teachers’ responses to the text selections in the new textbook series and intended outcomes designed in the textbooks (e.g. comparison of the JEP and PEPH textbooks, shifts of the canon in the textbooks)

4) Teachers' self-perceived professional identities and autonomy (e.g. "What if you don't like the style of the text or don't agree with the authors' point of view?" "To what extent do teachers rely on or are dependent on the official textbooks?")

The inferences that I made were based on the "thick description" of the qualitative data analysis, which enriched and altered the picture of literacy teaching that I had drawn from the literature review, and textbook and syllabus analyses.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter centred on the kind of data that addressed each research question and how the particular kind of data was processed and analysed. The researcher employed qualitative content analysis and argued that it was the nature of the data and the research questions that decided that qualitative content analysis was most suitable for this research.

Three different kinds of primary data were processed, namely, syllabus documents, textbooks and interview transcripts, and different codes and categories were established. For instance, in the analysis of the syllabus documents, the major components were identified and coded after a close reading of all the five documents. This is the typical conventional qualitative content analysis approach. Likewise, the coding of the transcripts of interview was a continuous process of back-check. The initial coding was based on the open-ended interview questions. As the interviews progressed and later with the researcher's immersion in the transcripts, four major themes emerged and were categorized. For instance, "resistance" and "resistance to political control" were very important themes emerging from the literature review, and therefore, several questions were purposely designed to elicit answers about these themes. However, close reading and analysis of the interview data did not support the validity of these themes. "Resistance" did not stand out as a theme. Instead, the aspiration of education success through *Yuwen* in *Gaokao* became a major theme for analysis.

## Chapter 5: Findings from Syllabus Analysis (1978-2003)

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to unravel the relationship between changes in the *Yuwen* syllabus and socio-political transformation in China. In this chapter, six major *Yuwen* (Chinese language and literacy) syllabus documents and their subsequent revised versions across three decades are analysed. They include the 1978 *Yuwen* “Curriculum Outline” (*Yuwen Dagang* 语文大纲) through to the 2003 senior high school *Yuwen* Curriculum Standards (*Gaozhong Yuwen Kecheng Biao zhun* 高中语文标准课程). This thesis is concerned specifically with the senior high school curriculum; however, due to the fact that a separate *Yuwen* syllabus for senior high school did not emerge until 1996, the 1978 syllabus and its two revised versions (the 1980 and 1986 editions) for both junior and senior high schools are included for analysis.

The content analysis in this chapter focuses on two interrelated aspects of the syllabus documents but with varying emphasises and units of analysis. The first part of this chapter is concerned with the major components of the syllabuses, that is, the major constituents of the syllabus documents that account for the “unit of analysis.” I trace the changes of the syllabus structure, definitions of *Yuwen* as a school subject and the scope and objectives of *Yuwen* subject, all of which reflect the changes and formation of *Yuwen* subject identity. Based on the detailed diachronic analysis of the texts, I argue that the *Yuwen* syllabuses as prescriptive education documents reflect the de-politicisation trend from the CCP’s strong and prevailing ideological and political orientation to a more language and literacy focused orientation. The *Yuwen* syllabuses have been changing continuously to embody the compromise and conflict that I have delineated in Chapter 3.

The second part of this chapter is devoted to the analysis of key political and educational terms in the syllabus documents. As I indicated in Chapter 4, I not only trace the frequency of selected politically significant words distributed in the five syllabus documents across over 30 years, but more importantly, I pay attention to the new expressions and vocabulary emerging in the new syllabuses carrying specific political significance. The content analysis of these newly emerged words and phrases provides a new dimension in the exploration of the relationship between the syllabus text and its educational and socio-political context. I argue that the discursive change to de-politicisation in the syllabus can also be interpreted as

a new form of politicization. The new form of politicization is reflected in the shift from the cultivation of literate subjects dictated in Mao's era to the crafting of literate citizens of a China that is integrating into the world economic system.

The diminution of old-fashioned political discourse such as the frequent use of Mao's quotations in the 1980s syllabuses can be recognized as the trend of de-politicisation in the syllabus documents. However, the state's political control and interference did not vanish but took new forms in the 1990 syllabus and its revised versions featuring a new prevailing political and educational ideology. The trajectory of the change is obvious: from the aim of shaping and forming subjects as the inheritors of communism or revolution on the model of Mao's era to the creation of literate citizens equipped with high qualities (*Suzhi* 素质) or habitus required by a society in the process of transformation into a market economy (for literacy and the concept of habitus proposed by Bourdieu, please see the discussion in the Chapter 2).

## **5.2 Constructing the subject identity: Analysis of the major components of the syllabuses**

### **5.2.1. The structural evolution of the *Yuwen* syllabus from 1978-2003**

This section provides an overview of change over the specific time span. A close reading of the syllabuses reveals that two periods can be identified in terms of their structures. The syllabuses from 1978 up to 2002 are genealogically derived or modified from the 1963 version while the 2003 syllabus represents an intentional attempt to break away from the long tradition represented by the 1978 version and its subsequent "descendants". *Yuwen* teachers today are following the same ideas and practices as outlined in the 2003 syllabus.

In this section I outline and discuss the genealogical relationship between the syllabus versions of 1978-2002 as well as the "breakaway" syllabuses referred to as "Curriculum Standards" issued in 2003. The 1978 version and its subsequent revised versions, which were derived from the 1963 *Yuwen* syllabus, can be put in the category of the "1978 cluster" and the 2003 syllabus is called "Curriculum Standards". As illustrated in this chapter, the title "Curriculum Standards" itself transmits a strong message of intention for the reform of the subject including a new understanding its identity and its underlying education philosophy and teaching approaches. Table 5.1 outlines the changes in the contents of the high school

*Yuwen* syllabus from 1978 to 2003.

**Table 5.1** Structure and major content of senior high school *Yuwen* syllabus from 1978 to 2003

1978 and 1980 versions	1986 version	1996 version	2002 version	2003 version
Foreword (rationale): this part is concerned with what is the <i>Yuwen</i> and the necessity of learning <i>Yuwen</i>	Foreword: definition of the subject <i>Yuwen</i>	Foreword: definition of the subject <i>Yuwen</i>	Foreword: definition of the subject <i>Yuwen</i> and rationale of study	Part one Foreword: definition of senior high school education and <i>Yuwen</i> in senior high school level
Aims and objectives: 教学目的和要求	Aims 教学目的	Aims 教学目的	Aims 教学目的	Nature of the subject ( instrument and humanism 工具, 人文)
	Objectives 教学要求	Teaching principles 教学原则 most issues were addressed in 1986 version	Content and objectives (教学内容和要求) (reading, writing, oral communication, synthesis study 综合学习, texts)	
About textbooks : content and arrangement of the content 教材的内容和编排	Content of textbooks: texts, notes, exercises and linguistic and literature knowledge (语文基础知识)			Basic ideas of the subject 课程的基本理念( 素养, 审美, 开放)
Teaching of writing 作文教学	Teaching of writing 作文教学	Structure and teaching hours (课程结构和课时), streaming of the students at year 12.	Issues that need attention in teaching and learning (教学中应重视的问题)	Designing and structure 课程设计思路 – elective and compulsory , organized in modules
A few pedagogical issues 教学中的几个问题 (1978 version) A few points that require attention in teaching (1980 version)	Issues that need attention in teaching and learning (教学中应重视的问题)	Content and objectives 教学内容和要求 (skills, knowledge and texts)	Assessment 教学评价	Part two 课程目标 Aims and objectives, five areas  Compulsory section: reading and appreciation, express and communication
Appendix 1: text lists and objectives (descriptors for each year level and each semester). 各年级读写训练要求和课文	Objectives (descriptors for each year level and each semester Essential text lists for junior high school and senior high school	Assessment and examination	Resources	Electives: five modules: poetry and prose, fiction and drama, news and auto/biography, use of language and scripts, culture studies



It should be noted that the change of the title from “Curriculum Outline” (*Jiaoxue Dagang* 教学大纲) to “Curriculum Standards” (*Kecheng Biao zhun* 课程标准) is not unique to *Yuwen*; rather, it is a symbol of top-down education reform across all school subjects. The proposal to change *Yuwen Dagang* to *Kecheng Biao zhun* was put forward as early as 1995 in a conference held in Wuyi mountain in Fujian province, but this move was blocked by the Ministry of Education because at that time, all the other subjects still used *Dagang* (Outline) (Zheng, 2008). Here two questions arise: 1. What general change was brought to all syllabuses with the new title? 2. What subject specific changes were brought to the *Yuwen* subject?

The short answer to the first question of generic change across all the subjects is that the syllabuses under the new title of “Curriculum Standards” intend to impose modern ideas of teaching and learning, shifting to a learner-centred approach and more educational democracy. This is evidenced in the slogan of “across all subjects” and the promotion of: a. Knowledge and skills; b. Process and methods, emotion; and c. Attitude and values. Students’ learning experiences, and their interests and preferences are to be respected, which, according to the syllabus writers, will facilitate their life long learning and improve their personal qualities. This approach also corresponds to the official discourse of *Suzhi* education proposed by the central government as state education policy under the initiatives of national educational reform.

Table 5.2 is an adaption of my translation of a table in an article published by an official of the Ministry of Education of PRC. It outlines the organisational or structural differences between the current syllabuses titled “Curriculum Standards” (*Kecheng Biao zhun*) and the old syllabuses titled “Curriculum Outline” (*Dagang*)

**Table 5.2** Differences between “Curriculum Standards” and “Curriculum Outline”

Curriculum Standards (课程标准)		Curriculum Outline (课程大纲)
Foreword	Nature of the subject	
	Basic ideas of the subject	
	Designing ideas	
Subject aims	Knowledge and skills	Aims
	Process and methods	
	Emotion, attitude and values	
Content of standards	Areas and objectives	Teaching content and requirements
Suggestions for implementation	Teaching	Teaching advice: Issues that need attention in teaching and learning Allocation of teaching hours Assessment and evaluation
	Assessment	
	Textbook compilation	
	Development and use of curriculum resources	
Appendices	Glossary	
	Cases	

**Source:** Adapted and translated from Liu (2001)

What is the structural or organizational change specific to the *Yuwen* subject? Table 5.3 below and Table 5.4 in the following subsection illustrate the major components and structural changes of the senior high school syllabuses of the 1996 and 2003 versions, representing the revolutionary changes in the 1990s and the early 21st century.

**Table 5.3** 1996 senior high school *Yuwen* curriculum structure

Year levels Components	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	
Compulsory component	For all students	For all students		
Designated elective Component (3 streams)			Stream intending to enter higher education	Stream intending to major in arts and social science in university
				Stream intending to major in science and engineering university (理科)
			Stream intending to obtain employment upon graduation (准备就业)	
Free electives	Across all year levels and students are free to choose to take or not to take according to their strengths or preferences the recommended themes: Chinese characters and calligraphy, applied grammar and rhetoric, language and logic, appreciation and commentary of film and TV, applied aesthetics, folk literature, folklore, selection of masterpieces of Chinese and foreign literature, cultural history etc.			

Two major structural changes are particularly important in *Yuwen* as a school subject, which are also related to or can be understood as immediate and direct responses to the central government's call for innovation and *Suzhi* education. One is the reinstatement of the elective component of the syllabus and the other is the relaxation of the teaching and learning materials designated in the appendix of the syllabus. I will discuss the two aspects in more detail below.

#### 5.2.1.1 *The division into compulsory and elective components for senior high school Yuwen curriculum*

This division, which indicates the syllabus writers' intention to increase the autonomy, independence and flexibility of students and schools, was first introduced in 1996, but was reversed in the 2002 syllabus. The division was re-introduced in the syllabus under the name of "Curriculum Standards" in 2003 and implemented ever since with different ideas. The 1996 division demonstrated the syllabus designers' intention to stream students according to their aspiration or academic merits, assuming that students at the year 12 level should focus on different aspects of language and literacy (/ies). For example, it was suggested that

students who are prepared to seek employment after graduation should focus on selective components of listening and speaking skills and practical writing at year 12 while students intending to study arts and social sciences at university should focus on language and literary cultivation, writing skills and the ability to read easy classic texts. Thus, the elective components for the last year of senior high school differentiated students' needs according to their occupational aspirations and plans. Students intending to seek higher education were offered highbrow content, e.g. literature, while students wanting to enter employment directly upon graduation were advised to learn just practical writing. In contrast to the 1996 *Yuwen* syllabus, the new 2003 "Curriculum Standards" syllabus gave students and schools the freedom to choose or not to choose the elective parts according to their strengths or preferences, as outlined in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4** The structure of the 2003 Curriculum Standard Syllabuses.

Year levels Components	Year 10 semester 1	Year 10 semester 2	Year 11 semester 1	Year 11 semester 2	Year 12 semester 1	Year 12 semester 2
Compulsory Component	Five units across 2.5 semesters accounting for totally 10 credit points, this is the minimum load for senior school					
Elective Component				Five themes to be chosen based on schools, this is the minimum load for senior school 1. Poetry and prose 2. Fiction and plays. 3. News and biography (autography) 4. Applied Linguistics (语言文字应用) 5. Reading of selected works of culture studies (文化论著选读)		

The recommended themes or detailed study topics are: Chinese characters and calligraphy, applied grammar and rhetoric. The syllabus allows for autonomy of the schools and localization: regions and schools have more discretion to organise the teaching and teaching content from the elective level.

Two changes in the 2003 version are noteworthy. Firstly, the elective components become truly elective, unlike the so-called "elective components" for senior high school in the 1996 version, which were actually compulsory in year 12 and were mainly used to stream students

rather than to offer students and school choices. The design of the 2003 syllabus creates more free space for schools to manage their curricula and gives the schools and teachers (if not students) the decision about which themes of the electives to teach.<sup>v</sup> Secondly, the compulsory components and their allocated teaching time are substantially reduced. The total time allocated to compulsory units is 2.5 semesters (10 units), and the suggested teaching hours are 36 hours (per unit-*mokuai*) x 5=185 hours, compared to the required teaching hours in the 1996 syllabus of 280 compulsory hours for years 11 and 12, with the total hours of 384, 332, 332 hours respectively for the three student stream of arts and humanity pathway, science and engineering pathway, and vocational pathway. This design reflects the compromise between foundation, equity, commonality, innovation, and individuality.

This design also leaves unanswered such questions as: In an education system still very much controlled by the entrance examination, how can the syllabus writers' intention to encourage students to explore and innovate be implemented by schools? How can the education administration make sure the remaining 3.5 semesters are used for elective components rather than for coaching and standard training for the higher education entrance examination? These questions will be addressed in Chapter 7 based on the data obtained from the fieldwork

#### *5.2.1.2 Softening the appendices: Relaxation and decentralisation of textbook compilation and empowerment of localities and schools*

The appendices of *Yuwen* syllabuses released before 2000 normally comprised the “hard ingredients” of the menu. The general trend in the syllabuses after 2000 reflects the softening of the requirements. The most conspicuous change from 1978 to 2007 is the increasingly loose central control of textbooks or prescribed texts. The 1978 and 1980 syllabuses prescribed the texts for each volume of each year level, while the 1986 version only prescribed the “essential texts” for all senior and junior high school levels without specifying which text should be learned in which year level. The appendix in the 1996 syllabus only provided a list of recommended texts for textbook compilation while the 2002 syllabus appendix only prescribed the common words of Classical Chinese including 120 content words and 15 function words, recommended recital works (poems and prose) and suggestions on extensive reading. Unlike the 1970-1996 syllabuses, no prescribed texts and recommended

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<sup>v</sup> How the seemingly free choices in the syllabus or “Curriculum Standards” are translated into practical teaching practices constitutes one of my research inquiries in my fieldwork.

texts of modern Chinese were listed in the 2002 syllabus. In the appendix of the 2003 syllabus, it is stated clearly that the modern Chinese texts will be recommended by textbook compilers and teachers. Obviously, the trajectory of the syllabus appendices concerning texts and words demonstrates an increasingly loosening contour. I will deal with the evolution of textbooks in greater detail in the next chapter (Zheng 2008).

### 5.2.2 Evolving definition of *Yuwen*: from instrumentalism (functional) to humanism

The debate on the nature of *Yuwen* subject that I described in Chapter 3 is clearly reflected in the syllabus texts, most conspicuously in the persistent division between instrumentalism (*Gongju xing* 工具性) and humanism (*Renwen xing* 人文性). The key arguments underpinning the five versions of the syllabus from 1978-2003 oscillated between these two theories.

#### 5.2.2.1 Instrumentalism

The 1978 and 1980 high school *Yuwen* syllabuses did not address the question of “what is *Yuwen*” and no specific definition was given. In both versions, reading and writing or teaching of reading and writing, that is, literacy in the narrow sense was assumed to be equivalent to *Yuwen* teaching and learning practices. Both versions also prescribed that political and ideological education should be the indispensable components of *Yuwen* but should be carried out through the teaching and learning of reading and writing. Reading and writing and political and ideological education were considered complementary and mutually beneficial.<sup>vi</sup>

The 1986 version of the syllabus reverted to the conception of *Yuwen* in the 1963 pre-Cultural Revolution syllabus. Thus, the 1986 version begins with: “*Yuwen* is the basic tool for study and work”, which is almost verbatim of the 1963 version: “*Yuwen* is the basic tool for learning all kinds of knowledge and doing all kinds of work”. This return to the pre-Cultural Revolution prescription or perception of the instrumental nature of *Yuwen* (*Gongju lun* 工具论) was in line with the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping’s call to bring order out of chaos

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<sup>vi</sup> *Suzhi jiaoyu* was first officially put by Communist Central Committee and China State Council as the state’s education policy in 1999 (中共中央国务院关于深化教育改革，全面推进素质教育的决定 [http://www.edu.cn/zong\\_he\\_870/20100719/t20100719\\_497966.shtml](http://www.edu.cn/zong_he_870/20100719/t20100719_497966.shtml))

(*Boluan fanzheng*). The instrumental argument appears to be reductionist, although it addressed the long-term debate over the relationship between *Yuwen* and politics: the State's ideological and direct political control versus the *Yuwen* professional's opposition to control in the form of seeking an independent identity for literacy education.

Chapter 3 has provided a more detailed description of arguments around instrumentalism in the major debates on *Yuwen* education after 1949. However, it is worth recapping the origin of this theory and its promotion in China. The origins of the instrumentalist argument can be traced back to three heavy weight linguists and forerunners of modern *Yuwen* education: Ye Shengtao (叶圣陶 1894-1988), Zhang Zhigong (张志公 1918-1997) and Lü Shuxiang (吕叔湘 1904-1998). Ye Shengtao's "instrument argument" is superficially very similar to Western functional literacy theory, but addresses the different political environment in China which features too much direct top-down political and ideological control and interference from the State.

Ye Shengtao's instrument argument should be examined further in two historical contexts: the pre-1949 elitist views and the more egalitarian views of the New Culture and May Fourth Movements. In the pre-1949 social and political background, the instrument argument was mounted against the pre-modern literacy education that mainly focused on the elite group, ignoring the vast majority of the population. The New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement viewed *Yuwen* education as an instrument to empower the whole population and as an integral part of the agenda of Chinese modernisation, enlightenment and development. The definition of *Yuwen* in the 1963 syllabus as an instrument was based on the discussions and debates about the low efficiency of *Yuwen* education and its subordinated status to politics after the Great Leap Forward (Zhuang, 2010), while the resort to the instrumental argument in the 1986 syllabus can also be interpreted as the attempt to balance the over-politicized orientation of *Yuwen* education in the post-Mao era.

#### 5.2.2.2 Blend of instrumentalism and humanism (*Culturalism*)

The new definition of *Yuwen*, first put forward in the 1992 *Yuwen* syllabus for junior high school and proposed in the 1996 senior high school *Yuwen* syllabus, can be regarded as a step away from the instrument argument. In the first sentence of the 1996 version, *Yuwen* is defined as "the most important means of communication ... it is also the most important carrier of culture" (my translation). In the three subsequent versions of the senior high school

*Yuwen* syllabus (2002, 2003 and 2007), the relationship between *Yuwen* and culture was slightly revised as: “*Yuwen* constitutes the important component of human culture. The integration of the nature of instrument and the nature of humanity is the fundamental feature of *Yuwen* as a school subject”.

The amalgamation of instrumentalism and humanism was an attempt to create more space for *Yuwen* out of the shadow of the prevalent instrument argument proposed and implemented in the syllabus by Ye Shengtao, Lü Shuxiang and Zhang Zhigong since 1949. Direct political and ideological interference gradually faded in the domain (site) of the *Yuwen* subject, as the instrumentalism theory, which was taken up as a strategy to resist the heavy hand of politics and seemed to have become dominant in this area, resulted in the over-emphasis of the instrumental, operational and scientific nature of the *Yuwen* subject. This over-emphasis triggered a revision of the linguistic and scientific orientation of *Yuwen* subject, with the call to bring back humanism, culture or mentalism.

The effort of the integration into *Yuwen* of instrumentalism and humanism (人文性) as important components of human culture was not without its flaws. *Yuwen*, if understood as language and scripts (*Yuyan he wenzi* 语言和文字) or written language and spoken language (*Shumian he koutou yuanyan* 书面和口头语言), language and literature (*Yuyan he wenxue* 语言和文学), are definitely a part of culture regardless how we define the culture per se. However, in two consecutive sentences of the 2002 syllabus, *Yuwen* was used inconsistently as language (“the most important communication instrument”, a statement derived from Marxist and Leninist linguistic theory) and as a school subject that teaches Chinese language as mother tongue plus Chinese literature and Chinese culture.

Because the term *Yuwen* is used in two related but different senses: one refers to language and literacy plus literature and culture while the other is a subject that teaches language and literacy as well as literature and culture, the definition and description of the nature of *Yuwen* as a subject was problematic. All of these flaws may have stemmed from the inconsistency of Ye Shengtao’s original definitions of *Yuwen*. Ye Shengtao used the term first but the various definitions he gave over time were not consistent. Zhuang Wenzhong (2010) also pointed to the inconsistency of Ye Shengtao’s descriptions and definitions of *Yuwen*.

The new concept and perception of *Yuwen* education in China, which is embedded in the



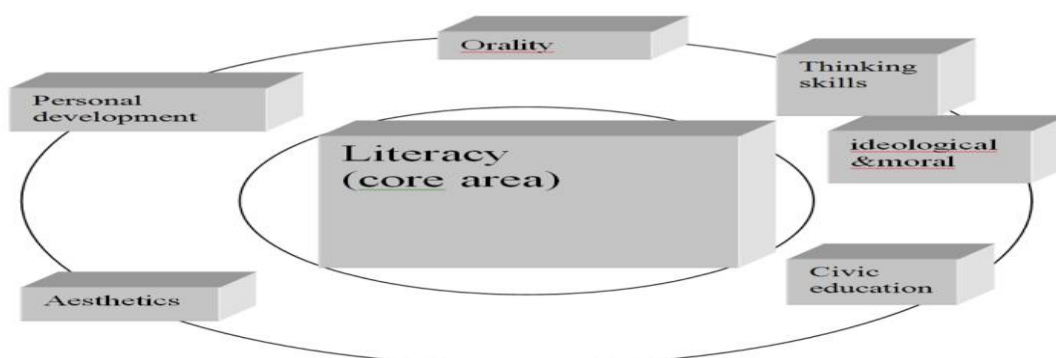
2003 syllabus (Curriculum Standards), is in line with Hunter’s definition of literacy education (Hunter, 1997): rhetoric (reading and writing), aesthetics, and ethics. Hunter’s definition was useful in the analysis of the scope and nature *Yuwen* and its core and extended areas, as presented in the following section.

### 5.2.2.3 Change of scope, functions and aims of *Yuwen* in the syllabuses

In the preceding discussion, the changes in the definition of *Yuwen* were addressed and explored. In this subsection, what *Yuwen* should teach or what content should be included in *Yuwen* will be examined in the relevant syllabus documents.

The question of the content of the *Yuwen* subject is based on the fundamental question of what literacy education or mother tongue education should and can do. There is no denial that however we change the definition of *Yuwen* or revise the perception of the nature of *Yuwen* as a school subject, the core territory of *Yuwen* or mother tongue education is about schooled literacy, that is, the reading and writing of a chosen language, instructed and guided through formal schooling. Although literacy in the narrow sense (reading and writing) is seen as out of fashion and reductionist by Western professionals and scholars today, in recent years, the idea of “back to basics” still has its appeals and is being implemented in education policy and practice in Western countries like UK, Australia (as discussed in Chapter 4 regarding literacy theories). The content of *Yuwen* can be extended to orality,<sup>vii</sup> ideological and moral education, aesthetics education, personal development, thinking skills, civic education and more. Figure 5.1 illustrates the perceived areas of literacy education.

**Figure 5.1** The core area and related domains of literacy education



<sup>vii</sup> Oral skills are particularly important in China as there are six or seven dialects which are not mutually intelligible.

My data suggests that in the 1978 syllabus and its two revised versions (1980 and 1986), the main concern of syllabus writers was how to rationalise the status of *Yuwen* as an independent subject and how to legitimate the area of literacy in the subject under the shadow of heavy party political influence, as, during The Cultural Revolution, *Yuwen* was merged with political education. After the 1990s, the writers attempted to expand the territory of the *Yuwen* subject: the content of literacy was enriched and new spaces like the role of personal development were created in *Yuwen* education. As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Dixon's development theory (Dixon, 1975) came into fashion in the 1970s but no *Yuwen* syllabus documents or research articles in China ever mentioned that the new syllabus is influenced by Dixon's theory. More new discourses were put forward, which are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### 5.2.3 From the literacy and ideological education model to *Yuwen Suyang* (语文素养) and personal development model

#### 5.2.3.1 Period one (1978-2002): Literacy and ideological education: Content analysis of objectives articulated in the 1978 syllabus and its revised versions

Table 5.5 illustrates continuity and change in the aims of the *Yuwen* subject articulated in 5 syllabuses of the first period, which are all based on the 1963 matrix featuring the instrumentalist orientation. I divide the aims into two categories: linguistic competence and non-linguistics objectives including morality, ideology, overt political goals and aesthetics.

**Table 5.5** Ideological principles guiding the teaching and learning practices, and linguistic and non-linguistic aims and objectives of the *Yuwen* syllabuses 1978-2002

Version	Ideological principles	Linguistic competences	Non-linguistic objectives
1978	Marxist standpoint, perspective and method	Improve reading and writing skills Correctly understand and use mother tongue Full literacy in modern standard Chinese Ability to read classic Chinese of basic level Acquire Marxist writing	To receive ideological education ( <i>sixiang jiaoyu</i> ) To raise socialist consciousness To foster proletariat class feeling ( <i>wuchan jieji ganqing</i> ) To establish proletariat world view ( <i>wuchan jieji shijie guan</i> )

Version	Ideological principles	Linguistic competences	Non-linguistic objectives
		style <sup>viii</sup>	
1980	Marxist perspective	<p>Correctly understand and use mother tongue</p> <p>Full literacy in modern standard Chinese</p> <p>Ability to read classic Chinese of basic level</p>	<p>To raise socialist consciousness</p> <p>To foster proletariat class sentiment and values (无产阶级情操)</p> <p>To foster communist morals.</p>
1986	Marxism	<p>Love their mother tongue and correctly understand and use mother tongue</p> <p>Full literacy and full orality in modern standard Chinese (reading, writing, listening and speaking)</p> <p>Ability to read classic Chinese of basic level</p>	<p>Widen students' vision (<i>kaituo shiye</i>)</p> <p>Development of students' intelligence</p> <p>Foster socialist ethics and sentiments</p> <p>Cultivate healthy and noble aesthetic sense</p> <p>Foster patriotism</p>
1996	Dialectical materialism and historic materialism	<p>Correctly understand and use mother tongue</p> <p>Knowledge in language and literature (语文知识)</p> <p>Applied competence in reading, writing and listening and speaking in modern Chinese</p> <p>Basic competence in reading classic Chinese</p>	<p>Basic literary appreciation</p> <p>Learning methods and self-study ability</p> <p>Analytical and problem solving skills</p> <p>Widen students' vision (<i>kaituo shiye</i>) and amass knowledge</p> <p>Encourage the development of individuality and speciality</p> <p>Foster the love of mother tongue and traditional culture</p> <p>Foster aesthetic ability</p> <p>Post-socialist ethics and patriotism</p>

<sup>viii</sup> It is hard to find what Marxist writing style really refers to nor can we link it to Karl Marx's writing style. It is better understood in the light of Mao Zedong and his proposed writing style featuring clear, concise and vernacular language as opposed to a kind of elitist Europeanised writing style. Mao himself chastised this kind of writing in Yan'an by intellectuals whose writing imitated European language(s) in his speech: *Fandui dang bagu* 反对党八股.

Version	Ideological principles	Linguistic competences	Non-linguistic objectives
2002	Marxism and scientific education theories	<p>Applied competence in reading, writing and oral communication skills in modern Chinese</p> <p>Development of language sense (feel of the language) (语感)</p> <p>Basic competence in reading classic Chinese</p>	<p>Basic competence in reading classic Chinese</p> <p>Development of cognition</p> <p>Competence in identifying issues and inquiring and solving problem</p> <p>Foster the love of mother language and Chinese characters</p> <p>Sublime aesthetic taste</p> <p>Interest in contemporary culture life, respect diversity of culture</p> <p>Enhance the culture taste</p> <p>Healthy personality and character</p>

The linguistic competence prescribed in the five syllabus documents remained the same while literacy in the traditional sense (reading and writing) occupied the core area of the *Yuwen* syllabus despite the change of political fashion. Listening and speaking (orality) were added to the syllabus in 1986; however, literacy in narrow sense (reading and writing) remained dominant in the syllabus and, much more importantly, in the assessments and examinations. Like L1 in other countries, reading and writing are dominant in the curriculum and assessment practices. The 2002 version can be regarded as a transitional or interim syllabus linking the two phases or two periods of syllabus documents in two senses. Firstly, it was closely related to the previous versions and was still called “Outline” (*Dagang*). It still adhered to the instrumental approach, emphasizing the training and acquisition of reading and writing skills, but it only lasted for one year before the new “Curriculum Standards”, featuring a holistic and humanist approach, was released. Secondly, to some extent it heralded the fundamental change. In the 2002 version the term *Yuwen Suyang* was advocated and became the dominant concept in the 2003 version, indicating an orientation towards macro-literacy, although the full concept of macro-literacy (*Da Yuwen* 大语文) was not yet presented in the 2002 syllabus.

As indicated above, the core area of *Yuwen* subject was clearly defined in the 1978 syllabus and maintained consistently in all syllabuses all the way through to the 2002 syllabus, due to their genealogical relationship and the imprint of instrumentalism. Linguistic competence and

literacy (reading and writing skills) were situated in the centre. From the 2003 new syllabus (Curriculum Standards), literacy in the traditional sense (reading and writing) vanished, and there was no specific mentioning of reading and writing skills in the syllabuses; instead, a new term: *Yuwen Suyang* (*Yuwen* quality and attainments 语文素养) replaced literacy in the traditional sense.

#### *5.2.3.2 Period two: New concepts and ideas. Analysis of the new Curriculum Standards in the 2003 version*

In addition to the structural change discussed above, innovation and reform are evidenced in the new syllabus called “Curriculum Standards” of 2003. *Yuwen Suyang* (语文素养) embraced the concepts of the cultivation of literacy and linguistic attainments as well as reaffirming the role of literature and the emergence of personal development as a function of literacy education.

#### *Yuwen Suyang: cultivation of literacy and linguistic attainments*

The term *Yuwen Suyang* was first introduced in the 2002 syllabus and defined as:

*Senior high school Yuwen ... further improves students' Yuwen Suyang, in order to enable them to acquire practical reading skills of modern Chinese texts, writing skills and oral communication skills, basic competence in literary appreciation and understanding easy classic texts. (my translation)*

Obviously, under the heading of *Yuwen Suyang* literacy and linguistic competence remain the most important areas. *Yuwen Suyang* is further explained in the 2002 syllabus as acquiring “practical reading and writing skills”, and “oral communication skills” along with “literary appreciation” and other competencies like ethical, cultural and cognitive skills or awareness.

In contrast, in the 2003 syllabus, such words as literacy or reading and writing skills are no longer mentioned. Instead, only a very vague and loose term of “applied literacy competencies” (*Yuwen yingyong nengli* 语文应用能力) was used, which is as confusing as

*Yuwen Suyang* itself.<sup>ix</sup> In these syllabuses, the use of *Yuwen Suyang* as a core concept revealed a more integrated approach and perception of *Yuwen* than the definition in the 2002 syllabus. The core area of literacy (reading and writing skills) was played down and de-emphasized and the specific and detailed description of literacy skills in the 1978-2002 syllabus documents disappeared and was replaced with a more integrated (if not too ambitious) approach and notion aiming at fostering students' full development, which included emotional development, aesthetic sensitivity, personal qualities (*Suzhi* 素质) and thinking skills. The importance of linguistic competences was challenged and *Yuwen* was endowed with many new tasks, if not too many, beyond the "instrumental function" that Ye Shengtao and his followers advocated, supported and implemented for nearly half a century. Thus, the senior high school *Yuwen* subject turned to a more integrated and holistic approach.

#### *5.2.3.3 Reaffirmation of the role of literature and emergence of personal development as a function of literacy education.*

In Chapter 3 I pointed out that the notion of literature being separate from language appeared first in the 1956 high school curriculum. Ye Shengtao believed that literature is an art while language is a science with a different cognitive orientation and the dominant proponents of the "instrumental camp" were inclined to belittle the status of literature in literacy education even after the two subjects of literature and language were reunited in the 1960s.

The 2003 senior high school *Yuwen* syllabuses, under the new name of "Curriculum Standards", tried to transcend the traditional linguistic and instrumental (utilitarian) perception of *Yuwen*. They went so far so to portray *Yuwen* as a super-subject, raising the status of *Yuwen* into a comprehensive and all-purpose subject that did not specify key knowledge and or prescribe the learning activities and language modules such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing or presenting (as in the case of multimedia texts). Further, the roles of language and literacy were sidelined and the role of literature was idealised and elevated.

In the first section of the 2003 "Curriculum Standards", it is stated clearly that senior high school *Yuwen* should fully realise its unique function in facilitating students' development as

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<sup>ix</sup> Even experts like Liu Zhenfu from PEP also critiques the use of *Yuwen suyang* as core concept in the *Yuwen* syllabus for lacking of definition or specification of what constitutes *Yuwen suyang*, making it hard to implement in the practical teaching.

individuals. This guiding thought is reiterated in the elaboration of the third section about the basic ideas of the subject. The tasks and students' requirements are summarised as three dimensions: knowledge and competence, process and methods, emotion and values. It should be noted that these three dimensions were not *Yuwen* specific and were prescribed for all subjects for the first time in the basic education curriculum reform outlined in 2001, which heralded the release of "Curriculum Standards" for all subjects in the ensuing years : Basic Education Syllabus Reform Outline ( Trial Version) (*Jichu Jiaoyu kecheng gaige gangyao (shixing)* 基础教育课程改革纲要 (试行)). The improvement of students' *Yuwen Suyang* as well as students' general quality was stipulated as the first aim of *Yuwen* education. Although there was no definition of students' quality (*Suzhi*), the syllabus provided a long list under this heading which includes: national spirit, culture of excellence, love of motherland and Chinese culture, devotion to the cause of human progress, noble sentiment, positive attitude towards life, understanding of social and scientific and technological development, participating in social practice, understanding of nature, society, and self and, finally, life planning.

The menu of the full development of students did not stop here. The second heading: "emphasize the application of *Yuwen*, aesthetic and inquiry competence, promote balanced but individualistic development" continued to extend the ingredients of development: the nurture of artistic and literary skills, creativity and ability to innovate, aesthetic appreciation and creation, inquiry competence, depth and breadth of thinking about nature and life, and cognitive skills.

Compared to the 1978-2002 syllabuses, the so-called "Curriculum Standards" of 2003 presented an innovative face in content, ideas and discourse, indicating a resolute break with the prevailing instrumental approach in response to the call for innovation from the professional circle. As well as synchronising with the political and educational change, the description of the new ideas about the *Yuwen* subject in the 2003 syllabus portrayed *Yuwen* more as an inspirational and pastoral subject (Hunter, 1997) of art which is concerned more about the development of the student's mind, emotion and inner world than a series of lifeless "instrumental" linguistic skills. However, concurrent with the release of the new syllabus ("Curriculum Standards") came the questioning of and scepticism about its new and innovative concepts. For example, the popular use of *Yuwen Suyang* caused confusion and open interpretation among class teachers (the implementation of the curriculum is worthy of

further inquiry). More importantly, senior high school teaching in China had long been entrance examination oriented and no empirical study exists that shows that this trend was reversed after the new curriculum was released. How this idealistic syllabus has been implemented or distorted in class teaching are addressed in Chapter 7, based on fieldwork featuring the interviews of teachers in China.

#### 5.2.4 Summary of this part

In this part of the analysis of the textual data, I divided the development of *Yuwen* syllabuses into two periods based on the textual organization of syllabuses, and their aims, objectives and other key pedagogical terms. One period evolved from the matrix of the 1963 *Yuwen* syllabus, featuring the mix of the instrumental notion of *Yuwen* as a school subject and the cautious acknowledgement of the party state's political authority and its prevailing ideological inculcation. The second period of development, from 2003 to the present day, witnessed a more receptive attitude towards education reform and socio-political change. This is evidenced in the more innovative ideas and perceptions appearing throughout the syllabuses in the statements of the aims, objectives and approaches, which echoed the debates and discussion surrounding the notion of *Yuwen*. The territory of the subject was expanded and the subject shouldered more responsibilities than the syllabuses of the first period. Among the new responsibilities were to “foster youth development” and “well-rounded” personalities. However at the same time, the core areas of reading and writing skills were sidelined in senior high school syllabuses.

In the next section of this chapter, I present the results of my analysis of the senior high school *Yuwen* syllabuses based on the unit of analysis of the level of key political and educational discourses that appear in them.

### **5.3 Changes of political and educational discourse in the syllabus documents**

In this part of the chapter, I delineate the trajectory of the shift of the key political and educational terms in the *Yuwen* syllabuses. I trace the replacement, addition, and removal of specific political and educational key words in the syllabus documents in order to unravel the tension between textual change and socio-political contextual change.

The syllabus documents under analysis suggest that these texts witnessed a shift from a party-



ideological dominant discourse (Mao’s imprints) to a more liberal and humanist discourse featuring the aims of cultivating literate subjects suitable for China’s drastic socio-political and economical changes. I first trace the use of key political terms such Mao Zedong or the quotation of Mao’s or other CCP leaders’ words in documents in the syllabuses of the first period (1978-2002), then highlight and analyse the use of the new political and educational words such as *Suzhi* (素质 quality), *Chuangxin* (创新 innovation), *Yuwen Suyang* (语文素养 cultivation and attainments) in the selected syllabus documents from 1996-2003. My aim is to describe the relationship between literacy education, State politics and education policy.

### 5.3.1 From over-quotation of Mao Zedong to zero-quotation: A rhetorical strategy from ideology-ridden discourse to pragmatic discourse

#### 5.3.1.1 Maoism, Post-Maoism and De-Maoism tendencies: “The Chairman said” convention

To quote Chairman Mao’s word was not just a fashion but an internalised linguistic strategy appearing in almost all texts in the public domain after 1949, culminating in the Cultural Revolution era. This strategy also pervaded everyday conversation during the Cultural Revolution (Ji, 2004). The 1978 *Yuwen* syllabus text exemplified all the features of public discourse, including frequent quotation of Mao Zedong’s words both as a persuasive technique and as a self-protective strategy in order to ensure political-correctness or political safety. Table 5.6 presents the frequency of representations of Mao Zedong and other CCP leaders in the 1978 syllabus and its subsequent revised versions. The Table reveals how the curriculum was linked to the CCP’s shifting guiding policies.

**Table 5.6** The frequency of quotations from or mentions of Mao and other CCP leaders

Version	Frequency of Mao Zedong’s name or thought mentioned or Mao Zedong quoted	Frequency of mention or quotation of other CCP members	Frequency of mention of Marxism, Leninism
1978	15	1	4
1980	2	0	2
1986	0	0	1

In the 1978 version, unless Mao Zedong’s name was attached to his thought as in “Mao Zedong’s thought” (*Mao Zedong sixiang*), the honorific form was used and Mao Zedong was always called Chairman Mao (*Mao Zhuxi*). If his name was the subject of the sentence, it was

followed by a verb such as *Jiaodao* (teach or instruct), which appeared five times, or *Zhichu* (points out), which was used once.

In the 1980 version, Mao Zedong was addressed as “Comrade” Mao Zedong, which is in line with the post-Mao or more specifically Deng Xiaoping era fashion of addressing Mao in CCP official documents, denoting a more equal but less honorific title than “Chairman” Mao or “The Chairman” exclusively referring to Chairman Mao, which was established during the Cultural Revolution era. Although the syllabus documents witnessed the decreased frequency of quotations of Mao Zedong’s words, the presence of dominant ideological and political vocabulary remained prevalent. The old-fashioned political vocabulary was replaced by new discourses embodying the CCP’s political and educational shift. Table 5.7 provides a brief picture of this trend.

**Table 5.7** Key political terms reflecting CCP’s ideological or policy change.

Version	Key words, phrases or statements that were related to current dominant ideology, CCP’s policy
1978	Class, class feeling Socialist revolution and socialist construction modern socialist world power
1980	Socialist construction
1986	Highly civilised and highly democratic modern socialist power Face the modernisation; Face the world; Face the future: the three-face slogan was proposed by Deng Xiaoping Patriotism

The trend was evident in the various revisions during the years 1978-1986. It would be tempting to assert that the *Yuwen* syllabus underwent a de-politicisation process during this period and that the subject *Yuwen* gained more professional autonomy. However, I argue that de-Maoism does not necessarily mean de-politicisation. Indeed, the absence or withdrawal of the discursive control of the Mao era was accompanied by a new political discourse in a softer manner, as seen in the 1986 version. For instance, references to Mao Zedong and communism were replaced by “modernisation”, “face the world” (synonymous with being open to the world and joining the world capitalism economic system) and “patriotism”, all of which were in line with the open and reform policy of the post-Mao era advocated and implemented by China’s leader Deng Xiao Ping. In this sense, as I argued in the preceding

chapter, de-political itself can be political.

Kwong (Kwong 1985) observed the removal of references to particular communist leaders from the *Yuwen* textbooks in the early 1980s. She argued that such removal was firstly based on practical concerns but was also a strategy to avoid commercial loss by the textbook publisher (PEP) due to unpredictable or sudden personnel changes at the top level of the CCP. For example, Mao's successor, Hua Guofeng, was removed from the position of chairman of the CCP after 1978. Kwong's explanation can also apply to the syllabus documents, which is also in line with the then leader Deng Xiaoping's pragmatic, low key approach and his claim of personal abhorrence of the personality cult. Unlike Mao and Hua Guofeng, Deng's name never appeared in the *Yuwen* textbooks or in the *Yuwen* syllabus documents.

### 5.3.2 *Yuwen Suyang* (*Yuwen* attainments ) and *Suzhi Jiaoyu* (素质教育 quality education) discourse after the 1990s

The data for the 1980s revealed that Maoism discourse gradually faded from the *Yuwen* syllabuses. From the 1990s, a new catchword became prevalent in the public and education domain and eventually became part of the national education policy: *Suzhi* or *Suzhi* education, which can be translated into education for quality. This section is concerned with the appearance of the concept of *Suzhi* and of the *Suzhi* education rhetoric in the *Yuwen* syllabus documents and how the new prevailing *Suzhi* ideology and educational thoughts shaped the *Yuwen* syllabuses. I first draw on the research and government documents on *Suzhi* and *Suzhi* education in order to shed light on the impact of social and political change on education reform and education discourse. Then I analyse how *Yuwen* as a school subject embraced the dominant *Suzhi Jiaoyu* (*Suzhi* education) discourse in the syllabus documents.

#### 5.3.2.1 *Suzhi* (素质) , *Suzhi Jiaoyu* (素质教育 *Suzhi* education): the new socio-economic contexts and the new literate subject in the post-Mao era

Kipnis (2006) described the origin of the word *Suzhi* and its rise and transformation from the 1980s in China. He first analysed the two morphemes that constitute the disyllabic word: *Su* (素) and *Zhi* (质). *Zhi* means nature, character or matter, while *Su* means plain, white and unadorned. *Suzhi*, as a compound word refers to the inborn qualities of a human being. Kipnis found that in its 1979 version *Cihai* (辞海), a large Chinese dictionary and

encyclopaedia, defined *Suzhi* as the inborn characteristics of a person (Kipnis, 2006, p. 297). The transformation of the usage of *Suzhi* occurred in the late 1970s together with major social and educational change in China. Semantically, the stress on the inborn, genetic qualities diminished, and instead, the word *Suzhi* increasingly denoted the characteristics and qualities cultivated and crafted through education and upbringing. The usage of the term and concept of *Suzhi* was particularly predominant in two fields: China's birth control policy and its education policy. In the birth control policy, the most common combination was *Renkou Suzhi* (人口素质 population quality) while in the education policy it was *Suzhi Jiaoyu* (education for personal quality). The word *Suzhi* has gained such a dominant position in China's political, educational and even popular discourse that it has drawn the attention of many Western China scholars, in particular, anthropologists, since the 1990s (Kipnis, 2001, 2006; Sigley, 2009; Woronov, 2003). In addition to the fields of education and population control, *Suzhi* has become a very powerful discursive weapon in popular discourse of dominant urbanites (mainly middle class). On the one hand, it is used by the media and in everyday conversation to uphold moral conduct in public places; on the other hand, it also functions to privilege and justify the symbolic or substantive status of urban middle class by highlighting their civilized manners and behaviours and derogating the inferior outsiders. For instance, urban employers use "low *Suzhi*" to brand and arbitrarily stigmatise their domestic maids, most of whom are migrant women from rural China (Sun, 2009). As Jacka observed:

*Suzhi* is very much a part of contemporary public culture, being reproduced by numerous different social actors and in a variety of popular as well as official discourses. It is both a common, taken-for-granted word whose meaning and function vary and are much contested but which nevertheless seems to distil a set of values that are central and specific to particular historical and social conditions. (Jacka, 2009, p. 524)

It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to undertake a comprehensive review and analysis of *Suzhi* in all the social fields in contemporary China. However, I believe that it is worth exploring how *Suzhi* is initiated, inculcated, embraced or even resisted by the various social actors in the educational field and its sub-fields, the curriculum documents. I therefore investigate the meaning of *Suzhi* and *Suzhi Jiaoyu* (education for quality) in wider socio-political contexts and examine which social actors are promoting this discourse, for what purposes, and who benefits and who is disadvantaged.

### 5.3.2.2 Emergence of *Suzhi* and *Suzhi Jiaoyu* and its teleology; convergence of education and the State in the post-Mao era

The advocacy of *Suzhi* and *Suzhi Jiaoyu* from the late 20th century till today has two aims. Firstly, *Suzhi* and *Suzhi* education reflects the State's urge to produce well-rounded students (high quality) fit for the global economic competition in the post-Mao era (Woronov, 2003). For instance, such qualities as creativity and the pursuit of science and technology are all enlisted as *Suzhi* in the curriculum, along with moral ethics such as the loyalty to the nation. Secondly, *Suzhi* was proposed to balance the prevalent utilitarian pedagogy that focussed too much on examination results, in particular the university entrance examination (*Gaokao*).

As I discussed in my literature review, among other key subjects required for *Gaokao*, *Yuwen* was conveniently linked to the imperial civil service examination (科举 *Keju*). It was attacked by Chinese education reforms during the periods of Chinese modernisation and revolution including in the radical education reform in the Cultural Revolution initiated by Mao Zedong (Dello-lacovo, 2009), during which the university entrance examination was abolished. From 1972, Chinese universities enrolled students recommended by factories, villages and the army where candidates served rather than new senior high school graduates, and the selection criteria were mainly about moral and political merits. However, as Benjamin A. Elman observed, "The ghost of the civil service examinations lived on in Chinese public school and college entrance examinations, which have now become universal and are no longer unique to imperial China" (Elman, 2009, p. 2672). The belief that the university entrance examination was an avenue of social mobility as it had functioned in imperial times persists and was reinforced in 1977 with its resumption. Tradition won again.

From the turn of the century until today the adverse effects of the obsession with the examination results have incurred much criticism even by those who benefitted from it. Dello-lacovo (2009) listed following criticisms:

- It is an elitist education focusing on promising students and selective schools (key schools) at the cost of the majority of students, most of whom are doomed to be losers due to the limited education resources.

- There is too much focus on the subjects that are tested in the examination, such as math, Chinese, and English at the cost of other subjects that are equally or even more important to students, such as physical education, music and arts. All the learning activities are designed to address the tasks and questions directly related to the examinations at the cost of hands-on learning experience, individual interest and creativity.
- Excessive pressures are placed on students starting primary school levels and have caused psychological problems.

All of these aspects come down to such essential questions addressing parents, educationalists and the government as: What kind of subjects (persons) do we expect our children or next generation to become? What desirable qualities do we expect to be developed through so-called *Suzhi Jiaoyu* in a globalised market place?

### *5.3.2.3 Institutionalization of Suzhi in state policy: 1999 State Council and CCP joint directive: the top down implementation process*

The discourse of *Suzhi Jiaoyu* evolved from being about remedial issues to become the dominant political and educational discourse. *Suzhi Jiaoyu* was promulgated by the central government in 1999 as national education policy and the direction of education reform, and the CCP Central Committee and the State Council jointly released a directive called “The decision of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council to further the education reform and implement full-scale *Suzhi* education” (中共中央国务院关于深化教育改革，全面推进素质教育的决定) (CCPCC&SC, 1999). The 1977 resumption of university entrance examinations can be regarded as a correction of Mao’s radical education reform that had promoted all-rounded development, educational democracy, the relevance of education, hands-on experience, abolition of, or de-emphasis of the role of examinations. On the other hand, the 1999 *Suzhi Jiaoyu* reform aimed to remedy the exam-orientation of education since 1977. All qualities included in the government documents and academic publications from the 1990s regarding the all-round educational purpose of *Suzhi* education bore a remarkable resemblance to Mao’s thoughts on education, although the rationale for the reform was the context of the globalized, knowledge-based economy and international competition. In this period of educational reform, Mao’s name and his credits were not overtly acknowledged. Instead, *Suzhi Jiaoyu* was credited to an idealized West.

In the above-mentioned 1999 directive jointly issued by the Chinese Communist Party’s

Central Committee and the State Council (CCPCC&SC, 1999), the importance of *Suzhi Jiaoyu*, according to the title, was equated with the education reform as the major theme. The directive falls into four parts: 1) Comprehensively promote *Suzhi Jiaoyu*, cultivating socialist successors who have the capabilities required for the construction of 21st century modernization; 2) Deepen and facilitate educational reform; 3) Optimize the structure of teaching staff and train and develop high quality teachers to implement *Suzhi Jiaoyu*; and 4) Strengthen the leadership, society and the CCP members to work together to create a new configuration of *Suzhi Jiaoyu* (my translation). Obviously the first directive directly addresses the questions of what kind of subjects the State expects the education system to produce and reproduce, and what kind of *Suzhi* (qualities) are the goals of subject formation or what qualities would constitute the “socialist successors to serve the 21st century modernization of China.”

The first directive reveals the big picture of the CCP’s education policy of stressing the ultimate aim of enhancing the quality of citizens (*Guomin Suzhi* 国民素质) with the emphasis on cultivating students’ innovative and practical competence in order to produce a labour force or citizens with “socialist vision, ethics, knowledge and (self) discipline and full moral, academic (intelligence), physical and aesthetic development”. The core value of full development or well-rounded development reiterated in the *Suzhi Jiaoyu* directive of 1999 is a continuation of the modern education discourse which can be traced back to the education philosophy and practice of Cai Yuanpei and Mao Zedong. However, the State’s new requirement underpinning this education policy is the transformation of the economy in the globalized market.

#### 5.3.2.4 Defining *Suzhi* and *Suzhi Jiaoyu* in the new socio-economic contexts

One of the barriers to understanding *Suzhi* and *Suzhi* education lies in the fact that there is no exact counterpart of *Suzhi* in the English language to cover all the functions in all the contexts and fields that *Suzhi* actively and powerfully covers in Chinese. Dello-lacovo (2009) quoted five translations: competence education, quality education, essential qualities-oriented education, and character education. Kipnis (2006) suggested that the term *Suzhi Jiaoyu* may be likened to the North American character education.

*Suzhi Jiaoyu* has a dual character. On the one hand, it arose from the negation of the education practice and system that placed too much emphasis on examination results. Any

measures, approaches and ideas that were meant to rectify this trend could be put in the basket of *Suzhi Jiaoyu*, no matter how contradictory they were (Kipnis, 2006). On the other hand, it is constructive and positive. Woronov (2003) also linked *Suzhi* education with the modern Chinese educationalist Cai Yuanpei (1868-1940) as well as with Mao Zedong's thoughts on education.

*Suzhi* education in the post-Mao era should be examined in the context of international competition that post-Mao China faces, as was stressed in the very first of the 1999 *Suzhi* education directives. The rationale for education reform and *Suzhi* education is attributed to the new international configuration featuring the rapid development of science and technology, and the increasingly fierce international competition. Education is believed to be the foundation of the development of national strength, and national strength relies more and more on the quality of the workforce and the quality and quantity of the talents in all areas of endeavour. In this context, the full development of the human being is concerned with how to form the new subjects required for international competition and the transition of the socialist market economy into a globalized market economy (CCP Central Committee and State Council, 1999)

*Suzhi* education means the “full development” in the “fit-prescription” featuring the integration of “body, mind and student well being”. The 1999 directive prescribed an ensemble of elements that are deemed essential for the construction and formation of the subject “fit” for the above-mentioned new international environment as perceived by the State. This directive inherited the traditional approach of integrating moral education with inculcation of the dominant political philosophy (Woronov, 2003); hence, Marxism, Maoism and Deng Xiao Ping theory are listed as the guidance for moral education.

*Suzhi* education also stresses the cultivation of innovation, creativity and individuality for the new subjects facing international competition. This “ingredient” is both remedial and constructive. It is remedial because it is meant to rectify the “examination” mind-set that focuses on rote learning and repetition in order to achieve high marks in the examination. *Suzhi* education's “constructiveness” is meant to address the “knowledge economy”, as showcased by the creativity in high technology and management of many successful multinational corporations.

The strident call for the cultivation of innovation and creativity in education was an



expression of the new perception of the relationship of integration and competition between China and the outside world, in particular the “West”. It transferred the anxiety of the State and the wider society to the education sector, which is the eagerness to create the mechanism of producing and re-producing the talents required to become competitive in the global economy.

Finally, the 1999 government policy document also stipulated literacy competence or the ability to use the mother tongue as an indispensable part of *Suzhi* education along with the aesthetic literacy or aesthetic education. *Yuwen* education was deemed the most appropriate vehicle for teaching these skills.

In sum, China’s education policy and discourse have witnessed a de-Maoism process since the 1980s. Education policy has been attuned to the party-state’s new developmental path of integration into the market economy and global competition. The *Suzhi* discourse, emerging in the 1990s, became dominant in education policy and education discourse with the aims of producing new subjects for the new socio-economic conditions.

### 5.3.3 How *Yuwen* syllabus documents embraced *Suzhi* and *Suzhi* education discourse

#### 5.3.3.1 *A voluntary embrace with the State education policy*

As discussed above, *Yuwen* competence or competence of communication in Chinese as mother tongue is an important dimension highlighted in *Suzhi* education policy. After the 1990s, the qualities or objectives mandated in *Yuwen* syllabus documents were consciously related to or attuned to *Suzhi* (qualities) education advocated in government education policies (CCP Central Committee and State Council, 1993, 1999). Such qualities as aesthetic appreciation, moral cultivation, national cultural heritage are more or less related to the modern *Yuwen* or the traditional (pre-modern) literacy curriculum. At the same time, the development of *Yuwen* education also required the school subject to expand its traditional territory and “macro-*Yuwen* (*Da Yuwen* 大语文)” was proposed to transcend the narrowly defined role of “reading and writing” traditionally assigned to *Yuwen*. The “macro-*Yuwen*” syllabus, unique among the syllabuses of all other subjects in the school system, included thinking skills, personality development, psychological development, aesthetic literacy and information literacy. This echoed the question facing all language and literacy education around the world; it was also a continuation of the debate of *Yuwen* education in the past

century, such as the debate over the relationship between linguistic components and literature within the *Yuwen* curriculum.

I would argue that when the *Suzhi* education discourse became prevalent and dominant, the *Yuwen* syllabus echoed and intentionally became integrated with the State's education policy. If we interpret the "instrumental argument" advocated by Ye Shengtao and his colleagues as a withdrawal strategy of self-protection from direct and tight political and ideological control, then the integration of *Yuwen* education with *Suzhi* education can be understood as an attempt to expand the territory of this subject and enhance its status among other school subjects. It also resonates with the continuing debate worldwide about first language or literacy education: should the mother tongue or first language curriculum only cover the narrowly defined areas of literacy, that is, the reading and writing skills, or should it be elevated to literacy plus liberal or humanist education? I conclude that the content of *Suzhi* education is a Chinese version of humanist education in the West.

#### *5.3.3.2 Production and formation of the literate whole person: How Yuwen syllabuses embraced Suzhi education*

*Suzhi* discourse was increasingly evident in *Yuwen* syllabuses from the middle of the 1980s to the 2003 "Curriculum Standards". Historically, literacy in China played the important role of teaching moral values and inculcating political thoughts. The revered texts of the Confucian Classics and children's primers all functioned as literacy training as well as subject formation for the State and ruling class. The humanist tradition of literacy education, although suppressed in various eras for a variety of reasons, resonates with the call of the "well-rounded person" advocated by *Suzhi* education.

The term *Suzhi* first appeared in 1986 in the *Yuwen* syllabus with *Yuwen* specifically related to civic education in the socialist context as:

Yuwen subject plays a significant role in enhancing students' moral quality (*Suzhi*) and scientific and cultural competence or quality (*Suzhi*) and fostering socialist citizens with ideal, ethic, culture and discipline. (Institute 2001, p.477, my translation)

The 1996 senior high school *Yuwen* syllabus repeated such wording as, "enhancing students'

moral quality (*Suzhi*) and scientific and cultural quality (*Suzhi*)”. What merits noting is that in this document, among other equally important roles that were assumed for *Yuwen* as a school subject, *Suzhi* (quality) was listed in the introduction as for the enhancement of the national citizenry. The appearance of *Suzhi* in the 1996 *Yuwen* syllabus can be understood as resonating with the *Suzhi* education discourse that emerged in the 1990s.

The 2002 syllabus is commonly regarded as a transitional document because the new “Curriculum Standards” for all subjects were being drafted concurrently for release in 2003. The 2002 version still used moral quality (*Suzhi*) and scientific and cultural quality (*Suzhi*), but no reference was made to the role of *Yuwen* in enhancing the quality of the national citizenry. However, this document delineated other comprehensive qualities that *Yuwen* was assigned to foster: thinking skills, problem solving skills, personal growth and personality development.

The *Yuwen* “Curriculum Standards” of 2003 fully embraced the State’s *Suzhi* education policy and discourse; this is evident in their aims, objectives and processes (methodology, suggested teaching approaches). As discussed earlier, *Suzhi* education discourse is concerned with the subject formation, that is, what kind of graduates will be produced through the education. This is very akin to the core question raised by advocators of western liberal education: the ideal of the educated person (Mulcahy, 2009). In regard to the *Yuwen* syllabus, the question can be adapted as: what literacy education can contribute to the form and shape the students’ habitus?

The 2003 curriculum claimed that *Yuwen* needs to fully utilise its advantage in educating and cultivating the whole person or the ideal educated person (*Yuren gongnen* 育人功能). This is the point of convergence of the *Yuwen* curriculum and *Suzhi* education. This line of argument of cultivating whole person has long been embedded in Chinese literacy education and can be dated back to the Confucian tradition of liberal education. Its modern version is the promotion of the role of humanist education in the *Yuwen* curriculum. The predominance of *Suzhi* education provided a good chance for *Yuwen* as a school subject to activate suppressed intellectual energy by expanding its ambit and elevating its status among other school subjects. *Yuwen* is the ideal subject for *Suzhi* education to implement its ideals. My fieldwork data also suggested that all the teachers interviewed agreed that *Yuwen* is the most suitable subject to implement the *Suzhi* education (see Chapter 7 regarding the interviews with *Yuwen*

teachers in China).

The kind of person that Western liberal education and China's *Suzhi* and *Yuwen* education attempts to form and the desirable qualities to be attained are amazingly convergent, although there is little or no reference to Western liberal and general education theories in Chinese *Suzhi* education policy or the *Yuwen* syllabus documents. Table 5.8 presents the key components of the implementation in *Yuwen* "Curriculum Standards" and the similarities between *Suzhi* education and western liberal education philosophy.

The function of cultivating the whole person" developed with the change of the society and the development of education theories. According to Mulcahy (2009), the concept of liberal education or general education itself evolves with social change, as does the concept of the "ideal person". From the Table above, it can be asserted that *Suzhi* education and Western liberal education are homogenized and convergent in many of the core concepts that are the focus of the *Yuwen* education syllabus. Common notions are the emphasis on the integration and application of knowledge and on the role of non-cognitive elements in education such as emotion, feeling, values, attitudes and aesthetic appreciation, respect of personality and individuality.

**Table 5.8** Comparison of Western liberal education and *Suzhi* education in *Yuwen* syllabuses and general education policy

	<b>1999 <i>Suzhi</i> Education directive</b>	<b>2003 Senior high school <i>Yuwen</i> “Curriculum Standards”</b>	<b>Mulcahy’s (2009) review &amp; definition of 21st century liberal education</b>
Vision or aims of the of the education	Produce the talents for the 21st century and enhance national quality	Integration of the instrumental function (literacy) and humanist education, its special role in personal development(Three aspects: knowledge and competence, emotion, and process and methods as outlined below)	Produce ideal person through general or liberal education
Intellectual development	Inspire students’ independent thinking and innovation consciousness, scientific spirit, analytical and problem solving skills, literacy skills	First aspect: Knowledge and competence. Ability to innovate and motivation for exploration: The study of <i>Yuwen</i> should be a process of exploring unknown areas.	John Henry Newman: Cultivation of intellect and intellectual excellence, philosophical habit of mind, a notion characterized by broad knowledge and, as Ker (1990, pp. 4-10) emphasized, the ability to engage in analysis and critical reflection.
Moral and personal development, Aesthetic appreciation	Marxist worldview and life attitude, patriotism, collectivism and nationalism. Civic education.  Psychological development is also put in the category of moral education.  Team work, cultivation of ability of social practice, combining education with social practice as important path of training all-round talents	Second: Emotion (feelings), attitudes and values  Emphasize <i>Yuwen</i> ’s special role in aesthetic education to enhance students’ full development in cognitive, emotion and willpower.	Adler: general preparation for citizenship (civic formation), acquisition of organized knowledge,  Personal development: the development of intellectual skills, and the enlargement of understanding, insight, and aesthetic appreciation.  Martin’s new dimension of general education: values of practicality, feelings and emotions, and the three Cs of care, concern and connection.

	<b>1999 Suzhi Education directive</b>	<b>2003 Senior high school Yuwen “Curriculum Standards”</b>	<b>Mulcahy’s (2009) review &amp; definition of 21st century liberal education</b>
Pedagogical methods	Heuristic models of teaching, understanding and experiencing knowledge production,  Cultivation of social practice, and team work	Third aspect: Process and methods:  Encourage students to participate in social practice. Strengthen the link with other subjects.  Give full consideration of individual students’ interests, needs, development paths and aspirations in teaching.  Cooperative learning and research focused study	Hutchins and Ader: nonspecialized and nonvocational  Hirst’s rethinking of theoretical knowledge and experiential knowledge (“education may at many stages turn out to be best Approached through practical concerns”)  Martin: concern, and connection. Active participants, not merely passive observers in education  Bereiter: school as workshop for the generation of knowledge, division of known and unknown knowledge area  Mulcahy: gives full recognition to the experience, capacities, and interests of the individual.

## 5.4 Summary

This chapter has examined six senior high school *Yuwen* syllabus documents from 1978-2003 along with relevant guiding government documents, with a view to exploring the changes in content and discourse in the syllabuses. The analysis focussed on the qualitative content by identifying the major components of the syllabuses and the key political and educational rhetoric changes.

Based on the textual data, the evolution of *Yuwen* syllabuses is divided into two phases: the 1978-2002 phase, i.e. the *Dagang* (curriculum outline) period; and the 2003-present phase, the “Curriculum Standards” period. The 1978 versions and its subsequent revision featured Mao’s political and ideological control over the literacy syllabus. They embraced the CCP’s dominant political perceptions of literacy education (*Yuwen*) while they revived the instrumental literacy perception. There is evidence of a compromise between the relative autonomy of *Yuwen* professionals and the top down political control. The second phase of the *Yuwen* syllabuses has demonstrated strong resonance with the state’s *Suzhi* education discourse and policy by integrating into the *Yuwen* syllabus such concepts of the *Suzhi*

discourse as “Macro-*Yuwen*”(Da *Yuwen* 大语文) and *Yuwen* humanist qualities (*Renwen Suyang* 人文素养). The new syllabus (Curriculum Standards) can be interpreted as strategies by the curriculum experts of the subject to harmonize with the state’s *Suzhi* education policy, thereby securing and enhancing the status of *Yuwen* as a school subject.

The trajectory of the change is obvious. The evolution of *Yuwen* syllabuses from phase one to phase two indicated the shift of the aims of the syllabuses: From Mao’s literate subject to the modern high *Suzhi* literate citizen. This citizen is equipped not only with reading and writing skills in the mother tongue but all the other qualities designated by the state. In this sense, the *Yuwen* syllabus and curriculum can never be separated from its socio-political contexts. In the next chapter, I focus on the analyses of the textbooks and the text selection, which are deemed to be guided by the syllabuses.

## Chapter 6: Findings from Textbook Analysis

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with two essential issues centred on the *Yuwen* textbooks. The first is the change of the textbook production and adoption mechanism. The second is the analysis of the contents of the textbooks, which focuses on the authors and the themes of the texts selected in the *Yuwen* textbooks. The aim of this chapter is to address the second research question and explore the dynamics of the changes in the text lists and the social change exemplified in the field of *Yuwen* education at senior high school level.

I start with the description of the special role of the textbook in education and curriculum design and implementation in Chinese society. A general description follows of two series of textbooks published after the new 2003 “Curriculum Standards” was established. Before proceeding with the textbook analysis, I present definitions and classifications of the authors and themes for the purpose of data collection and processing.

The bulk of this chapter is devoted to a historical outline of the trajectory of changes in texts and authors from the 1980s to 2004, based on the data analysis of the 10 volumes of senior high school *Yuwen* textbooks of the two series approved and published in 2004 by the People’s Education Press (PEP) and the Jiangsu Education Publishing House Press (JEPH). Based on the results of data analysis, I discuss: 1) the compliance of the text selection and interpretation in the textbooks with the guidelines and statements in the syllabus documents and 2) the impact of social, political and economic change on text selection and interpretation.

### 6.2. Textbook and curriculum design in China

#### 6.2.1 Centrality and uniformity of syllabus, textbook and examination from 1978-2003

The relationship between the senior high school syllabus, the textbook and the university entrance examination featured high uniformity and coherence from 1978 to 2003. The 1978 *Yuwen* syllabus and its subsequent revised versions all prescribed a text list for all year levels. Consequently, the national *Yuwen* textbooks published by the People’s Education Press (PEP) used the same text list to compile textbooks, add notes, and linguistic and literary knowledge, introduction and exercises. In this sense, textbooks functioned as the reified embodiment of



the syllabus and main source of teaching and learning.

Lai (1995, p. 103) suggested that in China, the term “textbook” can be regarded as synonymous with “syllabus” or even with “curriculum”. Lai (1995), referring to her teacher interviews about syllabus guidelines, textbooks and examinations, believed that teachers generally refer to textbooks and public examinations rather than syllabuses for information regarding the official expectations of outcomes of the *Yuwen* curriculum.

The text lists in the appendices of syllabuses of 1978 and 1980 were identical with the PEP 1978 and 1981 *Yuwen* textbooks. Lai also revealed that the text list prescribed in the 1980 syllabus was based on the 1979 PEP *Yuwen* textbooks (Lai, 1995, p. 161). In fact, until 1987 PEP was both the designer and publisher of *Yuwen* syllabus and textbooks, although the publisher sought advice from experts mainly from universities and research centres (Lai, 1995, p. 112). This can only mean that PEP played a prime role in curriculum production as a high-level agency affiliated with the Ministry of Education of the PRC.

#### 6.2.2 From uniformity to diversity

The reform and experiments of *Yuwen* textbook compilation, distribution and adoption occurred after the new syllabus called “Curriculum Standards” was released in 2003. This reform was concomitant with the moves to de-centralize national university entrance examinations. As early as 1985, Shanghai was allowed to organise their own examinations. By 2006 more than 16 provinces and municipalities were permitted to organise their own examinations, including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian etc. (Gu, 2011). This resulted in more freedom for provincial and local levels to decide what subjects are to be tested and, more importantly, how they are tested. The reform and de-centralization of university entrance examinations gave intellectual and financial incentives to local education administration and curriculum authorities to compile and distribute their own textbook series.

To implement the new syllabus (“Curriculum Standards”), after 2004 seven publishing houses across China published their own *Yuwen* textbooks for senior high school including the PEP, the *Yuwen* Publishing House and the Beijing Publishing House, the Jiangsu Education Publishing House (JEPH), the Guangdong Education Publishing House (GEPH), the Shanghai Education Publishing House (SEPH) and the Shandong People’s Press (SPP). It

is noted that PEP, JPEH textbooks and other textbooks series based on the 2003 “Curriculum Standards” versions are being used to the present day (2016) with very minor adjustments. The PEP textbooks are still embraced by many provinces where local textbooks are not available, while enjoying the highest market share. However, its previous monopoly status has been challenged: for example, Zhejiang, a neighbouring province to Jiangsu, uses the JEPH senior high school *Yuwen* textbook. Beijing, where PEP is based, uses their own textbooks published by the Beijing Publishing House rather than the PEP *Yuwen* textbook series.

### 6.3 Senior high school *Yuwen* textbooks in the market

#### 6.3.1 Centralism versus localism: the process of de-centralization of textbook publication and distribution

The time span of the implementation of the new *Yuwen* syllabus (national “Curriculum Standards”) for senior high school (with its accompanying textbooks series) across China has stretched from 2004 to the present day. The first cohort of four provinces (Guangdong, Shandong, Ningxia and Hainan) started using the new senior high school textbooks for the new curriculum in 2004, while the last group including Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Chongqing, Xizang (Tibet), Hubei and Guangxi started using the new textbooks in 2010. An unofficial census conducted in 2009 presented a clear picture of the distribution of senior high school *Yuwen* textbooks across 15 provinces and municipalities that used the new textbooks for the new syllabus “Curriculum Standards” (see Table 6.1 below).

#### 6.3.2 Senior high school *Yuwen* textbooks distribution as of 2009

As of 2009 the PEP textbook was still prevalent (its 2004 version and 2007 version with very minor change of the individual texts), with 7 provinces appointing it as the textbook for the entire province and 5 provinces using it as textbook for some or most of their subordinate cities. Table 6.1, which is adapted from the online source,<sup>x</sup> shows the senior high school *Yuwen* textbook distribution status in 2009.

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<sup>x</sup> Summary of 2009 *Yuwen* textbook adopted by provinces and municipalities (2009 *Quanguo geshengshi putong gaozhong kebiao jiakai shiyong qingkuang huizong* 年全国各省市普通高中课标教材版本使用情况汇总) <http://wenku.baidu.com/view/8c3d4b19964bcf84b9d57b77.html>

**Table 6. 1** The senior high school *Yuwen* textbooks adopted by provinces and municipalities

Provinces and municipalities	Textbooks series by publishing houses	Notes
Hainan	JEP/PEP	Two cities and counties including the capital cities Haikou use JEP series, the other 17 cities and counties all use PEP series.
Guangdong	GEP/PEP/ <i>Yuwen</i> Publishing House (YPH)	3 cities use PEP series, 1 uses <i>Yuwen</i> series and all the other cities use GEP series including the capital city Guangzhou use GEP series
Shandong	Shandong People's Press (SPS), PEP and JEP	9 cities use SPP including the capital city Ji'Nan, 5 use JEP series, 3 use PEP
Ningxia	PEP	
Jiangsu	JEP	All 13 cities use JEP
Fu Jian	PEP/YPH	8 cities use PEP and 1 uses YPH
Liaoning	PEP/YPH	2 cities use YPH including capital city Shenyang, 12 cities use PEP
Anhui	PEP	All 17 cities use PEP
Zhejiang	JEP	All 11 cities use JEP
Tianjin (Municipality)	PEP	
Hunan	PEP	All 13 cities use PEP
Shan'xi	PEP	All 10 cities use PEP
Jilin	PEP	Not just <i>Yuwen</i> , but all the other subjects use PEP as well
Heilongjiang	PEP	All 12 cities use PEP
Beijing	Beijing People's Press (BPP)	Started from Sept 2007

JEPH is the only non-Beijing based publishing house that has its senior *Yuwen* high textbooks accepted beyond its own territory. The JEPH senior high *Yuwen* textbooks series are used in

all the cities of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces and some cities of Hainan and Shandong provinces. In this sense, this series can be ranked the second most influential in terms of the market share.

### 6.3.3 The provincial and local decision

There are a variety factors which contribute to the local decision of which textbooks to adopt. They are:

- 1) The power configuration: The power relation between the local education administration and its higher governing body, such as the Ministry of Education of PRC with the Provincial Education Administration, and the Provincial Education Administration with the City Education Bureau.
- 2) Relevance and suitability of the textbooks: This constitutes a contradiction. On the one end is the national “Curriculum Standards”, authorized by the governing body, such as the Ministry of Education together with the PEP textbooks; on the other hand, localism and regionality are increasingly promoted and represented in local textbooks such as the BPP’s Beijing flavour and the GEP’s so called Ling’nan (Cantonese or the regions of Southern China including Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan) culture.
- 3) The quality of the textbooks: This comprises a long list of ingredients such as the ideas and philosophy of literacy education or mother tongue education of the textbook compilers, the organisation of the textbooks, and the aesthetic tastes of compilers in terms of text selection, in particular of modern texts which may be controversial.
- 4) The tradition and accumulated reputation of the publishing house: It can be seen from Table 6.1 above that the PEP remains the most reputable publishing house, particularly in Northern China.
- 5) The marketing and lobbying power of the publishing house: After the de-centralization of textbook compilation, the local education authorities, mainly at provincial levels, were offered the autonomy of textbook selection, but most provinces, where the local *Yuwen* textbooks are not available, still choose PEP *Yuwen* textbooks. However, Zhejiang province, which features strong economic development and is renowned for its literary tradition, decided to adopt JEPH textbooks rather than to compile their own series or use PEP series. In

contrast, Shandong province allowed some cities to either use the PEP or JEPH textbooks rather than their local textbooks compiled by SPP. In this chapter, I focus on the content analysis of the PEP and JEPH senior high school *Yuwen* textbooks, which represent respectively the centralised tradition of *Yuwen* textbook compilation and the newly arisen trend of local *Yuwen* textbook compilation that embraces more reform and new ideas in *Yuwen* teaching and learning.

## **6.4 Data collection, previous studies and general description of PEP and JEPH senior high school textbooks**

### 6.4.1 Previous studies and my data collection

Since the early 2000s, a number of PhD and Master's theses have analysed *Yuwen* textbooks from a variety of perspectives (Chen, 2010; Fu, 2002). Two Master's theses completed in 2009 and 2012 respectively addressed among other aspects of *Yuwen* textbooks, the selection of texts and the changes in the text lists in the PEP and four other textbook series published after 2004 when the new "Curriculum Standards" were established.

Jiang (2009, pp. 33-71) devoted one third of her thesis to a comparison of the text selections in five *Yuwen* textbook series (post-2004 versions) from the following perspectives: size, time, genre, range and theme. In contrast to Jiang's synchronic (cross-sectional) study, Shan (2012) compared the PEP 2003 and 2004 textbook series, of which the 2004 series was designed to address the new syllabus ("Curriculum Standards") released in 2003.

Both theses have contributed original and substantial findings; however, due to the restriction of the disciplinary perspective and perceived academic censorship, some sensitive issues that need to be examined under the wider social and political milieu were intentionally or unintentionally avoided, such as nationalism, patriotism, and shifting state ideology.

My data includes three sets of senior high school *Yuwen* textbooks published by PEP from the 80s, 90s and post 2000. Therefore, the configuration of the 2004 PEP and JEPH textbooks are examined in the historical setting which reveals more clearly the stability and change of quality and quantity, continuity and innovation. The 2004 PEP version evolved from its predecessors although its appearance is meant to address the new "Curriculum Standards". While the 2004 JEPH textbook was compiled to correspond to the new "Curriculum

Standards” without referencing or deliberately breaking away from the PEP matrix, actually PEPH and other textbooks series are in a competitive relation with PEP textbooks.

#### 6.4.2 Structural differences and organization by themes versus by genres

This section is devoted to the structural analysis of the PEP and JEPH senior high school textbooks. It examines the organisation and structure of the textbooks. The most noticeable change in the organisation of the JEPH textbooks is that the texts are arranged by the themes rather than in the old way of arrangement by genres or chronological clues. However, the PEP texts still follow the old way.

##### 6.4.2.1 Structure and organisation of PEP textbooks

Each volume of the PEP textbook comprises four sections: 1) reading and appreciation; 2) expressions and communication; 3) summarisation and exploration; 4) introduction of masterpieces (PEP Volume1, Foreword). The section on reading and appreciation for close reading and discussion in the class constitutes the main body of each volume. Each volume has four units that are arranged by functions and genres; for example, the first unit of Volume 1 is of modern poems featuring imagery and emotions.<sup>xi</sup> Five volumes provide 65 lessons with 67 pieces of work in total. In Volume 1, for example, there are two instances where two poems and two pieces of brief news make one lesson each.

The section on expressions and communications provides the guidelines for writing as well as oral communication. Volumes 1 and 2 focus on narrative (*jixu* 记叙), descriptive writing and imaginative writing (*miaoxie* 描写, *xugou* 虚构); Volumes 3 and 4 deal with argumentative writing (*yilun* 议论), while Volume 5 provides a guide for further improvement: analytical skills (*yuanshixili* 缘事析理), love including affection and emotion between parents and children (*qinqing* 亲情), literary grace (*wencai* 文采), and innovation ability and creativity (*chuangxin* 创新). For oral communication, each volume deals with one kind of genre: recitation (*langsong* 朗诵), speech, discussion, debate and interview.

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<sup>xi</sup> Although in the Foreword, the compilers claim that this unit features four modern poems, the first poem, written by Mao Zedong in 1925, belongs to the genre of classic poem *ci*, of which the oldest surviving texts can be traced back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Actually Mao himself never published any poems written in modern Chinese.

The third section is about summarisation and exploration. According to the compilers (Foreword, Volume 1), this section provides either a) the summarisation and integration of the knowledge of linguistic, literature, culture, or b) development of students' research skills through independent research or cooperative learning.

The last section of each volume contains an introduction to two literary masterpieces: one by a Chinese writer and one by a foreign writer. Volume 4 is slightly different than the other volumes. Instead of selecting a piece of work by a foreign writer, this volume introduces William Shakespeare's plays as a whole. As regards the Chinese writer, this volume recommends Zhu Guangqian's work of aesthetics "On Beauty" (*Tanmei* 谈美). The purpose of this section is to encourage students to read these recommended works after the class.

#### 6.4.2.2 *The organisation of JEPH textbooks*

The JEPH senior high school *Yuwen* textbook series takes a different approach from both the old and the new PEP series. The essential and most eye-catching feature is the organisation of the textbook series. The JEPH textbook series is constructed by units with four units in each volume. Instead of arranging the texts by literary genres and grouping selected classical Chinese works according to the chronological order as in the PEP textbooks, texts of each unit are linked by topics transcending eras, nationalities and genres. The title of each unit is called special *Zhuanti* (专题), which can be translated as "topic". However, some of the titles or topics seem ambiguous or indulgent in literary expression or rhetorical considerations rather than containing the substantial content that the compilers intended. For example, the topic titled "Think like a mountain" seems ambiguous, and the reader may be misled by the personification of the mountain. It is only after further reading the introduction to this part that the readers will know that the texts under this topic are about the beauty of nature including mountains, rivers, and plains in different seasons. Table 6.2 is adapted and translated from the JEPH compilers' notes on their new 2004 textbooks (*Bianxiezu*, 2004).

As the textbook compilers admit, the classification of themes and topics is rough and overlapping. For example, the topics "Value of life" and "The moon of the hometown" are put under the themes of "Individual and society", but they can also be related to the third theme "People and nature."

**Table 6.2** Themes and topics of JEPH *Yuwen* textbooks (2004)

	<b>Individual (self)</b>	<b>Individual and society</b>	<b>People and nature</b>
Module 1 Volume 1	Celebrating your youth	Approaches to civility The moon of the hometown	Mountains (Think like a mountain)
Module 2 Volume 2	Value life	Echo of history Pray for peace Walk slowly to appreciate	
Module 3 Volume 3	The bugle is calling you	Soil of motherland Dialogue between civilizations In search of bridge to classics Chinese language	
Module 4 Volume 4	I have a dream	Face your life Amazing ancient poems Communicate on a scene	
Module 5 Volume 5	A time and love that will be remembered Human nature in a drop of water	Forever topic of Lu Xun's Ah Q	Formula of beauty Starry sky

(All my translations)

In the revised version of 2008 there are some minor changes from the 2004 version. There are no changes in Volumes 1-3, but there are some minor adjustments in the order of some topics in Volumes 4 and 5. Further, two topics “Forever topic of Lu Xun’s Ah Q” and “Formula of beauty” do not appear in Volume 5, and are replaced respectively by the theme of “People and society” and the “People and nature”. One new topic: “The light of science” is added to Volume 5.

The innovative way of organizing the textbook featuring an “integrative approach” reflects the JEPH compilers’ new vision of literacy education in China, of which personal development and humanism are the two core values, as the compilers claimed at the



beginning (notes to learners: *Zhi tongxue* 致同学) of the textbook. The top priority of literacy education or mother tongue education at senior high school level, as the JEPH textbook demonstrated, is high school students' spiritual maturity (*Jinshen chengzhang* 精神成长) rather than merely specific literacy skills. In this sense, the JEPH compilers' vision matched more closely the ambition and discourse of the new *Yuwen* syllabus ("Curriculum Standards").

## 6.5 Whose texts? An analysis of the authors

### 6.5.1 Why authors and themes become units of analysis

The change of authors and themes in the textbooks are the two most obvious measurements of social, political and ideological changes embodied in curriculum. That is, by tracing whose work and which work stayed, disappeared or was added, the intention of the compilers can be understood in conjunction with the reading of the macro-context of language and literacy teaching. On the basis of preliminary analysis, I developed the classifications of authors and themes for further analysis. The classifications are not in any sense exhaustive and are subject to the researcher's preference. For instance, the gender division can be a very interesting dimension when exploring the hidden masculinity ideology embedded in the text selection, but due to the restriction of the length of this thesis, this topic was left for future study.

In this and next section, the text lists of the 2004 PEP and JEPH versions as well as their predecessors, the 1980 and 1986, 1990 and 2003 PEP versions, are analysed in order to demonstrate the trajectory of the continuity and change in text selection. The focus of the analysis is the change of authors as presented in this section. The theme analysis is demonstrated in the next section.

The 2004 PEP and JEPH versions of textbooks mark the beginning of the relaxation of the central government's monopoly over textbook compilation and publication, making the 2003 PEP version the last set of compulsory *Yuwen* textbook distributed nationwide. Since more autonomy has been granted for interpretation of the national *Yuwen* curriculum in terms of textbook compilation and text selection, the main question for this section is: to what extent do the 2004 PEP and 2004 JEPH textbooks conform to or deviate from their predecessors? In the following section the textbooks and text lists are treated as primary sources and the recent findings in textbook studies in China as secondary sources.

### 6.5.2 Classification of authors

The following categories are listed in alphabetical order to identify the political, ideological, literary, and cultural and other educational implications of the inclusion or exclusion of the authors in the textbook.

A: Current and late party-state leaders such as Mao Zedong, his peers and the four deemed great revolutionary mentors in China: Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.

B: Revolutionary writers: this category refers to the writers who joined the CCP before 1949 and whose writings conform to the CCP's political and cultural agenda. Representative writers are Wei Wei and Yang Shuo.

C: Canonical writers or prominent figures of the 20th century: representatives are Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Mao Dun, and Ba Jin. These writers have been included in various histories of modern Chinese literature since the 1950s; however, the textbook list is subject to adjustment due to changes in literary fashion and political climate.

D: Writers emerging after the 1980s. These authors belong to the so-called new era of “open and reform.”

E: Writers of the pre-modern era: This is a big category including all the Chinese writers prior to 1911 when the Republic of China was founded. Their texts are written in classical or vernacular Chinese, the latter including such works as “the four great novels” which appeared in the Ming or Qing dynasties.

F: Scientists and popular science writers in China

G: Journalists

H: Foreign authors: This category comprises all the writers whose writings have been translated into Chinese other than the four revolutionary mentors listed in Category A.

I: Authors of non-Mainland China: This category includes writers who write in Chinese but are based in Hong Kong, Taiwan and other regions or countries beyond Mainland China.

J: Scholars of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in China (non-literary and non-fiction

writing)

In the next section, I compare authors in 2004 JEPH and PEP textbooks in order to give a general picture as to who are represented in the textbooks. I then present the analyses on the vertical axis (comparing previous text lists from 1980 on) and the horizontal axis (comparing PEP and JEP versions).

### 6.5.3 Categories of authors in 2004 JEPH and PEP versions: A cross-sectional comparison.

Table 6.3 presents a comparative list of author in the 2004 PEP and JEPH textbook series according to the author categories A to J.

**Table 6.3** Comparison of the authors in the 2004 PEP and JEPH textbooks

PEP Version	Number of authors	Percentage	JEPH Version	Number of authors	Percentage
Category A	2	2.4%	Category A	3	2.8%
Category B	0	0.0%	Category B	2	1.9%
Category C	18	21.2%	Category C	16	14.8%
Category D	0	0.0%	Category D	10	9.3%
Category E	43	50.6%	Category E	36	33.3%
Category F	1	1.2%	Category F	2	1.9%
Category G	2	2.4%	Category G	5	4.6%
Category H	14	16.5%	Category H	27	25.0%
Category I	0	0.0%	Category I	2	1.9%
Category J	0	0.0%	Category J	6	5.6%
Total number of authors in PEP version	85		Total number of authors in JEPH version	108	

The Table shows that the PEP textbook series demonstrates strong cultural conservatism or ethnocentrism in author selection. PEP adheres to its reiterated vision of “守正创新 *Shouzheng chuangxin*” (Gu, 2005), which can be literally translated as “the first principle is insistence on the tradition and orthodoxy, the second is innovation”, or put other way, “innovation based on the respect of the tradition”. My understanding of the “orthodoxy” here includes imagined or assumed linguistic orthodoxy, literary orthodoxy and cultural orthodoxy. The pre-modern writers of Category E account for 53.75% (43/85) of all the texts.

This is the highest percentage since 1978. PEP textbooks do not include post-1980 literary writings; that is, the compilers only acknowledge pre-1949 canonical authors in Category C. The ratio of pre-1949 writers (Category C) to post-Mao era writers (Category D) is 18:0. What is also worthy of note is that the PEP versions also reject any work between 1949-1980, the so-called Mao era. The PEP versions keep authors of foreign country at the low level of 16.5% (14/85), only including classical writers like Shakespeare, Dickens and Victor Hugo and contemporary scientists or scholars like Stephen William Hawking, but excluding 20th century Western literary writers. PEP textbooks do not include any Chinese writers outside Mainland China, such as writers from Taiwan, Hong Kong or any other diaspora Chinese writers (Category I). In sum, the selection of texts or the authors in the PEP version is conservative in multiple senses, favouring classical works and centring on Mainland China.

In contrast, the JEPH textbook takes a more open and innovative stance in terms of structure and text selection. The most conspicuous and controversial move is to incorporate as many as 27 authors of foreign countries (Category H), accounting for 25% of total authors. Thus, of the texts students are required to read in the *Yuwen* subject, more than a quarter are translated texts. This selection has incurred a wide range of criticism from views of ethnocentrism, linguistic purism to pedagogical difficulty.

JEPH also takes a more balanced position between “modern writers” and “contemporary writers”. The ratio of “modern writers”, referring to pre-1949 writers (category C), to “contemporary writers”, referring to post-Mao era writers (Category D), is 16:10.

#### 6.5.4 Change of authors: A comparison over time

In this section, I report the findings of the analysis relating to changes in the textbooks of the emblematic authors or authors bearing social, cultural, ideological and political implications. The purpose of the analysis was to discover the trajectory of change of authors in certain categories over the time span of 1978-2004 in relation to changes in educational and social contexts. I also discuss in more detail the change in the included proportion of works by Mao Zedong and current paramount party-state leaders in Category A, Lu Xun and other canonical writers in Category C and Confucius in Category E between 1978-2004. The changes in the proportions of foreign and non-mainland Chinese authors included in the textbooks are also examined.

6.5.4.1 *The change of Category A authors over the time*

Category A authors represented in *Yuwen* textbooks are Mao Zedong, other founding leaders of PRC and the four great revolutionary mentors in China, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin. The trend of phasing out authors of Category A is very obvious, as Table 6.4 shows. Category A authors alone account for 15.38% of all the texts in the 1980s PEP textbooks, while both the PEP and JEPH 2004 textbooks only have 2 pieces of work by Category A authors, one by Mao and the other by Engels, accounting for 2.35% and 1.85% respectively. From 1986 on, PEP no longer selected works from Communist leaders other than Mao, while neither the JEPH and nor the PEP textbooks include the contemporary Chinese paramount leader’s work.

**Table 6.4** Mao and other leaders fading out the textbooks

Versions	Total Cat A Total Texts	Category A Sub-categories			
		Mao’s works	Current paramount leaders	Other communist leaders	Four revolutionary mentors
80	18/117	9	1 (Deng)	6 (Zhou 3, Liu 2, Tao1)	2 (Engels, Stalin)
86	7/87	5	1 (Deng)	0	1 (Engels)
90	9/153	6	2 (Jiang and Deng)	0	1 (Engels)
03	4/184	2	1 (Jiang)	0	1 (Engels)
04 PEP	2/85	1	0	0	1 (Engels)
04 JEP	4/108	1	0	0	2 (Engels and Marx)

This trend suggests that the direct ideological control or inculcation via the imposition of the works of revolutionary leaders has become obsolete. However, a minimal presence or representation of Category A authors is still necessary to show the party-state’s symbolic or nominal link to communist ideology and revolutionary history.

The decrease in Mao works in the textbooks is worthy of note because I believe that it does not give the whole picture. We also need to know which texts or which kinds of texts were included or excluded. In the 1980 and 1990 PEP versions, Mao’s selected work covered a wide range of themes and the texts were meant not only to teach students the literacy models,

such as persuasive and evaluative writings, but also to be instructive in the political, philosophical and cultural senses. The texts included such topics as Mao's thought on culture, arts, Marxism and China's reality, socialism and national-democratic revolution. It is worth noting that the 1990 PEP version added Mao's political commentary, "Good bye, Mr John Leighton Stuart" (*Bie le Situ Leideng* 别了司徒雷登), written in 1949 when the Communist Party won the civil war and the American Ambassador left China a few days after the KMT's capital Nanjing was captured by the Communist army. This article severely criticised the USA's China policy in assisting the KMT government in the civil war and proudly declared to the Western powers that China is not afraid of being isolated and sanctioned. The addition of this article in the textbook can readily be associated with China's isolation after the political turmoil of 1989.

Table 6.5 shows the list of selected texts of Mao's work in the 1980 and 1990 PEP textbooks. In contrast, the two texts by Mao selected for the 2003 textbook and the one text selected for the 2004 PEP and JEPH versions are all Mao's poems. Now Mao remains in the textbooks not as the great leader and revolutionary mentor, but merely as a poet along with other modern poets.

**Table 6. 5** Mao’s work in the 1980 and 1990 PEP textbooks

1980 Titles	1990 Titles	Topics	
How to improve our studies	Same	How to apply Marxist theories to China’s reality and practices	
Against a stereotyped methods of writing within our party	Same	Against a kind of writing style within Communist party cadres, only quoting Marxist theories but not focusing on the real issues and problem solving.	
<i>Shui Diao Ge Tou</i> Swimming	Same	A poem in classical format recalling Mao Communist party cadres, a river and his ambition to build a dam in the higher range of the river	
<i>Qin Yuan Chun.</i> Changsha	Same	A poem in classical format written in 1925 expressing Mao’s orders, only quoting Marxist theories about a river and his ambition	
Foreword to my investigation report in rural area	“Good bye Mr John Leighton Stuart”.	Emphasizing “no investigation, no right to comment” a foreword for his collection of fieldwork in rural China completed in the 1920s.	A political editorial commenting on USA’s ambassador John Stuart’s departure due to CCP’s victory over KMT in the civil war in 1949, criticising USA’s imperialist policy.
<i>Nian Nu Jiao</i> Kunlun Mountain	“Where did the right thought come from?”	A poem in classic form indicating Mao’s global view, wishing for a more even and egalitarian world.	Convey Mao’s materialist epistemology by arguing that the correct ideas can only come from social practice.
A culture of the nation and the mass	N/A	Mao proposes a new culture of openness but with Chinese characteristic, scientific (materialism), belonging to all the people	
For whom are our arts?	N/A	Mao proposes that art should serve the working class and all the people not just elites	
In memory of Dr Sun Yat Sen	N/A	<i>In memory of Dr Sun Yat Sen</i> , the father of modern Chinese national democratic revolution	

Engels and his speech “At the Grave of Karl Marx” remained in the textbooks for over 30 years and appeared in the 2004 PEP and JEPH versions. In this speech, Engels summarises the theoretical framework of Marxism and eulogises Marx’s contribution to the world and human beings. Although the CCP has actually moved away from socialism and orthodox Marxism in practice and Maoism in ideology (Dirlik, 1981) since the 1980s, the symbolic or nominal affiliation to Marxism has become a heritage that is hard to deny. This can partially explain the symbolic and nominal presence of Mao and Engels (for Marx) in the *Yuwen*

textbooks.

#### 6.5.4.2 Change of Category C authors over time: Lu Xun and other modern writers.

The change of authors in Category C (canonical Chinese writers) involves two issues. The first is whether *Yuwen* textbooks have been dominated or affected by the authoritative historiography of modern Chinese literature, that is, was the selection of writers in this category required to be in accordance with the evaluation of the writers in literary history books published in Mainland China? For example, it has been a tradition to rank Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, and Mao Dun as super-class writers and Ba Jin, Cao Yu and Lao She as first class writers. The *Yuwen* textbooks published in 1980s and 1990s followed this tradition in the selection of texts in this category. However, the historiography of literature itself is to a great extent subordinated to the changes in the political climate and fashion, and the selections in the *Yuwen* textbooks also mirrored these changes in the dominant literary discourse.

The second issue is the change in fashions of literary taste. Since the 1980s, in addition to the great writers mentioned above, critics and researchers rediscovered and re-assessed many writers in this category on the basis of literary quality or rhetorical refinement. Writers such as Qian Zhongshu, Shen Chongwen, and Xu Zhimo were deemed to have been undervalued due to their distance from politics.

The general trend in this category has been the diversification of writers and works. Both Guo Moruo's and Mao Dun's texts appeared for the last time in the 1990s textbooks. Not everyone embraces the changes in literary history and literary fashions. Liu Zhenfu (2006), the editor of PEP textbook, was not convinced that Mao Dun's work should be removed from the textbook by pressure from the literary authorities. He deemed that Mao Dun's essay is superior in many ways to Lu Li's essay that had been newly selected in the textbooks. From the 1990s, Lu Xun's domination in the textbooks declined and his status of "Saint" weakened. Liang Shiqiu, a poet, translator and essayist, was well known to students of 1980s and 1990s, not for his own works, but because he was mentioned in a polemic essay by Lu Xun which was selected for the 1980 and 1986 textbooks. In this essay, Lu Xun rebuked Liang Shiqiu as the homeless running dog (accomplice) of all the capitalists after Liang insinuated that Lu Xun might have been financially supported by the Soviet Union. Liang was constructed as a public enemy by the textbook. However, in Volume 1 of the 2004 PEP



textbook, Lu Xun, Ba Jin and Liang Shiqiu’s works constitute a unit featuring narrative writing. Lu Xun’s texts were reduced in both absolute number and percentage of all texts in the 2004 JEP and PEP versions. This is illustrated in the Table 6.6

**Table 6.6** Change of the Lun Xun’s texts in the senior high school *Yuwen* textbooks 1980-2004

Version	Number of texts	Percentage
1980 PEP	9	7.7% (9/117)
1986PEP	11	12.6% (11/87)
1990 PEP	10	6.5% (10/153)
2003 PEP	7	3.8% (7/184)
2004 PEP	3	3.5% (3/85)
2004 JEPH	3	2.7% (3/108)

Lu Xun enjoyed paramount status in modern literary and cultural histories in Mainland China after 1949, mostly because of his canonization by Mao Zedong and the CCP. Mao used the word “the first saint” for Lu Xun. In praise of Lu Xun, he called Lu Xun not only a great writer, but a great thinker and revolutionary, the most brave, determined, loyal and passionate hero in the field of the culture. Mao also pointed out that the path that Lu Xun created heralded the direction of new Chinese national culture (Mao, 1991). Mao’s definitive conclusion of Lu Xun’s achievement and contribution to Chinese culture and literature became the guideline for the historiography of modern Chinese literature and text selection in *Yuwen* textbooks. The high percentage of Lu Xun’s works became a tradition after 1949. The 1963 (pre-Cultural Revolution) syllabus selected 14 Lun Xun’s texts, the 1980 PEP textbook had 9, the 1990 PEP textbook had 10, but the 2003 PEP had only 7, and the 2004 JEP and PEP both had only 3 texts (the same three texts: two essays, “Taking-in Principle” (*Na lai zhu yi* 拿来主义), “In Memory of Miss Liu Hezhen” (*Jinian liuhezhen jun* 纪念刘和珍君), and a short story, “New Year’s Sacrifice” (*Zhu fu* 祝福).

The sharp decrease in number as well as proportion of Lu Xun’s works in the textbooks invited popular media and academic attention and debate. Professor Wen Rumin of Beijing University and co-chief editor of the PEP 2004 textbook defended the decision to reduce Lu Xun’s texts from the perspective of “receivability” by high school students due to the “historical distance” (*Shidai gemo* 时代隔膜) (Chen & Zhao, 2010). In lay language, his rationale for reducing Lu Xun’s works was they were “out-dated”. The presence of Lu Xun’s texts in *Yuwen* textbook have incurred extensive debates and discussions in an expanded

public space, and I will deal with these kinds of debates in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis. However, we can understand this phenomenon of Lu Xun's loss of the status as "Saint" in the textbooks as indicating more tolerant and diversifying cultural attitudes toward the text selection. Although Lu Xun is still deemed a great thinker and writer, he has to yield more space to writers of different styles and ideological orientations.

#### *6.5.4.3 Change in Category E: Cultural heritage, Confucius and other pre-modern writers*

This category comprises a wide range of authors starting from 6 BC, the Spring-Autumn Era, to the early 20th century. To term this category of authors as "pre-modern" is based on a popular historical periodisation in China which demarcated imperial and modern China at 1911 when the last dynasty fell, although this periodization is not without debate. I tend to use 1911 as a dividing line not just for the sake of convenience. Linguistically, written vernacular Chinese was in use in Ming and Qing dynasty, but only for some literary genres such as short stories and novels, which were regarded as low-brow literature at the time, their forms resembling oral literature. Classical Chinese was still dominant in official genres and highbrow literary writings. Written vernacular Chinese did not ascend to the status of official language in China until the appearance of the New Culture Movement and the Vernacular Language Movement in 1916, with further refinement by intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement from 1919. Of the powerful slogans and objectives of that era the most relevant to language and language education were "down with Confucianism" and "abolish classical literary language". The victory of the New Culture Movement ensured the replacement of classical Chinese by the previously humble vernacular Chinese to the status of national language. This development was sustained by the successful experiment in modern literature written in the vernacular language, with genres or writing styles mostly imported from Western literature.

However, Confucianism has proved to be a resilient cultural tradition, as is classical Chinese. Even the CCP, which claims to be the inheritor of the New Culture Movement, appropriates and uses Confucianism and other cultural traditions strategically and tactically in the field of culture and education. This strategy is related to the CCP's ideological shift as the governing party. Before the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese leader Liu Shaoqi (1951) appropriated the Confucian concept of self-cultivation (*Xiuyang* 修养) to require CCP members to raise their moral standards through self-reflection. Mao, however, launched another nation-wide

campaign called “The criticism of Lin (Lin Biao) and Confucius” in 1974, in which Confucianism was constructed as a conservative, regressive ideology that hindered the progress of Chinese society. Confucianism was embraced by Mao’s political enemies within and outside the CCP, such as the KMT (headed by Kiang Kia Shih) and Mao’s aide turned political opponent, Lin Biao in 1974.

The intellectual debates and ideological conflict concerning Confucius and the Confucian school still has an impact on contemporary Chinese cultural politics. In the 2004 PEP textbook, as discussed above, classical authors account for more than half (43/85) of all the texts. This seems to indicate an “official” orientation of re-embracing tradition after the rejection of Confucianism and the classical canons for virtually the whole of the 20th century. In comparison, JEPH has only one third of its texts authored by classical writers (36/108). But the percentages of Category E authors in both the JEP and PEP 2004 textbooks need to be examined over the time span. Table 6.7 shows how classical authors are represented in *Yuwen* textbooks.

**Table 6.7** Category E authors present in *Yuwen* textbooks 1980-2004

Versions	Texts by Category E authors	Total number of texts	Percentage of Category E authors
1980 PEP	44	107	41.1%
1986 PEP	35	81	43.2%
1990 PEP	59	154	38.3%
2003 PEP	88	188	46.8%
2004 PEP	43	85	50.58%
2004 JEP	36	108	33.3%

Viewing the 2004 PEP and JEPH *Yuwen* textbooks from the historical coordinate and taking into consideration the weight of pre-modern authors or the pre-modern texts as cultural heritage, it can be seen that the PEP 2004 textbook favoured pre-modern texts more than any previous versions, reaching more than 50%. This is equal to the ratio stipulated in the 1963 syllabus. On the other hand, classical texts in the 2004 JEPH version only amounted to 1/3 of all the texts. In this sense, it is more modern and avant-garde than any PEP textbook.

Textbook selection reflects how Confucius and Confucianism are treated in the curriculum.

As mentioned above, the ups and downs of Confucius in the 20th century reflect the clash and compromise of cultural radicalism and conservatism as well as the state's ideological shifts and political climate, which are also mirrored in the selection of Confucian classical texts in *Yuwen* textbooks.

The 1978 *Yuwen* textbook did not include any works of Confucius and Mencius, which can be explained as due to the last vestiges of the influence of the Mao's 1974 campaign denouncing Confucius. The 1980 textbook included two works by Mencius ("I want the fish" *Yu wo suo yu ye* 鱼我所欲也 and "Zhuang Bao meets Mencius" (*Zhuangbao jian Mengzi* 庄暴见孟子), but no works by Confucius. The preference for Mencius over Confucius can be attributed partly to his more popular political orientation expressed in his declaration that "the people are the most important element in a nation; the spirits of the land and grain are the next; the sovereign is the lightest (*Minweigui, shejicizhi, junweiqing* 民为贵,社稷次之,君为轻) (trans. James Legge), while Confucius' political and moral code emphasised the order and hierarchy of the governance, although both espoused soft control. Therefore, Mencius fitted better with the CCP's ideology that stressed that the mission of the CCP is for the people.

In the 1986 version, the same two texts by Mencius remained, but one Confucius' text was included for the first time since the Cultural Revolution. In the 1990 textbook, both Mencius and Confucius had two pieces selected. In the 2003 textbook, one work of Mencius and one work of Confucius were included in unit 6 of Volume 1 along with Zhuangzi and Xunzi as ancient classic philosophers and thinkers. In Volume 5, a chapter was devoted exclusively to five pieces of Mencius work with an introduction designating Mencius as representative of Confucianism. The 2004 PEP version has one Mencius text, but no works by Confucius. However, in Volume 1, a chapter is devoted to Confucius and his Analects as one of the ten great books recommended for further reading in this series. The 2004 JEPH version also has one work by Confucius and one by Mencius

#### *6.5.4.4. Change in categories H and I: the proportions of authors' countries and regions (Non-Mainland China)*

The inclusion of foreign writers or writers outside of Mainland China is related to the compilers' attitude toward the "authenticity" (linguistic purism) and "localism or nativism" of

the language and the subject itself. Should a subject called Chinese language and literacy (*Yuwen*) include the translated texts of foreign writers? If so, what is the appropriate percentage? This is an issue about the ontology and positioning of the subject. It is related to the interpretation of the notion of *Shouzheng* (stick to the orthodox) or keep Chinese tradition as the foundation of the subject, as proposed by PEP compilers.

The issue of the relationship between translated works by foreign authors and modern Chinese language and linguistic purism is related to a very fundamental, yet to be solved problem of understanding how modern Chinese language, in particular its written form or literary form, evolved. That is, to what extent have modern Chinese writers linguistically benefited from or been affected by the translated work? The question is beyond the scope of this thesis, but this category reflects the compilers' attitudes towards translated texts and imported ideas at different historical periods. To be more specific, the category reflects which authors from which countries or regions the compilers are familiar with and receptive to. For instance, Mark Twain's *Running for Governor* was selected in the 1963 and 1978 PEP versions, the value of his work for Chinese readers lying mainly in its critique of the hypocrisy and ugliness of America's democratic electoral system. Emily Dickinson's poem *Over the Fence* in the 2003 textbook is meant to be read for its pure literary value, which is deemed to transcend national and cultural boundaries. Her inclusion in the textbook indicates a friendlier attitude toward America and the Western world.

Table 6.8 provides the statistics of the numbers of foreign authors included in PEP textbooks from 1978 to 2004 and the comparison of the foreign and non-mainland authors in the PEP and JEP 2004 versions. Since Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin are treated as mentors of the revolution transcending nationality, they are not included in the statistics.

**Table 6.8** Distribution of foreign authors by country and region in PEP textbooks from 1978-2004

Versions	Total Cat H+I/ Total Texts	Percentage	By Nations or Regions								
			Russia USSR	USA	UK	Japan	France	Germany	Spain	Taiwan	Other countries
78	3/118	2.5%		1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
80	8/117	6.84%	3	0	2	0	2		1	0	0
86	5/87	5.75%	2	0	1		2	0	0	0	0
90	11/153	7.14%	4	2	0	2	3	0	0	0	0
03	28/184	15.21%	2	6	6	2	4	0	0	2+1	4 Austria/ Hungary, Colombia, Ireland
04 PEP	13/75 (or 18/85 if extended reading counted)	17.33% or 21.17%	1	8	2/4*	0	2/4	0	0	0	0
04 JEPH	28/108	25.92%	3	11	6	0	2	2	0	2	Swiss 1 Poland 1

\*Shakespeare was counted twice.

The 1978 syllabus had only three foreign writers, two critical realism writers of America and France: Mark Twain (*Running for Governor*) and Balzac (*Le Père Goriot*) and William Shakespeare (an excerpt of *The Merchant of Venice*). Foreign writers in the 1978 textbook accounted for 2.5% of the total number of texts.

The 1980 version had eight foreign writers: The same works by Balzac and Shakespeare as in the 1978 textbook plus three Russian/USSR writers, Gorky, Chekhov, and Gogol, and the Spanish writer Cervantes as well as the French writer Guy de Maupassant. Charles Darwin's "Preface" to *On the Origin of Species* also appeared in this version. The total percentage of foreign writers increased to 6.84%.

With 11 foreign writers in the 1990 textbook, the percentage increased only slightly compared to the 1980 version. The 1990 textbook series comprising 6 volumes was designed for the three year senior high school, while the 1978 and 1980 text lists were for senior high school of two years, as from 1966 to 1980 the whole high school years had been reduced to two years junior high and two years senior high school. In this version, the same works of Gorky, Balzac, Maupassant and Chekhov were selected, with one more piece by Gorky listed as after class reading. Two American writers, O. Henry and Walt Whitman, and the Russian poet Pushkin were added. O. Henry's *Gift of Maggi* had been selected in the 1980 English textbook for senior high school, but his *The Cop and the Anthem* was selected for the *Yuwen* textbook. Both works portray the miserable life of low class people in early 20th century America. Whitman's poem, "O Captain! My Captain!" mourns the murdered American president, Abraham Lincoln, extolling his struggle for the unification of the country and the abolition of slavery. Two Japanese writers' works were added: an essay with an anti-war theme and a short story praising self-esteem, care and family by Sakae Tsuboi (壺井栄) and Kuri Ryōhei (栗良平) respectively.

In general, the 1990 version took a conservative attitude, selecting works mainly from the 19th century and early 20th century or even earlier, from more critical realism writers than other types, and from a low proportion of foreign writers (only 11 out of 153 or 7.14%) from only four countries. This can be partially attributed to China's harsh international environment after the 1989 political turmoil and the emergence of cultural conservatism.

The 2003 PEP textbook saw a great rise in the number of foreign writers' texts: 25 texts by writers from 10 countries including Austria, Japan and Columbia with a wider range of

themes and genres. Moreover, for the first time Chinese writers beyond Mainland China were selected, with three writers from Taiwan. Abandoning the traditional preference for critical realism writers of the 19th century, the textbook contained modernist writers like Virginia Woolfe (*Spot on the Wall*), Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*) and the Magical Realism writer Gabriel García Marquez (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*). The greatly increased presence in the *Yuwen* textbook of foreign writers of a much wider range of nations, styles and time spans reflect the state's then dominant discourse of integrating with the outside world.

Nevertheless, from the point of language study, these texts may not have been well received by high school students.

The number of foreign writers in the 2004 PEP textbook has decreased although the percentage in this category increased because the total number of texts was reduced, but no Chinese writers beyond Mainland China are included. Thirteen texts by foreign writers are included with an additional five Europeans masterpieces for recommended after class reading: Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Charles Dicken's *David Copperfield* and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. There are no texts by avant-garde or Category I writers in this textbook.

The 2004 JEPH version has the highest percentage of writers in this category, accounting for 25.9% of all the texts: 26 foreign writers' works plus two Taiwanese writers. The high number of foreign or translated works in JEPH textbooks have incurred the criticism from educators, as it contravenes the 2000 senior high school syllabus guidelines which suggest the proportion of 10% of foreign works, and a ratio of around 5:4:1 of modern, pre-modern and translated texts (PEP, 2000). A Chinese (*Yuwen*) teacher from Zhejiang province criticized the JEPH compilers for being "xenophiles" in this regard (Chen, 2010). This teacher complained that in the first two units of Volume 2: "Treasure life" and "Pray for peace", 6 out of the 7 texts are translated works with only one essay by the contemporary Chinese writer Shi Tiesheng. He further argued that China boasts 5000 years of civilisation and has produced voluminous literary works, so why were the compilers unable to find more texts under these themes by Chinese authors. He also warned that exposure to the high percentage of translated works in the language of non-Chinese or non-first language authors will affect the students' development of their mother tongue or first language literacy.

#### 6.5.4.5 Cultural essentialism, native texts and translated texts



*Yuwen* or *Yuwen* text selection is a site where various thoughts and ideas clash, negotiate and compromise. The engagement is not just about the identity of the subject, but also reflects the anxiety of cultural essentialists, as expressed in Chen's (2010) accusation of xenophilia in the JEPH textbook. This phenomenon requires examination in the larger social context of China's eagerness to integrate with the world (mainly the Western world) culturally and economically since its bid for the Olympic Games and attempts to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The issue of modernity and tradition, native and foreign is an on-going debate accompanying China's modernisation process.

From 1978 to 2004, the general trend in *Yuwen* textbooks was to begin giving more space to translated texts and more authors, wider themes, and more genres. The 2004 textbooks, particularly JEPH textbook, incorporate new themes such as "global peace" under the title of "Pray for peace". The focus of this unit is different from the tradition of eulogising war heroes and heroism in textbooks and all the authors are foreigners.<sup>xii</sup> Chen (2010) justified this choice of foreign writers, arguing that in contemporary China narrative works about war lack sympathy for the trauma that war inflicts on the people and place too much emphasis on the pride of the winners.

Thus far, I have reported and analysed the ratios in the textbooks of the authors of differing cultural and political significance in the wider social contexts. I argued that the coded data and statistics suggested that the selection of authors reflected the social, cultural and political shift. In what follows, I discuss the second question: what works are selected?

## **6.6. Which texts: An analysis of the themes**

### 6.6.1 Classifications of themes

The term "theme" has many meanings and usages, but the usage closest to the term *Zhuti sixiang* (主题思想) used in *Yuwen* education is provided by Griffith (2010). Griffith differentiated the "subject" and "theme" by saying that subject is what the work is about and the theme is what the work says about the subject. Griffith's idea of subject is equivalent to topic in our context. Griffith further defined theme as "ideas about life outside the work –

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<sup>xii</sup> Such texts as "who are most loveable persons" *shei shi zui keai de ren* 谁是最可爱的人 eulogizing Korea War Heroes and other heroes in Anti-Japanese war etc were all removed.

about the real world, our world – that we draw from works of literature, not just fiction, but from literature in all genres”(Griffith, 2010, p. 40). This is most relevant to the question that *Yuwen* teachers repeatedly ask students or maybe themselves: What is the work about and what does the work say about the topic or subject?

The themes of some works can or should be very overt; for example, in political editorials or argumentative essays such as Mao Zedong’s “Goodbye, Mr John Leighton Stuart” while other genres or text types may have implied or ambiguous themes. Categorisation of the themes in this section is based on: 1) themes claimed by textbook compilers in the textbooks and other teaching references books; 2) themes aligned with the aims and goals claimed in syllabus; 3) Researcher’s preference.<sup>xiii</sup>

Table 4.4 (The coded categories of themes) in Chapter 4 presents the categories that I used in the analysis of the *Yuwen* textbooks, and lists and encodes the themes appearing in the textbooks across the three decades. It is not suggested that all the themes are represented in all the textbooks series throughout the three decades; rather, some are under-represented or not represented at all in particular periods, while the others may be strongly or over-represented. Even under the same theme, the value orientation may alter with time. For instance, because textbook compilers and curriculum designers barely took into account age-related issues of the high school students “as passive receivers of knowledge”, the theme “youth and development” did not appear in *Yuwen* textbooks for high schools until it was specifically proposed in the JEPH textbooks. For instance, “World peace” and “Revolutionary war heroes” are to some extent conflicting even from the perspective of surface meaning. This reflects the inconsistency of official or state ideology and the discrepancy of academic discourse and state discourse.

#### 6.6.2 Themes in 2004 PEP and JEPH textbooks: A cross-sectional analysis

Before I proceed to identify and classify the themes in the textbooks, it is imperative to differentiate the compilers’ interpreted “themes” and the authors “intended themes”. By their selection compilers already predetermine the value orientations and the references to the real world. Then, they either explicitly state or implicitly hint at “interpreted themes” in the

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<sup>xiii</sup> The three Master and PhD theses concerning textbook analysis that I cited above all have different indexes for theme analysis.

introduction to each unit or in the questions and discussions added after the texts, The “interpreted” themes can also be identified by their conformity with the aims and objectives prescribed in the syllabus documents. Themes are ideology and value laden. The textbook compilers, as the delegates of the state and ruling political party in China, assume that certain texts deliver or intend to deliver certain themes and select texts accordingly. Furthermore, the selected texts are not “naked”; the theme(s) appear in the textbook, accompanied by notes, questions or overt statements of the themes. Textbook compilers also use recontextualization or de-contextualization strategies to manipulate the author’s “intended” themes. To explore the representation of the themes in the textbook is to examine the ideology and value orientations of the textbooks. Thus, the textbooks function as the vehicle through which the selected or assumed ideologies and values are inculcated. Table 6.9 illustrates the distribution of themes in the 2004 PEP and JEPH textbooks.

**Table 6.9** Configuration of themes in 2004 PEP and 2004 JEPH textbooks

Themes	Number of texts in 2004 PEP	Number of texts in 2004 JEPH
Inculcation of party's dominant ideology or party and state's policies (Category A)	1 ("At the Grave of Karl Marx")	1 Same text
Extol revolutionary leaders' noble spirit and lofty moral character (Category B)	1 Mao's poem "Qin Yuan Chun". Changsha in classic form	1 Same text
Praise the achievements after 1949 and praise new heroes after 1949 (Category C)	1. (Text about China's space program and the success of the Shenzhou no.5, China's first manned spaceship)	1 An interview with China's first astronaut.
Praise the virtues of common people (Category D)	2	4 No overlapping texts and JEPH has two translated foreign texts
Praise heroes in pre-modern China and traditional values (Category E)	2	1
Eulogize the heroes in the cause of overthrowing the Qing dynasty and founding the republic (Category E1)	0	1 In memory of the martyrs of second Guangzhou uprising against Qing Dynasty ("Yellow Mountain Uprising")
Praise the cultural elites (Category F)	1. A text about Liang Qichao (1873-1929) a thinker, historian, politician, writer and poet in late Qing dynasty and early republic era	1 A text about Jin Yuelin (1895-1984) a Chinese philosopher and logician.
Promote equity, freedom, civil rights (Category G)	1 "I Have a Dream" by Martin Luther King	5 The same speech by Martin Luther King along with other four translated texts

**Table 6.9** Configuration of themes in 2004 PEP and 2004 JEPH textbooks

Reflection on the ebb and flow of history (Category H)	5	4 Two texts: <i>Xin Qiji</i> and <i>Su Shi</i> overlapping, both in the classical form.
Depict scenery and express feelings (about life, ideal, nostalgia (home sickness) (Category I)	27	28 More classical texts are the same as in the PEP version than modern or foreign translated texts
Depict the scenery and express feelings (for the new China after 1949) (Category J)	0	0
Disclose and condemn the social reality of China before 1949 and beyond or condemn 19th century western society (Category K)	8	2 Two texts overlapping, both by Lu Xun
Extol good life, good deeds & good feelings after 1949 (Category L)	Nil	Nil
Love and romance (Category M)	4	5 One text overlapping: an excerpt from <i>The Red Mansion</i> .
Eulogize the heroism of communist soldiers, communist members and their supporters (Category N)	Nil	Nil
Introduce traditional Chinese thoughts, values and philosophy (Confucianism, Daoism and, legalism) (Category O)	6	8
Celebrate the patriotism (Chinese historical patriotism, modern Chinese patriotism and patriotism of other countries) (Category P)	5	10

**Table 6.9** Configuration of themes in 2004 PEP and 2004 JEPH textbooks

Promote science, technology and crafts (Category Q)	6	5 Two texts that have appeared in PEP version for some decades plus three other texts: 1 by Darwin and 2 by Ye Shengtao.
Promote world peace, anti-war ideology and condemn war crime (Category R)	2 One translated text and one classic Chinese poem from <i>Shijing</i>	7 All translated texts
Be concerned with growth of youth (communication with older generation, future work, study and etc) (Category S)	2	4
Be concerned with the world around us and raise the environment awareness (Category T)	Nil	4
Be open to foreign literature and culture, Chinese culture and western culture (Category U)	7	4
Promote Chinese linguistic, literary and cultural knowledge (Category V)	6	2
Inculcation of party's dominant ideology or party and state's policies (Category A)	1 ("At the Grave of Karl Marx")	1 Same text
Extol revolutionary leaders' noble spirit and lofty moral character (Category B)	1 Mao's poem Qin Yuan Chun. Changsha in classic form	1 Same text
Praise the achievements after 1949 and praise new heroes after 1949 (Category C)	1. (Text about China's space program and the success of the Shenzhou no.5, China's first manned spaceship)	1 An interview with China's first astronaut.

**Table 6.9** Configuration of themes in 2004 PEP and 2004 JEPH textbooks

Praise the virtues of common people (Category D)	2	4 No overlapping texts and JEPH has two translated foreign texts
Praise heroes in pre-modern China and traditional values (Category E)	2	1
Eulogize the heroes in the cause of overthrowing the Qing dynasty and founding the republic (Category E1)	0	1 In memory of the martyrs of second Guangzhou uprising against Qing Dynasty (“Yellow Mountain Uprising”)
Praise the cultural elites (Category F)	1. A text about Liang Qichao (1873-1929) a thinker, historian, politician, writer and poet in late Qing dynasty and early republic era	1 A text about Jin Yuelin (1895-1984) a Chinese philosopher and logician.
Promote equity, freedom, civil rights (Category G)	1 “I Have a Dream” by Martin Luther King	5 The same speech by Martin Luther King along with other four translated texts
Reflection on the ebb and flow of history (Category H)	5	4 Two texts: <i>Xin Qiji</i> and <i>Su Shi</i> overlapping, both in the classical form.
Depict scenery and express feelings (about life, ideal, nostalgia (home sickness) (Category I)	27	28 More classical texts are the same as in the PEP version than modern or foreign translated texts
Depict the scenery and express feelings (for the new China after 1949) (Category J)	0	0
Disclose and condemn the social reality of China before 1949 and beyond or condemn 19th century western society (Category K)	8	2 Two texts overlapping, both by Lu Xun
Extol good life, good deeds & good feelings after 1949 (Category L)	Nil	Nil

**Table 6.9** Configuration of themes in 2004 PEP and 2004 JEPH textbooks

Love and romance (Category M)	4	5 One text overlapping: an excerpt from <i>The Red Mansion</i> .
Eulogize the heroism of communist soldiers, communist members and their supporters (Category N)	Nil	Nil
Introduce traditional Chinese thoughts, values and philosophy (Confucianism, Daoism and, legalism) (Category O)	6	8
Celebrate the patriotism (Chinese historical patriotism, modern Chinese patriotism and patriotism of other countries) (Category P)	5	10
Promote science, technology and crafts (Category Q)	6	5 Two texts that have appeared in PEP version for some decades and three texts: 1 by Darwin & 2 by Ye Shengtao.
Promote world peace, anti-war ideology and condemn war crime (Category R)	2, one translated text & one classic Chinese poem from <i>Shijing</i>	7 All translated texts
Be concerned with growth of youth (communication with older generation, future work, study) (Category S)	2	4
Be concerned with the world around us and raise the environment awareness (Category T)	Nil	4
Be open to foreign literature and culture, Chinese culture and western culture (Category U)	7	4
Promote Chinese linguistic, literary and cultural knowledge (Category V)	6	2



As shown in Table 6.9 the distribution of themes between the two textbook series varied significantly. The following section analyse this distribution in terms of orientation (theme versus genre), new themes, recurring themes in new form, and themes that disappeared.

#### *6.6.2.1 Theme-orientated versus genre-oriented*

The PEP textbook series adhere to their traditional way of organisation: each unit is linked by certain genre(s). The JEPH, on the other hand, links its units by themes, which is its most characteristic feature, distinguishing it from PEP and other textbook series. Each volume of the JEPH series is divided into a few units, and each unit is headed by a “special topic” with several sub-topics. The “special topic” is the theme perceived by the compilers if not the authors, although in some instances, the linkage among the texts is quite subjective, even arbitrary. This new method of constructing the textbook series has invited both acclaim and criticism.

#### *6.6.2.2 New themes*

The JEPH series intends to present a global vision; therefore the compilers tend to include themes of global concern such as environment awareness (Aldo Leopold’s essay “Thinking Like a Mountain”), cross-cultural dialogue through arts and science, and advocacy for world peace and anti-war ideology (Mikhail Sholokhov’s short story “The Fate of a Man”). The texts concerning the above-mentioned themes are carefully chosen so that they do not challenge the legitimacy of the CCP government and its route to the power. For example, for the anti-war theme, only the texts about the Second World War and Nazi atrocities are included. No texts about the civil war in modern China appear.

The JEPH series, also for the first time, includes the new theme of “concern with the world around us” with the texts or genres taken from the mass media. This theme is meant to encourage students to think and debate the social issues that are relevant to their own lives. This is a new dimension of the values instilled through the textbooks.

Both JEPH and PEP textbook include the theme of “promoting democratic values (equality, justice and liberty)”. However, the PEP has only one text, Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream”, while the JEPH textbook has five texts related to this theme including King’s speech.

Last but not least, both JEPH and PEP textbooks add a new theme addressing the “growing up” of adolescents. The JEPH version devotes more texts to this theme (four texts) than the PEP series (two texts). This is the first time the textbook compilers chose texts that address specific issues related to the age of high school students in their growing up process, including such sub-categories as: inter-generation communication, career outlook, and self-improvement.

#### *6.6.2.3 Re-occurring themes in new forms or configurations*

The compilers changed the weighting of some themes. As Table 6.9 shows, under the Category A theme of “Inculcation of party’s dominant ideology or party and state’s policies”, both JEPH and PEP compilers chose the same speech by Engels, which is a very concise summary of Marx’s theoretical contribution to Marxism. This is the only text that appears in the 2004 textbooks under Category A. In contrast to the previous textbook series, no texts that are directly relevant to the state or party politics with relevant genres were selected for the 2004 textbook (I present the analysis of the data regarding the change over time in more detail in the next section).

The Category B theme of “Extol revolutionary leaders’ noble sentiments and lofty moral character” is also played down and weakened in the 2004 textbooks. Again, both the JEPH and PEP compilers chose the same poem by Mao, written in his youth. Unlike the textbooks in the 1990s and 1980s, no other excerpts of biography, autobiography or stories lauding revolutionary leaders have been selected for the 2004 textbooks.

While the themes remain the same in the 2004 textbooks there are changes in the subcategories. Under Category H, “Reflection on the ebb and flow of the history”, both JEPH and PEP compilers chose only pre-modern texts, not modern texts or excerpts from modern histories. The obvious rationale for this choice is to avoid the controversies of contemporary politics. Under the Category P theme “Promote and eulogize patriotism”, the JEPH version includes the theme of foreign patriotism, illustrating that patriotism is a universal value or sentiment. This is a return to the old tradition of the 1920s in the era of the early Republic of China (1920-1949), when the Commercial Press included their translation of the French writer Alphonse Daudet’s short story “The Last Lesson” in the *Yuwen* textbook.

#### *6.6.2.4 Themes that disappeared*

The Category N theme of “Lauding the Communist heroes of modern Chinese history” disappeared in both versions. No texts are included on the heroes in civil wars or the heroes in anti-Japanese War, Korean War and other smaller scale wars after 1949. In contrast, a new theme: “Praying for world peace and anti-war” (Category R) appears.

The Category L theme that was selected between 1949-1980, modern Chinese history” disappeared in both versions. No texts are included on the heroes in civil wars or the heroes in anti-Japanese War, Korean 950s and 1970s, thereby avoiding the debates and controversies over events under Mao’s rule such as the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), the anti-rightist campaign, and other social policies and practices discarded in post-Mao’s reform and open period.

### 6.6.3 Changes in the themes: An analysis over time

Thus far, we have examined the themes in the 2004 textbooks. In this section, I delineate the trajectory of theme changes in the textbooks by tracing which themes stayed, which were added, which were emphasised or de-emphasised and which disappeared, in order to provide a better understanding of one of the most important dimensions of the curriculum: the values and ideological shifts embodied in the “materialised” syllabus: textbooks. Table 6.10 lists the themes in the 1980, 1990 and 2003 PEP versions and the number of texts for each category

**Table 6.10** Distribution of themes from 1980-2003 PEP textbooks

Theme and code	1980 PEP	1990 PEP	2003 PEP
Inculcation of party’s dominant ideology or party and state’s policies (A)	20	13 Still high percentage of Mao Zedong’s articles	13
Extol revolutionary leaders’ noble sentiment and lofty moral character (Category B)	9	2 only two Mao Zedong’s poems in classical form stay	2
Praise the achievements after 1949 and the new heroes and role models after 1949 (Category C)	2	2 One text stays	2
Praise the virtues of common people (Category D)	Nil	2	1

Theme and code	1980 PEP	1990 PEP	2003 PEP
Praise heroes in pre-modern China (Category E)	2	3	1
Eulogize the heroes in the cause of social reform and the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the republic (Category E1)	1	3	0
Praise cultural elites (Category F)	Nil	1(琐忆) <i>Suoyi</i> “Scattered Memories”	3
Promote equity, freedom, and civil rights (Category G)	Nil	Nil	4
Reflection on the ebb and flow of the history (Category H)			
Depict the scenery and express feelings (about life, ideals, nostalgia (homesickness) (Category I)	8	23	54
Depict the scenery and express feelings (for the new China after 1949) (Category J)	7	6	0
Disclose and condemn the social reality of China before 1949 and beyond or critique Western societies in particular the 19th century capitalist society (Category K)	21 Lu Xun’s work account for 1/3	23 Lu Xun still had 5 texts	20 (Lu Xun had 3 texts)
Extol the good life, good deeds and good feelings after 1949 (Category L)	2	1	0
Love and romance (Category M)	2	3	17
Eulogize the heroism of communist soldiers, communist members and their supporters (Category N)	5	5 (three texts remained unchanged)	1
Introduce traditional Chinese thoughts, values, wisdom and philosophy (Confucianism, Daoism and, legalism) (Category O)	16	24 (texts written by modern authors and a text concerning the concept of birth control in the Qing dynasty (could be interpreted as non-typical traditional	19

Theme and code	1980 PEP	1990 PEP	2003 PEP
		thought)	
Celebrate patriotism (Chinese historical patriotism, modern Chinese patriotism and patriotism of other countries) (Category P)	4	11	11
Promote science and technology (Category Q)	7	9	8
Promote world peace, anti-war ideology and condemn war crime, (Category R)	Nil	1 A work by Japanese writer, 栗良平(Kuri Ryōhei)	2
Be concerned with growth of youth (communication with older generation, future work, study (Category S)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Be concerned with the world around us, Raise environment awareness (Category T)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Be open to foreign literature and culture, Chinese culture and western culture (Category U)	3 Lu Xun's "Taking-in principle" ( <i>na lai zhu yi</i> ), excerpt of Don Quixote and excerpt of <i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	2 Don Quixote withdrawn and the other two remained	7
Promote Chinese linguistic, literary and culture knowledge and rhetoric (Category V)	2	9	23

The general trend demonstrated in the data suggests that since the 1990s the proportion of state political themes decreased in proportion and number. Even when these themes (state politics, ideology shifts, state major policy changes and CCP's internal political struggles) appeared, they were played down or were presented in a more covert form.

For example, the texts of articles or speeches by the contemporary CCP General Secretary or

the de facto Paramount leader were selected for the 1978, 1980, 1990 and 2003 textbooks. These texts were landmarks of the major political and ideological shifts of the CCP as China's ruling political party. In the 1978 textbook, CCP Chairman Hua Guofeng's speech, "Let us unite to strive to turn China into a modern world power of socialism" (my translation) was selected. In this speech, Hua addressed the delegates of 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1977 and announced that the Cultural Revolution had ended and it was the mission of the Chinese people and the CCP to focus on economic restoration and construction. This speech also claimed the legitimacy of the new leadership by declaring that they were the inheritors of true Maoism and Marxism.

In the 1980 textbook, Hua's speech was replaced by the new leader, Deng Xiaoping's speech entitled "On the principle of seeking truth from facts and reality", given at the conference of the Chinese Liberation Army's political work held in 1978. In this speech, Deng denounced Hua's pro-Mao stance of two "whatevers": whatever Mao's decisions were, they should be upheld and whatever Mao's instruction were, they should followed (my translation). Deng's claim that "seeking truth from the facts and reality" is the essence of Maoism indicated a more political pragmatism, a shift, under the name of Maoism, away from orthodox Maoism to the post-Mao era.

The 1990 textbook included the new CCP leader Jiang Zemin's speech at the 1990 Commemoration of the May Fourth Movement. Jiang addressed the attendees on the mission of the intellectuals in the new era, and re-emphasised patriotism as the flag to unify the nation "to resist the peaceful evolution initiated by Western powers". Jiang's speech also reveals the ideological and political shift to nationalism by the CCP and the State in order to address the ideological crisis and to justify the CCP's legitimacy in the 1990s in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident on the 4th of June 1989.

Jiang's 1998 speech on the 100th anniversary of Beijing University was selected in Volume 1 of the 2003 PEP textbook. This speech was originally published in the People's Daily, the CCP's mouthpiece, on the 5th of May 1998. Compared to its counterparts in previous versions, this text was considered less important for delivering the message of political and ideological change, which can be attributed to the fact that Jiang had resigned his leadership position in the CCP and the State by the time the textbook was released (he still retained his position as the Supreme Commander in the defence force). The speech reemphasised the role

of youth, in particular the elite youth, in the mission of national rejuvenation for the past century.

In contrast to the decline of the themes related to state politics and ideology, themes such as “growing up” and other themes more relevant to high school students (such as “cross cultural understanding” in the JEPH textbooks) were added to conform to the *Suzhi* education discourse in syllabus and curriculum documents. Another change that merits discussing is the change under the Category J theme, “Depicting the scenery and express feelings (for the new China after 1949)” which eulogizes the new time and the new society under rule of the CCP. The most representative work of this kind is *Haishi* (“Mirage” 海市) by Yang Shuo. Texts under this theme featured 7 pieces in the 1980s and 1990s textbooks, but disappeared after the 2003 textbook. Yang Shuo’s *Haishi* was highly praised by critics in his time and until the 1980s for his refined language depicting natural sceneries and exquisitely linking his picturesque scenery to the theme which was normally pointed out at the end of his essays. In his essays he eulogizes the great times and great society with his signature techniques. More importantly, he glosses over the hard time that the Chinese people experienced in the early 1960s during the Great Famine in the wake of the Great Leap Forward.

With the same background as Yang Shuo’s as a military reporter of the CCP army, Jun Qing, another essayist and fiction writer, also wrote essays under this theme. His work *Qiuse fu* (秋色赋 “On the Colour of Autumn”, my translation mine was inspired by a widely read essay by Ou Yang Xiu, a poet and essayist of the Song dynasty. Jun Qing’s *Qiuse Fu* should be read intertextually with Ou Yang Xiu’s work. In his essay, Jun Qing presents a beautiful autumn scene in countryside. According to him, autumn indicates harvest and hope for the people in the new society, which is in sharp contrast to the beautiful, but sad autumn depicted by Ou Yang Xiu. In the last part of this essay, Jun Qing wrote:

*What I see here is a colourful harvest scene and the atmosphere of prosperity, because, here, autumn is no longer the indication that life is short; rather, it is the symbol of thriving and prosperity. Here, I suddenly realise why in Ou Yang Xiu’s essay autumn was so solemn and chilly, because what he depicted was not the autumn in the seasonal sense, but as the essence of his time. If he lived today, his essay on autumn would be different and present different colours. (June, 2010, p. 305, my translation)*

As can be seen from Tables 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10, essays by Jun Qing, Yang Shuo and other writers featuring the same theme of eulogising the new society led by CCP started to disappear from the 1990s textbooks and completely disappeared in the 2003 and 2004 textbooks. Ou Yang Xiu's essay, which was criticized in Jun Qing's essay for being too pessimistic, was selected in 2004 JEPH textbook as a classic essay for its skilful use of a variety of rhetorical devices to create vivid descriptions and sensory images of autumn.

Theme O, "Introduce Chinese traditional thoughts and values, cultural heritage", includes a wide range of sub-themes. Some sub-themes remained across different versions while some sub-themes were contingent upon the compilers' recontextualization of the texts for the purpose of referring to or conforming to the currently prevailing ideology or State policy. This practice can be regarded as the continuation of the tradition of teaching literacy through value-loaded texts or teaching value through selected famous classical texts or compiled reading primers such as *Guwen guanzhi* (古文观止 An Anthropology of Classical Chinese Prose), *Cai gen tan* (菜根谭 Roots of Wisdom), *San zi jing* (三字经, Three Character Classic), *Zeng guang xianwen* (增广贤文, Wisdom in Chinese proverbs).

The most valued or persistent sub-themes about cultural heritage, which recurred across the different versions of the textbooks in different periods, were about traditional Chinese values. They included "The encouragement of learning", "Promotion of solidarity and harmony in the state and organisation", and "Loyalty, righteousness and benevolent governing".

#### 6.6.3.1 Encouragement of learning

Xunzi's *Quanxue* ("Encouragement of Learning") was selected in all the PEP textbook versions from 1978 to 2004 as well as in the 2004 JEPH textbook. Texts that belong to this subtheme include Song Lian's *Song dongyan masheng xu* ("To Young Scholar of Ma of Dong Yang County" my translation), which appeared in the 1980 and 1990 PEP versions. A modern text, *幼学纪事*, (*Youxue jishi*, "Anecdotes of my learning experience as a school-aged child") by modern actor and art educationist Yu Shizhi appears in the JEPH version. Xun Zi's essay uses figurative language to explain that learning is a cumulative process that requires persistence and determination. Both Song Lian and Yu Shizhi's articles used their own life experiences to encourage young learners to carry on their study regardless of the adverse environment.



### 6.6.3.2 Promotion of solidarity and harmony in the state and organisation

“The Story of General Lian Po and PM Lin Xiangru” (*Lian Po Lin Xiangru Lie Zhuan* 廉颇蔺相如列传) was another text selected by all the textbook versions mentioned above. This story is about how the General and the new Prime Minister of the Kingdom Zhao began with confrontation due to the General’s arrogance and ended in harmony due to the General’s self-correction and the Prime Minister’s tolerance.

### 6.6.3.3 Loyalty, righteousness and benevolent governing

Qu Yuan has been portrayed in history and folklore as a prototype of loyalty, righteousness and faith. According to the *Shiji*, (*Records of the Grand Historian*), he was a descendent of a noble family and a senior official of the Chu Kingdom as well as a great poet. He was slandered by corrupt ministers and exiled by the King. During his exile the capital of the State of Chu was captured by the army of the State of Qin, and Qu Yuan committed ritual suicide in despair. Qu Yuan’s work appears in all the textbook versions: the 1980 version selected Qu Yuan’s poem “Guo Shang” (国殇 *Remembrance of Fallen Soldiers*), and an excerpt of his biography from Si Maqian’s *Shiji*. The 1990 PEP textbook added an excerpt of historical drama about Qu Yuan by the modern historian and poet Guo Moruo along with the same excerpt of Qu Yuan’s biography in the *Shiji*. In the 2003 PEP version, Qu Yuan appeared with his most representative poem “Li Sao” as well as the excerpt of his biography by Sima Qian. The 2004 PEP textbook just follows the 2003 textbook’s pattern in this regard. The 2004 JEPH textbook added “Yufu” (*The Fisherman*, A dialogue between a fisherman who was also a wise man and Qu Yuan, before he drowned himself in the river) in addition to “Li Sao” and the excerpt from the biography by Sima, Qian.

*Yuwen* textbook compilers across at least two decades continued to select texts for the sub-theme of “Righteousness and benevolent governing”, with a preference for texts by Mencius rather than Confucius. Both Confucius and Mencius stress self-cultivation and moral integrity, but Mencius places righteousness above life: “I value my life and I also seek righteousness. However, if I have to choose between them, I would rather sacrifice my life to choose righteousness.” (*Mencius Gaozi Shang* 孟子 告子上, my translation). This passage was selected in both 1980 and 1986 PEP versions. Mencius reinterprets the Confucian concept of social hierarchy. Confucius stresses top-down social control and the absolute

obedience by the governed inferiors to the dominant rulers or seniors at the state, family and all other levels in society. The minister should obey and respect the king, and the son should follow and respect his father and so on. While Mencius specifically claimed: “The people are the most important, then the state, the king is the least important” (*Minweigui, shejiczhi, junweiqing* 民为贵,社稷次之,君为轻). Therefore Mencius’s texts were more in harmony with the CCP egalitarian ideology that still prevailed in the 1980s. The excerpt that contained the widely quoted sentence: “I would rather sacrifice my life to choose righteousness”, was included in the 1980, 1986 and 1990 PEP textbook versions, while the same chapter concerning benevolent governing was selected in the 2003 PEP and both 2004 JEPH and PEP versions.

## 6.7 Summary

This chapter has addressed the central question: which texts counted as official knowledge (Apple, 1993) through the process of language and literacy textbook compilation in China. The chapter has presented the analyses of the textbook compilation and the content of the *Yuwen* textbooks from 1980 to 2004. Two questions were addressed: 1) Whose (which authors) texts? 2) Which texts (which themes) were selected and why?

In this chapter I have emphasized the unique role of the textbook in curriculum design and implementation in China. I argued that the relaxation of state control of textbook compilation and distribution indicates the new power configuration in the field of curriculum design and implementation, that is, the balance between political control and professional opinion, administrative authority and commercial interests, centralism and localism.

The most substantial part of this chapter comprised the content analysis of the textbooks, which focussed on the changes of authors and themes. I addressed the questions: which work of which writer was selected in textbooks from 1980 to 2004 and why. The comparisons in the longitudinal and synchronic data suggest that the selection of authors and texts is ideologically controlled, and the *Yuwen* textbooks not only reflect the shift in the higher knowledge base imposed on the high school curriculum and in academic fashions, but are also subject to political and ideological change.

## **Chapter 7: Teachers' Perceptions of and Reaction to the Curriculum Changes**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous two chapters examined the syllabuses and the textbooks of *Yuwen* curriculum of the past 30 years. The angle that I chose to look at the curriculum formation was top-down in these chapters. That is, I examined how the government and curriculum experts as power holders and dominant players formed, designed and imposed the curriculum, although these practices and outcomes are conditioned by social, political and cultural milieu. In this chapter, I address the third sub-question: how *Yuwen* teachers of senior high schools in China, as the agents in the field of literacy education, cope with the major curriculum changes. I focus on teachers' perspectives of and attitudes towards the most recent curriculum change in 2004 and the subsequent new textbook series published after the relaxation of regulations regarding textbook compilation and publication.

This chapter presents my findings on how teachers, as the executors of the curriculum, implement it. In particular, I explore the gap between the actuality of the curriculum implementation and the intended outcomes of the curriculum. I am concerned with the institutional constraints that hinder teachers from fulfilling the curriculum ideas and their personal teaching philosophies in their teaching. During the process of the interviews, two closely related issues began to emerge: how the institutional and social conditions shaped teachers' conception of the subject or the identity of the subject, and how the institutional and social factors shaped teachers' self-perception of their roles in implementing the curriculum.

### **7.2 Approaches and design of the fieldwork**

Unlike the data that I gathered from the published textbooks, syllabuses, government documents and relevant academic research works discussed in previous chapters, the data collected in this chapter is from the fieldwork featuring qualitative, in-depth semi-structured interviews in two senior high schools in Jiangsu Province, China from 9 October to 2 November 2013. The Human Research Ethics Committee (HRSC) at the University of Sydney granted the ethical approval prior to my undertaking the fieldwork. The protocol number of the ethics approval is 2013/411 (see details in Appendix 1).

### 7.2.1 Hypotheses

Based on the analysis of the national syllabuses, published textbook series and debates in the academic journals in China, I presumed that teachers are not passive receivers of a top-down curriculum implementation process and that in practice there exists a contextualized curriculum versus the official published curriculum. This hypothesis was tested by the fieldwork data through interviews of teachers in two selected schools to explore how they accepted, resisted and “recontextualized” the different components of the official curriculum.

### 7.2.2 Themes of the interview questions

In total 15 questions were designed for the semi-structured interviews. The interviewer and interviewees were interactive with the set questions and some spontaneous and relevant questions were raised during the interviews, depending on the participants’ perceptions, reactions, backgrounds, and experiences as well as their administrative roles in the schools. The key questions were explored in more depth and a multi-layered approach. For instance, more often than not, I used rhetorical questions to elicit more in-depth reflections on the textbook choices and the legitimacy of the examination questions. The time frame, however, was an impediment. On more than one occasion, we had to cut short or shut down the conversation due to the time limit in spite of the fact that both parties were eager to discuss the issues in more detail. For a full list of interview questions please see Appendix 2.

All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The initial coding of the transcripts was conducted during the fieldwork in China. The re-coding and analysis of data were conducted after returning to Australia from the fieldwork trip. The initial coding involved the categories that were relevant to interview questions, such as, consent or resistance to the “functional literacy”, like or dislike of the “removal of or addition of particular writers’ works such as Lu Xun’s work”, receptiveness or resistance to the “local curriculum authorities’ directives”. The interview questions were based on the literature review and my preliminary coding (for full list of questions, please see Appendix 2). One of the most important codes was “resistance to the political control by the teachers”; however, this category did not elicit the expected responses from teachers in the interviews. Rather, a category of “teacher’s professional identification and teacher’s education” emerged after I re-read the interview transcripts. I found that it was the institutional culture and organizational aims that eventually shaped the teachers’ self perception and their practice. Teachers’ responses to political control

and text changes were much less significant than the impression that some media reported.

During the coding and detailed content analysis, four themes emerged:

1) Teachers' perception of the microenvironment of language and literacy (*Yuwen*) teaching in the institutions and the nature of the *Yuwen* teaching. For example, how supportive were the administration of the school, the students and parents? How did your training as a *Yuwen* teacher in the university contribute to your current teaching as a *Yuwen* teacher? What were the institutional constraints, in particular the end of schooling examination and its implications on the pedagogy?

2) Teachers' response to the key words or major discourse change in the syllabus, e.g. *Suzhi* education and literacy education.

3) Teachers' response to the text selection in the new textbook series and intended outcomes designed in the textbooks, e.g. comparison of the JEPH and PEP textbooks, shift of the canon in the textbook.

4) Teachers' self-perceived role in the curriculum implementation, e.g. what if you don't like the style of the text or don't agree with the author's point of view? To what extent do teachers rely on or are dependent on the textbooks?

### **7.3 Findings**

The following section presents my findings on the basis of the above-listed four themes.

#### **7.3.1 Theme one: teachers' perceptions of the micro-environment of language and literacy (*Yuwen*) teaching in the institutions and the nature of the *Yuwen* teaching**

The interview data indicate that teachers are much less susceptible and sensitive to the political or ideological shift of the curriculum than the author predicted. Rather, they are more concerned with the educational change and the status of the subject (*Yuwen*) in the school system, more specifically, the positioning and valuing of *Yuwen* in the university admission examination system (*Gaokao*). The impact of *Gaokao* is ubiquitous in all aspects of the teaching. This might suggest that to a great extent the de-politicization of the curriculum and subject has been successful.

In what follows, I present my findings in two sub-themes: 1) Teachers' perceived status of *Yuwen* in the school community and 2) *Gaokao* as shaping force of subject identity and development of teachers' professional identity.

### 7.3.1.1 *The status of Yuwen and Gaokao as the directing baton for Yuwen*

*Gaokao*, the higher education entrance examination, has been leading the direction of senior high school education pedagogically. The debates have been heated regarding the reform. For example, some universities have conducted experiments to explore alternatives to this rigorous, centralized, one-off academic assessment process. However, *Gaokao* remains the mainstream and authoritative means of allocating places for universities. Therefore, it is still central to the vast majority of senior high schools. *Yuwen* as a school subject is no exception. I have discussed in detail in the Chapter 2 the critique of *Gaokao*'s role of distorting the aims and objectives claimed in the official syllabuses and the call for the reform.

When asked: How do you rate the status of *Yuwen* in your school, the participant teachers almost unanimously agreed that institutionally the status of *Yuwen* is in line with its weight in *Gaokao* system. That is, the school management has given adequate resources for *Yuwen* because of the state's emphasis on mother tongue education, which is embodied in the university selection examination system. In one interviewee's words, "every subject for *Gaokao* is taken seriously and given priority, *Yuwen* is no exception" (interview with PJ8 on 22 Oct 2013).

In Jiangsu Province, in which the two schools are located, only three subjects, *Yuwen* (Chinese language and literacy), English and Mathematics are scored for *Gaokao* after five changes since 1999. In the 1980s six subjects were tested for the arts stream and the science stream in *Gaokao* respectively, with *Yuwen*, Mathematics and English common subjects for both streams. These three subjects make up a total of 480 points: *Yuwen* and Mathematics account for 160 each and English is worth 120. The candidates of the science and engineering stream need to do an extra Mathematics question worth 40 points, while candidates in the humanities and social sciences stream need to do extra questions in *Yuwen*, also worth 40 points.

In terms of the resources allocation, *Yuwen* in both schools gets what the subject deserves. In J school, the head of the Chinese department showed me the reading rooms specifically for

each year level, which are filled with a great number of books and magazines for students' extensive reading. I also noticed that J school subscribed to most of the reputable literary magazines in China, although virtually no teacher came there to read during my site visit.

Both schools boast a large staff number in the *Yuwen* departments with more than 40 in J school and more than 20 in T School, with proportional teaching hours being secured for *Yuwen*. In addition to the regular classes, J school also allocates a two-hour compulsory reading time in the reading rooms for students of year 10 and year 11, specifically for the *Yuwen* timetable, with the books in the reading rooms selected by the *Yuwen* teachers. J school still preserves the old practice of keeping students on campus for the compulsory early reading period (7:30 am to 8:00 am) supervised by Chinese and English teachers alternately, and the centralised evening study in the classroom, with students also required to spend one hour doing *Yuwen* (Chinese) and English work. This practice is no longer very common in urban schools.

In addition to the secured and guaranteed teaching hours, both schools are also committed to staff training. Both schools encourage their staff to advance their degrees. In J school in recent years, only graduates with a Master's degree are recruited. Two days prior to my arrival to T School, the principal hosted a one-day symposium on "*Yuwen* for life" strongly advocated by a master teacher in the town. *Yuwen* experts from local areas and beyond were invited to discuss, evaluate and promote their new ideas and methods so that *Yuwen* teachers in T School had the privilege of being exposed to these high-end seminars.

The principal of T School (interview with PT1 on 31 Oct 2013) told me that the T School administration encourages *Yuwen* teachers to attend the new curriculum training at all levels including sending a deputy principal to attend high-end new curriculum training programs organised by the National Curriculum Authority of the Ministry of Education.

When asked if the status of the *Yuwen* subject in T School is somewhat privileged due to the fact that the principal is a *Yuwen* teacher, the deputy principal (PT9) of T School responded: "That is not necessarily the case; it is ultimately decided by *Gaokao*, the directing baton". The principal also expressed a similar opinion (interview with PT1 on 1 Nov 2013).

The status of *Yuwen* is institutionally guaranteed by the *Gaokao* system, as indicated above. However, from the teachers' perspective, the *Gaokao* system, at same time, distorts the ideal

curriculum or official curriculum in their minds and changes their prescribed role in practice. Teachers have their own self-perceived professional images, which are shaped by the *Gaokao* system: from the classroom literacy technician at one end to the pastoral carer at the other end (both titles are used in an analogous sense). Therefore, as I hypothesised at the beginning of this chapter, teachers are recontextualizing the official curriculum and creating their own curriculum in order to cope with the pressure of the directing baton: the *Gaokao* system.

PT9, the deputy principle of T School, outspokenly blamed the *Gaokao* and other external examinations for blighting the teaching of *Yuwen* at all levels including senior high school. Below is an excerpt of our conversation during the interview (interview with PT9 on 1 Nov 2013):

PT9: I have been teaching Year 12 Chinese for more than 20 years; both parents and students are at a loss. On the one hand, they wish to achieve in this subject and apply what they learn for practical use in the future. On the other hand, students' dedication to and interest in *Yuwen* is not very adequate.

Interviewer: The main reason?

PT9: Maybe our *Yuwen* or mother tongue education has entered a dead end.

Interviewer: How come?

PT9: The interest in mother tongue or *Yuwen* study was murdered at primary schools. From grade 3, students start to learn writing, analysis of texts, reading and appreciation. It is too demanding for grade 3 students to appreciate a poem or an article, and an essay is beyond their cognitive development. Students suffer from this kind of torture imposed by the *Yuwen* subject; they feel intimidated and helpless, they start to lose interest. So it is an awkward situation for *Yuwen*: it is like a chicken rib (Jilei means chick rib, A Chinese slang meaning "Catch 22"). That is: it is a pity to drop it, but you cannot get much taste by chewing it. When they enter senior high school, their interest decreases drastically; they only take it as a subject required by *Gaokao* not for the purpose of understanding and inheriting Chinese culture.



Two more interviewees used the term, “chicken rib”, to describe the situation of *Yuwen* teaching in the two schools.

The other reason for the blighting of the *Yuwen* subject is the prevalent utilitarian pedagogy.

Interviewer: Don't you think this is a paradox? If there were no *Gaokao*, would you expect students could be dedicated more to *Yuwen* study?

PT9: Without *Gaokao*, our *Yuwen* teachers would not be restricted to the current prevalent method. Now it is teachers who are contained by *Gaokao*; without *Gaokao*, teachers would explore more approaches that are in line with the cognitive principles and cater for students' interests. (Interview with PT9 on 1 Nov 2013)

PJ2 also blamed *Gaokao* system for alienating the nature and function of *Yuwen* as she imagined and perceived:

*Yuwen* is not testable and measurable. To study science, technology and engineering is an individual's responsible way to contribute to the society. To study arts and humanities is responsible to your own life. *Yuwen* is meant to nurture one's temper and self-refreshment; it is for one's spiritual life. (Interview with PJ2 on 22 Oct 2013)

Interestingly, PJ2's ideal of *Yuwen* as an exam-free subject was also echoed by another teacher (PJ9). When commenting on the rumour that English will be removed from the *Gaokao* subjects,<sup>xiv</sup> she said,

Our *Yuwen* teachers are saying that it is *Yuwen* that should be removed from *Gaokao*, so that students can really learn something in the class. We ask you to read a classic such as *Dream of Red Mansion*, but we are not going to test you about it, so that you can enjoy it through reading. This is the way we are talking and thinking about the subject. However, our boss (the principal of the school) said that is absolutely impossible. *Yuwen* is our mother tongue. (Interview with PJ9 on 18 Oct 2013)

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<sup>xiv</sup> During my visit to schools in Nanjing, an official announcement was released in Jiangsu province: English would be removed from the *Gaokao* subject list and from 2014, students could choose to have their English tested twice per year and not counted in the total mark for university admission.

PJ9's cynical remark about *Yuwen* also indicates an awkward "chicken rib" situation – politically, nobody can take the risk of removing *Yuwen* from the *Gaokao* subject list, while the *Gaokao* itself is the killer of the students' creativity and interest in the subject.

### *7.3.1.2 Gaokao and the education system as the shaping force of the curriculum and teachers' professional self-identification*

Although PT9's pessimistic opinions about the *Yuwen* subject and *Yuwen* teachers' professional self-identification – "what we do decides who we are: classroom literacy technician, exam trainer, pastoral carer and carrier of culture heritage" – are representative among interviewees, his narrative and comments demonstrated his intention to resist and change. Other teachers could also rightly be put in the pessimistic camp, but appeared more cynical about *Yuwen* as a school subject and their professional identities.

PJ7 is a reputable senior teacher who confidently revealed her utilitarian approach and cynicism about the subject and the professional identity of *Yuwen* during the interview. When asked to what extent her pre-service training including literary, linguistic and *Yuwen* teaching methodology in the teachers college contributed to shape her professional identity, PJ7's response was straightforward and illustrative if not blunt.

PJ7: Well, to classroom teachers, instrumental function is more important.

Interviewer: What do you mean by instrumental?

PJ7: In contrast to literariness, from the perspective of *Gaokao*, it must be operational and able to be measured by students' scores in the *Gaokao*; this is the instrumental dimension. Literary competence and attainment (highlighted in the new syllabus, my comment) is an elusive concept. Our school has always been stressing extensive reading for students; the horizontal banners also say, "to lay a solid foundation for students' lifelong development". Well, my understanding is, please excuse my shallowness, if you cannot help him/her get a high mark and cannot help him/her secure a place in the university, in which direction can he/she develop?

(Interview with PJ7 on 16 Oct 2013)

Guided by this instrumental rationalism, the reading and teaching of the literary texts end up emulating the systematic and de-emotionalised techniques of the *Gaokao* question format

rather than imparting a romantic appreciation of and immersion in the literary texts as the new syllabus (“Curriculum Standards”) intended. PJ7 illustrated her goal-oriented strategies for teaching reading as follows:

Reading is just like searching for a needle in the haystack. If the books won’t be tested, then reading would not help you increase your score, so our selection of reading materials is narrowed down. If *Gaokao* will test your literary essay (*sanwen* 散文) reading, I will find you literary essays; if *Gaokao* tests your reading of short stories, then I give you short stories. This is not enough, if you read; I will give you questions to answer. There are four types of literary essays, so I will give you questions addressing these four types: how to answer the questions regarding the functions of particular techniques; how to answer the questions regarding the plot of the story. This is how I train my students. I am pretty short-sighted but practical, goal-oriented (to serve the score). I feel this is necessary for our front-line teachers. You are accountable to students and their parents. This is the way it is ... Without proper training, the writers or professors won’t be able to outperform our students or even me for *Gaokao* questions. (Interview with PJ7 on 16 Oct 2013)

PJ7’s opinions of literary essays were also echoed by PT5 (the head of Chinese at T School). Although PT5 claimed that the literary training is most relevant to his current teaching, he admitted that teaching literature in high school is different from what he had been trained in the teachers’ college. It is fragmented and technologized for the purpose of *Gaokao*.

Interviewer: What aspects of literature training affect your current teaching: literature knowledge, literary appreciation or analysis, or literature cultivation?

PT5: I think that the influence of literature on students is a subtle and long process (潜移默化), but there is a distinction between the philosophy and the techniques. What curriculum experts are concerned about is the educational philosophy, while we as classroom teachers focus on the techniques: how to operate, how to teach and how to help students achieve the score in *Gaokao*. (Interview PT5 on 30 Oct 2013)

The classroom technician styles represented by PJ7, PT5 and others indicate an overt utilitarianism and instrumentalism for *Yuwen* teaching, while other participant teachers expressed humanist ideals in their teaching and self-perceived professional images, although

this idealism has to compromise with the quantitative requirements set by the examination system, the *Gaokao*.

In contrast to his colleague PJ7's overt goal-oriented approach in his teaching and self-perceived professional image, PJ1, the head of Chinese department at J school, is an ardent advocate of extensive reading and literacy and literary competence for students. (PJ7 also specifically indicated her difference with PJ1 in terms of teaching style, personality and insights into *Yuwen* pedagogy). PJ1 said:

I don't agree with the opinion that puts the pedagogy aiming to enhance students' overall literacy competence and the result/exam-oriented pedagogy in a binary opposition. A competent student is not afraid of *Gaokao*, because he/she has read extensively and is knowledgeable and insightful. Therefore his/her essay writing must be outstanding, and the analytical skills will be reflected in the answers and writing. His/her insight and opinion will be superior to his/her peers. Our school is actively promoting extensive reading. In the exam preparation training, we do give students proper instruction about methods and strategies in order to enable students to master the patterns. However, relying solely on teachers' instruction and the textbooks cannot guarantee students to achieve high scores in *Gaokao*.

PJ1 said that he encourages discussion and mutual inspiration in the class and believes that these practices will ultimately benefit the students' examination performance. He also asserted that the so-called exam oriented pedagogy is drawing closer to the overall-competence approach, as the question types of *Gaokao* are increasingly more flexible and aim to test students' overall competence (interview with PJ1 on 14 Oct 2013).

PJ8 is another member of the *Suzhi* camp stressing the fostering of the general quality of students in of language and literacy education. He presented a Chinese version of John Dixon's personal development model during our prolonged interview, although Dixon's advocacy is almost unknown to Chinese teachers and academics. It should be noted that besides his teaching duty, PJ8 is the deputy director of the Students' Disciplinary Department of J School. He is a renowned teacher in J district for his excellent work of pastoral caring and counselling of his classes. He enthusiastically advocates that *Yuwen*, in particular the literary component of the subject, should play a crucial role in students' personal development and he himself is a successful practitioner combining *Yuwen* as language and

literacy education with students' personal development. He published a book in 2008 in a respectable education publishing house documenting the spiritual and emotional development of his students in the class of which he was in charge. After the interview, he kindly gave me a copy of this book, which is titled, *Watch the Development: Notes of a Head Teacher of the Class*.

PJ8 placed very high significance on the nurturing function of the *Yuwen* subject, in particular its emotional educative function<sup>xv</sup> When asked how he perceives the nature of *Yuwen* education, PJ8 remarked:

It is widely accepted that *Yuwen* is the fusion of functionalism and humanism. Characters (scripts), vocabularies, these things belong to the functional dimension of *Yuwen*, while the literature is about humanities. This is one aspect. Another aspect is, I believe, that *Yuwen* assumes the important role of emotional learning. (Interview with PJ8 on 22 Oct 2013)

PJ8's understanding of the role of emotional education is in line with the new syllabus "Curriculum Standards" specification that emotional education (learning) is an indispensable component of *Yuwen* education. PJ8 and all the other *Yuwen* teachers of the overall-competence camp (*Suzhi*) acknowledged the unique disciplinary role of *Yuwen* in blending literacy and literature education with emotional as well as moral education.

PJ8, like PJ1, advocated extensive reading, public speech and extra-curriculum activities aiming to enhance students' overall literary and literacy competence but not necessarily directly relevant to the *Gaokao* system. Take orality for example. There is no oral examination for *Yuwen*, but he believed that oral expression would eventually help advance the writing skills as well as students' future career progress. He quoted twice his own experiences of interviewing new teachers for the district. He said that he witnessed too many young graduates disadvantaged due to their weak oral communication skills on these formal occasions. When asked by students, "Since *Gaokao* won't test our speech, why should we be bothered to keep practising it?" PJ8 responded, "It will be useful for your life ahead."

PJ8 admitted that he is in the minority in his school and his experiments had been questioned

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<sup>xv</sup> More than one teacher interviewed reiterated and discussed the role of "emotional education" in the *Yuwen* subject.

by his peers for being too time consuming and not focusing on *Gaokao*, but he had gained the respect and partial understanding from principals and colleagues because his class eventually achieved higher than average marks in the *Yuwen* examination of *Gaokao*. PJ8 used his own case to convince me in our conversation that the development approach does not contradict the requirements of *Gaokao*: “Even if my kids perform neck and neck with other classes, they are happier in the three years in the senior high school because I care about what they like and what they think” (interview with PJ8 on 22 Oct 2013).

One of the participants, PJ5, a senior teacher of J school used a more traditional and somewhat stylized concept: *Wenwei* (文味) or *Wenren qizhi* (文人气质) to describe what *Yuwen* teachers should look like. The closest and most pertinent translation for *Wenwei* or *Wenren qizhi*, in my opinion, is “literati habitus”, which can refer to the dignified comportment and ethos of pre-modern literati in China and/or a refined temperament underpinned by literary tastes or competences. PJ5 confirmed that it was the literature studies in the university (teachers college) that benefitted his teaching most. When I further explored what aspects of literature influenced his teaching most significantly, PJ5 responded:

I have been thinking about this question for a long time: What on earth is the difference between our *Yuwen* class and the classes of other school subjects? I think our *Yuwen* class should have a special flavour: *Wenwei* (文味) (literary qualities or flavour). How could *Wenwei* be reflected and felt? ...There is no denying that when you study *Yuwen*, you use it as textual practice and you want to achieve your communication goals. But I think *Wenwei* is more important. In my opinion, our *Yuwen* teachers should be noticeably different from others. It should be felt that you are not teaching Mathematics. Just the way it is, it is a question of manners and nurturing, and this is the influence of literature. (Interview with PJ5 on 21 Oct 2013)

PT1, the principal of T School described a case during our conversation illustrating the conflict and dilemma between the imposed utilitarian mind-set and the idealism in the *Yuwen* subject and the teachers’ professional perception of their role in the curriculum. PT1 used to have a teacher in the junior high school (years 7-9)<sup>xvi</sup> who only had a three-year college

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<sup>xvi</sup> When the junior schools in China were separated from the senior schools, this teacher was transferred to the junior high school campus of T School.

qualification in contrast to the 4-year standard BA course that most teachers nowadays are required to have. However, her class always achieved the top results of the year level in the external or entrance examinations. She said, “I do not care what my literary competence is, nor should you care. I am only concerned if my students are able to answer the exam questions.” PT1 said that as the principal of the school, he should support such staff because the school needs the enrolment rate of students for universities (from senior high school) and senior high schools (from junior high school). However, he told me that his idea is undergoing change and he has started to think about the life-long impact on students of *Yuwen* after his recent frequent contact with some Master Teachers (*Teji Jiaoshi* 特级教师 referred to as 特级教师 in Chinese, the top level of the academic hierarchy of school teachers) of *Yuwen*. That was also his motivation for hosting the seminar of “*Yuwen* for life” that had just completed when I arrived at his school, as I mentioned above (interview with PT1 on 21 Oct 2013).

As demonstrated in the above cases, a wide range of perceptions and self-perceived professional images were articulated by the teachers in their interviews. However, it would be misleading to conclude that overt pragmatists and passionate humanists and idealists are dramatically oppositional or mutually exclusive in the same staff rooms. Actually people like PJ8, PJ5 and PJ1 are no misfits. They have all survived and succeeded in the educational and institutional contexts. They all recognize the role of *Gaokao* in leading the way of *Yuwen* teaching and they try to blend their personal pedagogical beliefs with the official curriculum and the curriculum changes. PJ5 also admitted that his teaching is divided into his preferred aesthetic appreciation and the drills and practices required by *Gaokao* (Interview with PJ5 on 16 Oct 2013).

It should be noted that the overt pragmatists should not be simply treated as opportunists. Even in their preferred result-oriented training there also exist rational elements which might have been hidden by their overt cynicism. For instance, PJ7 has published a number of journal articles regarding thinking skills, arguing the training effectively provided by *Yuwen* has been overlooked or under-developed in the official curriculum. Her articles feature the strong imprint of Dixon’s development model, but she did not mention them during our conversation. I discovered her profile on the school website.

### 7.3.2 Theme two: teachers' response to the changes of key words or major discourse changes in the syllabus

In this section, I present the teachers' explicit and implicit responses to the discursive changes in the syllabus with a focus on the new major conceptual term, *Suzhi*, as articulated in the latest syllabus documents, the "Curriculum Standards" (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of the "Curriculum Standards").

During my fieldwork the responses to the "Curriculum Standards" were mixed. I should reiterate that most classroom teachers in China are accustomed to viewing the set textbook as the actualised syllabus and seldom have the energy and time to study closely the theoretical or conceptual changes in the syllabus. The interview data suggested that most participants welcomed the innovativeness of the *Yuwen* "Curriculum Standards".

There were some reservations, mainly centring on the operational level: for instance, the introduction of the concept of the module (*mokuai* 模块) in the curriculum. PT9, the deputy principal of T School was the only participant who had attended the national Curriculum Standards training but he held a very negative view of the latest change in the Curriculum Standards. PT9's general comment was that Curriculum Standards is a translated or adopted version of the curriculum of the State of California, USA. But the experts who had designed syllabus failed to consider the differences in the social, political and educational systems as well as the educational ideas between two countries and therefore, the conditions for the implementation of the curriculum in China have not been inappropriate. PT9 did not accept the concept of the module in the Curriculum Standards and accused it of failing to arrange the cultural and literature aspects of the curriculum chronologically and disordering the Chinese cultural system as a whole. There has been no official acknowledgement by the Curriculum Standards writers that their framework is based on California's curriculum documents and PT9's view could be the target of further research. Whichever framework the Curriculum Standards referred to or emulated, there are many similar discourses or concepts that are very local and China-based, such as *Suzhi* education.

*Suzhi* and *Suzhi* education is the major educational concept reflected in the Curriculum Standards and the vast majority of participants agreed that *Yuwen* is the most suitable subject to inculcate and implement *Suzhi* education. However, the interview data suggests that the



teachers' understanding of *Suzhi* and their intentions and attitudes regarding the implementation of *Suzhi* education are varied. Table 7.1 provides a summary of each participant's understanding of *Suzhi* and/or *Suzhi* education.

**Table 7.1** Summary of participants' understanding of *Suzhi* or *Suzhi* education

Schools and Participants	Participants' understanding of <i>Suzhi</i> and <i>Suzhi</i> education
J School	
PJ1	Literacy competence leading to life long study, agency and independent learning
PJ2	Personal development, moral education, whole person
PJ3	Cultivation of people skills ( 为人处世), emotional education (empathy, sensibility)
PJ4	He admitted that he was confused by this concept, but he alluded to moral education, aesthetics, thinking skills, personal development education, accumulation of knowledge
PJ5	Humanism, emotional education
PJ6	Humanities (humanism)人文素养
PJ7	Humanities (humanism)人文素养
PJ8	Nurturing, practical literacy competence, width of knowledge (acquired through extensive reading)
PJ9	Competence, values
T School	
PT1	Moral education,
PT2	Humanism (she did not specifically define what <i>Suzhi</i> education is, but she used it as an oppositional concept against education for examination.
PT3	Humanism
PT4	Whole person through reading classics
PT5	Humanism education (life philosophy: world view, outlook of life, positive attitudes)
PT6	Emotion, attitudes and values
PT7	Humanism, humanistic care, emotion education, social responsibility
PT8	Thinking skills, aesthetics, personal development, whole person, healthy emotions, literacy for life

Schools and Participants	Participants' understanding of <i>Suzhi</i> and <i>Suzhi</i> education
PT9	Humanism (but he contended that humanism itself is a fuzzy concept and open to interpretation)

Most of the participant teachers were sceptical about the implementation of *Suzhi* education in their literacy and literature education under the current educational milieu. PJ9 rejected *Suzhi* education in her teaching. The following conversation vividly illustrates her disdain for the *Suzhi* discourse:

PJ9: I told my students, I am a realistic person although my background is arts and humanities in the University.

Interviewer: Did you mean that you are a realistic person by nature or you have changed into a realistic person after you started to teach?

PJ9: The society taught me. As frontline teachers ... the ultimate assessment criterion is the exam result. This is severe competition. Somebody says that you enhance their *Suzhi*, give them a better chance to develop, but many of us *Yuwen* teachers cannot afford the failure of the experiment ... not just our young teachers but the seniors as well. Also, students would not allow you to play *Suzhi*. For instance, when teaching *Romeo and Juliet*, you teach them that this line should be read with passion, or sadness or rising or falling tones, and students would be happy to have grasped the meaning and emotion of Shakespeare. But the examinations do not test this; they only test the patterned reading comprehension. The students realise that what the teacher stressed in the class does not fit with the exam question and they feel that they have wasted a class. In the long run, students' evaluation and feedback of your teaching will be a problem. (Interview with PJ9 on 15 Oct 2013)

PJ3 also questioned the evaluation system of *Suzhi* education as lacking solid assessment criteria, with such thing as emotional experience hard to measure (interview with PJ3 on 21 Oct 2013).

Most of T School *Yuwen* teachers were impressed by the ideas and the showcase teaching presented by the Master Teacher (*Teji Jiaoshi*) during the seminar two days prior to my visit

to the school. However, they were cautious about implementing the ideas of “*Yuwen* for life” (*Shenghuo hua yuwen* 生活化的语文), which is integrated into the *Suzhi* discourse in contrast to the unarticulated but prevalent concept of curriculum for examination or *Gaokao* (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of “*Yuwen* for life” and other approaches to teaching *Yuwen*). More than one participant of T School tentatively questioned the practice and theory of the Master Teacher from the big brother school T1 School advocating “*Yuwen* for life”. When asked how to integrate *Suzhi* education ideas into the classroom practice, PT2, who still retained a fresh memory of the seminar and showcase teaching by the Master Teacher, commented:

A couple of days ago, our school hosted a seminar featuring an expert’s teaching philosophy of *Yuwen* (literacy) for life and he also gave two demonstration classes. The classes were wonderful and modelled the ideas of *Suzhi* education: life-oriented *Yuwen*. But I was told later that the classes that he taught actually did not score very high in the *Gaokao*. So if we place too much emphasis on *Suzhi*, and do not focus on the examination preparation, the results won’t be satisfying. (Interview with PT2 on 30 Nov 2013)

PT5 also expressed a similar view, reflecting the gap between the advanced educational ideas conveyed in the Curriculum Standards and the reality:

PT5: Just like in the universities, no matter how wonderful your teaching is, if you don’t have research output, it is deemed a failure. We have a Master Teacher<sup>xvii</sup> but he does not teach year 12 classes. We all liked his demo classes, they were superb. We all believe that this is the way *Yuwen* should be taught but the exam results are not good, what can you do?

Interviewer: why doesn’t the Master Teacher teach year 12? Is the way of teaching year 12 against his philosophy?

PT5: Yes, it is against his idea. We also got confused. “Well, aren’t you the Master Teacher?” Yes, he is dedicated to his ideas, he said. “If I don’t have this courage,

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<sup>xvii</sup> I have checked the school website later and found that T School does not have a Master Teacher for *Yuwen*, so he must be referring to the Master Teacher in the other school in the town.

confidence and persistence, how can I be a Master Teacher”? I have observed a few Master Teachers’ demo classes and I feel their ideas are not contradictory to the Gaokao system, but their way of teaching is slower to achieve the goals.

Interviewer: not efficient?

PT5: Yes. No efficiency, but actually what these master teachers advocate is very reasonable. (Interview with PT5 on 30 Nov 2013)

The participant teachers sometimes consciously linked *Suzhi* related rhetoric with their teaching; however, the more in-depth discussion did not result in coherent ideas as to how the rhetoric yields the intended or convincing outcomes. This indicates that the Curriculum Standards’ educational ideas did have impact on the teachers’ mind-set, just as the Master Teachers influenced them at the local level, but effective implementation of these ideas will not be realized in the near future given the current education conditions. For instance, more than one teacher mentioned emotional development in *Yuwen* teaching as part of *Suzhi* education. I was very interested in this dimension and had a few spontaneous discussions with teachers on the spot. The following is an excerpt of my conversation with PJ3, which shows the split between the curriculum ideas and their constraints in practical teaching:

Interviewer: Didn’t you feel the intention of *Suzhi* education and humanism embedded in JEPH textbook?

PJ3: They are clearly embodied in the textbook... I can feel the compilers’ intention to represent the three dimensions stipulated in the Curriculum Standards.<sup>xviii</sup> Emotional cultivation, better understanding of the society etc, but the effect is relative; students may not experience much, not in-depth, not many activities. More static knowledge...

Interviewer: As a teacher, wouldn’t you elicit students’ emotional reaction to the texts?

PJ3: I am not an emotional person and I am good at controlling my emotions. How

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<sup>xviii</sup> The three dimensions in the Curriculum Standards are “knowledge and competence”, “process and methods”, “emotion, attitudes and values”.

can I arouse students' emotions? Once they are inspired, how can you end it? How can I proceed to the other teaching objectives of the class including linguistic aspects?

Interviewer: Did you mean that emotion cannot be measured? So according to your description, *Suzhi* education cannot be tested in *Gaokao*?

PJ3: You cannot be that absolute. *Suzhi*, like the experience of emotion, can be evident in some question types, like poetry appreciation: there is the analysis of the emotion of the poet. But experiencing the emotion is different to analysing the emotion.

Interviewer: Well said. They belong to two different dimensions: analysis of the emotion and emotion creation, of which the latter is hard to test.

In sum, the frontline teachers are aware of the change in discourse in the syllabus, but in general, the tradition as well as the rigid assessment system somewhat restrict their efforts to implement the new ideas and methods into their daily practices. Some of the teachers, like PJ8 and PJ5, embrace the syllabus and curriculum change in their teaching, while most of the interviewees remain focused on the more traditional way of teaching and receive the new syllabus with some reservation or just resist it for being not practical.

### 7.3.3 Theme three: Teachers' responses to the text selections in the new textbook series and intended outcomes designed in the textbooks

In this section, I explore teachers' attitudes towards the textbook changes, in particular their responses to the JEPH textbook series after the relaxation of regulations about textbook compilation and publication. Three sub-themes emerged after coding and categorising the transcribed data: 1) teachers' dependence on the textbooks, 2) teachers' attitudes towards the change from genres-based model (PEP model) to theme-based model (JEPH model) and 3) teachers' responses to the changes of the texts in the new textbooks.

#### 7.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Teachers' dependence on the textbooks

In the previous chapter, I quoted Lai's interviews with teachers in China (Lai, 1995, p. 103), which found that teachers trusted textbooks and public examinations more than syllabus

documents. This finding was in line with my learning and teaching experience in China in the 1980s and 1990s. However, my interview data suggests that nowadays the importance of textbooks in senior high school teaching has been downgraded, and teachers do not respect and rely on textbooks as before. One of the major reasons is that the texts in the textbook are not directly or only slightly related to the texts in the *Gaokao* exam or the examination authority's examination guideline.

In Jiangsu Province where my interview sites were based, only about 5 out of the total of 160 marks in the *Gaokao* exam paper are specifically related to the textbook: some requirements to write down from memory the classical texts in textbooks. The awkward situation is that students study an excerpt of *Romeo and Juliet* in the textbook, but this masterpiece by Shakespeare will definitely not be tested in the exam; rather, according to one of the interviewees, *Gaokao* only tests works of second class or less famous writers in case the high school teachers anticipate or guess the questions for their students.

The reduced dependence on the textbooks was reflected in the interviews of both the utilitarian teachers as well as the humanism-oriented teachers. When asked, "To what extent do you think the JEPH textbooks are relevant to the *Gaokao* in Jiangsu province?" most of interviewees answered that they can either use JEPH or PEP to prepare for *Gaokao*; the end result won't be any different. PJ7 told me that she actually believes in the commercial or self-designed reference books more than JEPH textbooks, because these materials are more examination oriented. She said confidently that she could get her students better results without using the JEPH textbooks at all.

Again, teachers felt that the fact that what they teach is not relevant to what will be tested not only reduces teachers' enthusiasm to use the textbooks but also confuses students. PT4, who obtained a M.A in literature before starting her career, liked the text selection of the JEPH textbooks series but she also expressed her confusion in this regard. When asked the same question of how the current JEPH textbooks are related to *Gaokao*, she said:

No, they are not related. Math is better in this regard: it advocates that we test what we teach, but for *Gaokao*, this is not the case. That is why many students and parents get confused; they don't know where to start and where to make their effort.

(Interview with PT5 on 30 Nov 2013)

From the teachers' responses, the textbooks' previously perceived status as de facto syllabus is severely challenged. Take the JEPH's textbook for example. At the school level, the textbook compilers' intended objectives are re-contextualized due to the competitive education environment and teachers' individual background and preferences. For instance, the weight of works by foreign authors is as high as 25% (27/108) in the JEPH textbooks, as my finding in Chapter 6 showed. This at least indicates a more open attitude towards the thoughts and ideas of the West. However, in both schools, most teachers said that they only teach a small portion of the texts in the class and leave the rest for students to read after class or not at all.

PT4 can be put in the category of the minority who are still interested in teaching modern texts and texts of foreign writers, in spite of the fact that she is aware that the effort of teaching these texts is not as rewarding as teaching the classic texts. This can be attributed partly to her personal preference and her training in literature. At her demonstration class on O. Henry's Last Leaf she told me that she had done a lot of research on this short story. She explained why some translators used Last Ivy Leaf rather than Last Leaf to translate the title into Chinese. She was happy to tell me that her online research found that the reason for adding "Ivy" to the title was that ivy is related to the Greek God of Wine, Dionysus, who wore an ivy wreath and represented joy, theatre and peace (although this argument was not quite convincing from my point of view).

#### *7.3.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Teachers' attitudes towards the change from genres-based model (PEP model) to theme-based model (JEPH model)*

The response to the change from the genre-based model to the theme-based model was mixed. PT1, the principal of T School, said that in his school young teachers accept this innovation more readily than senior teachers, while the data that I collected from the 18 participants indicated that it is more related to teachers' speciality and personality: those who focus on literature are more likely to favour the theme-based model. For instance, PJ5, PJ8 and PJ1, all of whom graduated from teachers college in the late 1980s, had no objection to this change. It should be noted that although the response to this change varied, it was widely acknowledged by both camps, for and against the theme-based model, that the JEPH textbook has a weakness in that it fails to help students establish a sense of genre in writing and failed to organise the cultural and literature knowledge systematically.

PT1 favoured in principle the change in JEPH textbook. However, later in the conversation, he started to complain that the current curriculum overlooked the teaching of grammar in junior high school, which led him to teach make-up lessons of grammar in senior high school. Then he started to complain about the theme-based textbooks:

PT1: As to the text selection (JEPH textbook) and the way of arrangement of each unit and each volume are sometimes unintelligible.

Interviewer: Are not they linked by the theme?

PT1: Well, as to the theme, these articles or texts are somewhat artificially put in the same unit made by the compilers. I also teach year 10 classes now. After one semester, I feel that these articles are hard to put together: some are translated texts, others are classic texts or modern texts, but they appear in the same unit. The teachers find it hard to teach, and hard for students. They also lack systemacity.

(Interview with PT1 on 31 Oct 2013)

PT1's criticism of the JEPH's theme-based approach reflects two weaknesses of the textbook: 1) It is hard to operate for frontline teachers because all genres are mixed together under the banner of theme, 2) Cultural and linguistic knowledge are not organised systematically.

The second point was echoed in PT9's view discussed earlier that the theme-based model failed to arrange the cultural and literature aspects of the curriculum chronologically and disordered the Chinese cultural system as a whole. Other interviewees mentioned the first weakness and I found that the teachers have simple strategies to cope. PT5 told me frankly that the actual teaching is still controlled by the *Gaokao* model, and teachers would not focus on the themes in everyday teaching. He assured me that the *Yuwen* lesson does not turn into moral education class, because "we are all fully aware of what *Gaokao* requires us to do" (interview with PT5 on 30 Oct 2013). PJ7 addressed this question bluntly in her usual style, "It does not affect my teaching...I don't care much about those fancy things; I only take each text as a text; through teaching text, I teach students how to answer the questions" (interview with PJ7 on 16 Oct 2013). PJ3's comments are also very representative regarding the JEPH's theme based idea. "Because the compilers' ideas are somewhat divorced from school teaching...We are still following the old path in the new shoes" (interview with PJ3 on 21



Oct 2013). PJ6's criticism of the JEPH textbook's failure to foster the students' sense of genre is most illustrative and candid:

PJ6: Personally I don't like the theme-based approach. It fails to foster students' sense of genre. Kids don't have proper models and paths to develop a sense of genre. The biggest problem is that students confuse argumentative writing with narrative writing when I mark students' composition...sometimes I need to turn to my old version of PEP textbooks to find proper texts for a particular genre and reprint them for my students to emulate.

Interviewer: Isn't it related to the teachers' mind-set as to what a genre should look like?

PJ6: Maybe, but I was a *Gaokao* assessor and when we came across this type of writing with no proper distinctive features of the genre, the candidate would face substantial deduction of points. We know what the examiners consider as the proper way of writing, so we would not let our students take risks in this regard. Students take risks with a genre-based approach in this theme-based approach. Well, we teachers are uncertain about it. (Interview with PJ6 on 16 Oct 2013)

### 7.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Teachers' responses to the change of texts in the new textbooks

The interview data suggests that the participant teachers in general were not very sensitive to the changes of authors, text types and the countries of origin. Part of the reason may be attributed to the fact that the so-called Curriculum Standards and the new textbook series have been in use for nearly nine years. The changes, which I examined from the longitudinal perspective in the previous chapters of this thesis, may not be perceived in the same way by the frontline teachers. But when reminded of particular authors or texts, some of them seemed to be nostalgic, although they admitted that as the world changes, the selection of the texts should also change. Further discussions and consultations also corrected my previous assumptions. For instance, the weight of Lu Xun's work has drastically dropped in the compulsory textbooks but the teachers told me that in fact Lu Xun's fictional work is named as one of the ten master works for elective study, and the status of Lu Xun as whole has not been as challenged as the popular media claimed (interview with PJ1 on 14 Oct 2013).

The response to the text changes were mainly centred on three questions: 1) What is your opinion about the increased proportion of the foreign (translated) texts? 2) What is your opinion about the increased proportion of Classical Chinese texts? 3) What is your opinion about the drastic decrease of Lu Xun's works in the textbook?

1) Response to the increased proportion of foreign texts: Most participants demonstrated their understanding of JEPH's inclusion of a higher percentage of translated works, and no participant was strongly against it. Even if a few personally did not like foreign works, they felt that it is a good way of looking outward to the other parts of the world. To elicit responses and advance the conversation on this topic, I attempted to challenge the participant teachers with such questions as: "Don't you think that a subject called Chinese language and literacy but including so many foreign texts would distort the nature and identity of this subject?" or "Don't you think the translated language would affect the purity of our mother tongue?" Most teachers still stuck to their original stand even when they were confronted by these questions. PT2's response was representative of a more open attitude shared by the majority of participants who had no objection to this change:

There are more foreign writers' works selected. Well, comparatively there are more texts marked as self-study, so they don't teach them all in the class. However, these texts by foreign authors have one advantage: students can access something that they otherwise could not access normally. I have a class of the arts and humanity stream, and they know more foreign writers than I do, both classic and modern writers. They can name a lot. The trend of including more foreign writers in the textbook can expand their vision. (Interview with PT2 on 30 Oct 2013)

Those who favoured foreign texts also credited these texts for including a wider range of themes such as environment awareness, science, universal values and literary expressions in the fictional works. PJ4 overtly expressed that we need to learn from the West. He told me that he started to take an interest in foreign writers' works recently although he had devoted most of his time to reading classical Chinese works. He said that he re-read Tolstoy's *Resurrection* with great interest because he had recently marked his students' reading notes. Stefan Zweig's essay, "The Most Beautiful Grave in the World" in memory of Tolstoy's trip to Russia in 1928 also triggered PJ4's interest in Tolstoy.

These merits, however, also became the target of criticism, for instance, by PT9. He blamed

some of the popular science works by foreign writers for being so specialized that they are beyond teachers' scope of knowledge, let alone the students'. PT3 also complained that the themes of these foreign texts are too hard for high school students to comprehend.

Some teachers also expressed concern and mild scepticism about the language of translated works. PJ6 expressed concern about the translatability of some genres from the foreign language into Chinese:

If the translation is good, the proportion of the foreign work does not worry me. However, some genres, like poetry, sometimes sound weird. Those that are deemed good translations don't have the charm and rhythm of Chinese classical poetry, even though they may read beautifully in English or another original language. They don't sound good when translated into Chinese. (Interview with PJ6 on 16 Oct 2013)

PJ9 cited her own case of teaching Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream". She taught students how to feel the emotion of the text and introduced the background of this famous speech. When the students still did not get it, she played the audio of the original speech by King himself, and then the students felt excited and started to criticise the translated work and praised the English version (interview with PJ9 on 18 Oct 2013).

PT5 doubted the flexibility of the language of the translated works. He recalled when he was a high school student, how his teacher emphasised the excellence of one of the verbs that Engels used in his Speech at the Grave of Karl Marx. In the last paragraph, Engels comments on Marx's dismissive attitude towards the attacks and persecution: "All this he brushed aside as though it were a cobweb, ignoring it, answering only when extreme necessity compelled him."<sup>xix</sup> PT5's high school teacher praised the accuracy of the verb 抹 (*Mo*), means to brush) as the translation in the PEP textbook for this context and as the best representation of Marx's attitude. However, when PT5 as a teacher used the JEPH textbook to teach, he found that in this version, the translator used another verb 拂 (*Fu*) for "to brush". He became rather sarcastic about it in the interview, saying, "I am not sure what the original word in English is, maybe that verb is most pertinent and suitable?" I told him that I had only read that speech online in English, but Engels may have made that speech in German, so the German verb

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<sup>xix</sup> The English version online: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/death/burial.htm>

would be most suitable (interview with PT5 on 30 Oct 2013).

2) Response to the increased proportion of classical Chinese texts: Only two teachers (PJ2 and PT4) said that the weight of classic texts is somewhat too much for teenagers at high school as they are a bit beyond their comprehension level (interviews with PJ2 on 22 Oct 2013 and PT4 on 31 Oct 2013). One teacher (PJ7) said she does not like to teach classical texts, but *Gaokao* requires it (interview with PJ7 on 16 Oct 2013). Others had no objection in principle to the increased weight of classical Chinese texts in textbooks. The two reasons for this are, firstly, that most of the participant teachers are ardent advocates of traditional culture and values. Some of them even lamented the loss of traditional culture and values among the younger generations. Secondly, there are still a considerable percentage of questions in the *Gaokao* concerning classical Chinese, ancient Chinese philology and classical Chinese poetry appreciation, accounting for 29 points. Furthermore, teachers feel that classical texts are easier for them to manage. Teaching classical Chinese texts is somewhat like teaching a foreign language as teachers are put in a more advantageous position: “I know it is hard, but let me teach you”. At the same time, some of the teachers pointed out specifically that students generally don’t like to learn classical texts.

PJ8 advocated that the proportion of classical texts should continue to rise to 50%. He said that the language of the lyrics of popular songs from the Taiwan and Hong Kong regions sound more classical and elegant, because classical Chinese education is better retained in these regions than in Mainland China (interview with PJ8 on 18 Oct 2013). PT1 held a similar view. He had visited Taiwan two months prior to the interview and had been deeply impressed by how Taiwan had kept the traditional culture in their school curriculum although he lamented the recent proposal in Taiwan to cut down the proportion of classic teaching.

Both PT1 and PJ5 stressed the significance of moral education assigned to the classical texts. PT1 said that when he went over the reading questions of classical Chinese texts in *Gaokao* for the past years, he observed that these texts were all about historical figures with great virtues. He said this orientation would help students’ moral development. PJ5 stressed the indispensable role of classical texts in subject formation and aesthetics education through reading aloud with body movements. He said that it is a wonderful experience for both teachers and students to appreciate the beauty of the language and the content (interviews with PT1 on 30 Oct 2013 and PJ5 on 21 Oct 2013). PJ1 is a fan of Zhuangzi, the Daoist

philosopher. During the interview he related an anecdote regarding how much a scholar in the early 20th century should be paid according to their knowledge and understanding of Zhuangzi. He strongly advocated that we modern people should learn wisdom through reading classic texts (interview with PJ1 on 14 Oct 2013).

If the above responses supporting the textbook compilers' inclusion of classical texts reflect *Yuwen* teachers' collective aesthetic and moral orientation, we should also note that the teachers' preference for classical texts fits in with an advantageous power relation for teachers, as PT2 noted. The inclusion of classical texts is in line with the *Gaokao* requirements although students generally don't like it. If we examine the hierarchy of the power relation: on the top is the curriculum and assessment authority that imposes the curriculum, in the middle are the teachers who have to embrace it, and at the bottom are the students who have to accept it because it will be tested. So the implementation is still in progress. As PJ9 said, when her students came back to see her after they had graduated, the only recollection of senior high school that *Yuwen* the students had was reciting classical Chinese texts and writing compositions. I asked her, "Did they feel sad retrospectively?" PJ9 replied, "No, because they scored high in the *Gaokao*" (interview with PJ9 on 18 Oct 2013).

3) Response to the drastic decrease in the number of Lu Xun's texts: Of the 18 participants, 16 accepted or endorsed the decrease of Lu Xun's works in the textbooks, although they held varying views about them and had different perceptions of their reception by students. Two of them mildly objected to the removal of most of Lu Xun's works from the textbooks, in contrast to the mass media's fuss about this change.

In their interviews the teachers agreed that the textbooks need to be updated over time. The impact of Lu Xun on the generation of teachers born in the 1960s and 70s was profound, even among those who accepted the decreased proportion of Lu Xun's works in the textbook. Many teachers still honoured Lu Xun and his works, his mastery of language, his great thoughts and his status in Chinese literature. On the other hand the teachers who didn't like so many of Lu Xun's works to be included in the textbook mainly argued that Lu Xun's writings simply generate a sense of distance from contemporary readers, and therefore arouse students' resistance. However, some interviewees argued that it is the difference that creates the space for teachers to give interpretations in the class.

Teachers who did not like Lu Xun had other reasons as well. PJ2 said she did not like Lu

Xun's works because of his style. She preferred something more romantic and sentimental like Yu Dafu's works (interview with PT2 on 22 Oct 2013). The response and perspective of PT1 were unique: He described a typical case of texts being used to govern. His understanding of Lu Xun had been shaped by his role as a manager of the school as well as a language and literacy teacher. He was critical of Lu Xun's critical stance toward the KMT government, his fighting spirit and his relentless criticism of national characters. PT1 blamed Lu Xun for never offering a solution to the social and cultural ills in China in his time. I asked PT1 if these opinions on Lu Xun developed while he was a university student or after he started teaching. He answered:

After I worked in high school, in particular, when I started to teach senior high school. I think we should give students positive guidance and foster and inspire their sentiment of patriotism and national pride. In this regard, the selected essays, in particular the belles-lettres in the JEPH textbooks are beneficial to students".

(Interview with PT1 on 30 Oct 2013)

#### 7.3.4 Theme four: Teachers' self-perceived professional autonomy and critical literacy

In this section, I explore the teachers' perceptions of professional autonomy and their awareness of critical literacy in their judgement of the imposed texts in the textbooks. The data collected from the interviews led to two sub-themes: 1) Teachers' perceptions of professional autonomy and professional commitment, and 2) Professional autonomy from a historical perspective.

##### *7.3.4.1 Sub-theme one: Teachers' perceptions of professional autonomy and professional commitment*

Interview data suggests that *Yuwen* teachers' perceptions of the restrictions in their professional autonomy, to a great extent, shaped their discretion and independence in interpreting the texts. As examined in the previous chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), the current curriculum has experienced de-politicisation in terms of aims, objectives of the subject and the themes of the selected texts. The most obvious trend is the popularisation of the so-called *Meiwen* (美文 "beauty texts" or belles-lettres) as evident in the assigned composition titles in the *Gaokao*. Students and teachers are encouraged to explore the beauty of life, society and human nature, to inspire their imagination and even philosophical contemplation, but not to

think critically about social and historical issues. The most typical exam question is the essay title: “Contemplating the sky” (*Huaixiang tiankong* 怀想天空) for the 2007 *Gaokao* in Jiangsu Province. This is a hollow, misleading title, directing students to go nowhere.

The participant teachers were fully aware of their duty in the education system and their commitment to helping students to achieve in the *Gaokao*. Therefore, they were willing to compromise or even sacrifice their true aesthetic and political judgement even when they did not like the imposed texts in the textbook. PJ5 said, “It is like the surgeon’s situation: even if he/she does not like to face it, the job requires that he/she complete it; this is my duty” (Interview with PJ5 on 22 Oct 2013). PT6 told me, “I don’t bring my emotion or preference about the text to the class and affect my students” (interview with PT6 on 31 Oct 2013). PJ7 said, “I sometimes feel that I am just a tool, a bridge passing students to the other bank of the river, *Gaokao*. So it does not matter if I like particular texts or not” (interview with PJ7 on 16 Oct 2013). PJ3’s response seems less pessimistic but still in the same vein, “I sometimes also express my own opinions, but I alert my students that this is only my personal opinion. We need to stress the value of the mainstream society (the opinions of the official textbooks and reference books)” (interview with PJ3 on 21 Oct 2013). His remark also echoes my argument that *Gaokao* questions and reading texts have been trying to avoid polemic topics and themes, and therefore so do the textbooks.

#### 7.3.4.2 *Sub-theme two: professional autonomy from a historical perspective*

Looking back, senior teachers generally felt that the current educational environment is much more tolerant than in the 1980s and 1990s when they started teaching. PJ1’s response was detailed and illustrative:

Each era has its unique background and condition. With the development of openness and reform, people’s vision, insight and awareness of democracy and freedom all improved. This is different from the time when we started to teach Yuwen. At that time, teachers’ vision was narrow, so were our students. Whatever was said by the top, or written in the teaching reference books, we did not doubt at all, just like in the Cultural Revolution era, when did you dare not to trust Chairman Mao? This is the background of the era. Now we are advocating diversity, and multiple-interpretation. (Interview with PJ1 on 14 Oct 2013).

PJ1 also confirmed that in marking students' writings in the exam, the criteria had become more tolerant and as long as a student's essay was self-contained, it should be accepted.

PJ8 told me that he is now in a better position to decide which texts in the textbooks he would teach or not on the condition that both he and his students like them. He himself admitted that one of the reasons is that texts and textbooks are not as authoritative as they were deemed before the relaxation of the textbook publications. The multiplicity of textbooks series suggests that no text or textbook is indispensable, and more importantly, the textbook is not bound with *Gaokao*. PJ8 recalled that this was not the case when he started as a young teacher. He said, "At that time, I looked up to the prescribed texts with respect; the textbooks were frightening to me" (interview with PJ8 on 22 Oct 2013).

Teachers still set boundaries as independent and critical readers although they admitted that the teaching environment has become much less restricted. As quoted above, PJ1 overtly claimed that both teachers and students enjoy more freedom in textual practice; he insisted that only texts with optimistic themes should be promoted and selected. I reminded him that Daoism, which he favoured, does not always lead to positive thinking about life and the universe, in particular in Zhuangzi's case. Obviously PJ1 had consciously set himself the ambit of studying and evaluating those masters' works. When I cited the criticism of Lu Xun's use of language in his work *Autumn Night*, he told me that these masters are different and their art of using language needs to be savoured thoroughly. He said that he once wrote a journal article on these masters' use of language in their works (interview with PJ1 on 18 Oct 2013).

PJ4's response placed him at the other end of the spectrum in terms of critical reading. He was outspoken when asked what happens if he does not like a particular text in the textbook. He responded directly:

What are selected in the textbooks are the commonly regarded masterpieces. If you don't like them, that means you are not good enough, you do not understand and appreciate them adequately. For instance, Gui Youguang (the Ming Dynasty essayist and poet, my note), how can you not love him? He is number one in Ming dynasty. (Interview with PJ4 on 18 Oct 2013)

Both JP1 and JP4's responses show how the formation of the teachers' literary tastes and



ideology shape their attitudes and emotions towards the literary canon and the authorities. These attitudes and emotions unavoidably form a hegemony, which they pass on to their students when implementing the curriculum.

#### 7.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have examined the data collected from interviews with *Yuwen* teaching staff in two senior high schools in Jiangsu Province, China. The 18-hour semi-structured interviews resulted in more than 100,000 character transcripts, on which the above findings were based.

The interview questions mainly arose from the textual and content analysis of syllabus and textbook changes reported in the previous chapters. The purpose of the fieldwork was to explore how these textual and content changes were eventually implemented in the everyday pedagogic practices. The aim was to develop a more complete picture of the *Yuwen* curriculum and textual practices at senior high school level in China. It can be concluded that teachers do create their own unsaid curriculum deviating from the intended ideas and aims claimed in the published “Curriculum Standards” and the new textbooks series, if not contradicting them. The major force that leads teachers to make their own curriculum decisions is the university entrance exam system, the *Gaokao*.

The *Gaokao* system also has a great impact on teachers’ perception of their professional role and the nature of the *Yuwen* subject. The interview data also suggests that teachers are much less ideologically sensitive to the texts change than I had assumed. They generally have no resistance to the ideological shift represented in the text selection, politically and ideologically they are practical and utilitarian. They are more concerned with the technical aspects of the textual practices because what matters are the formulated or well-established strategies and techniques in reading and writing for *Gaokao*.

Besides the ubiquitous influence of *Gaokao*, the inertia of tradition remains powerful in the field of *Yuwen* teaching. This includes: 1) approaches of teaching and ideas of the nature of *Yuwen* inherited from senior teachers, 2) the literature education of the teachers during their university studies. The first point helps to form new teachers’ teaching methodology, which enables them to survive in the schools, while the second helps them to form their literary tastes or literacy habitus and therefore influences their students through their teaching.

From my interviews with the teachers and in my invited classroom observations, I found that if *Yuwen* is first and foremost assumed as a subject being tested and scored for *Gaokao*, no matter how the texts change, the new elements proclaimed such as *Suzhi* education, emotional education, or whole person education will only be regarded as something fancy and additional, but not essential. Beside the persistent debate in *Yuwen* education over functional *Yuwen* (literacy) and humanist *Yuwen* (literature), we should be also concerned with the third dimension: *Gaokao Yuwen*, a whole systematic way of teaching literacy tailor-made for the selection examination system.

## Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

### 8.1 Introduction

It is time to look back at the long journey of this research. This project was inspired by my personal teaching experience in China as well as in Australia. The whole project was triggered by the question from my own experience: why teaching the same subject of Chinese language and literacy ends up so different in different locations and times in terms of how to teach and what to teach. My initial hypothesis assumed that it is the context of teaching *Yuwen* (Chinese language and literacy) and the multi-layers of power relations that make the huge difference. The multi-layer relations are illustrated in Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3.

The outer layer is the social and political context; the middle layer is the educational context including education philosophy, and examination and selection methods; and the inner layer is the professional circle of this most important school subject. All of these are the results of the mixed forces.

This project is about the curriculum of the most “local” subject in China – *Yuwen* (the Chinese language and literacy). However, the research took a global and historical perspective. That is, the curriculum evolution of this most “local” subject was examined in both the historical and socio-political contexts of China’s revolution and modernization agenda as well as with a comparative approach into the theories and practices of language and literacy education in the international and global context. As mentioned above, the research project was motivated by the author’s personal experience as a teaching practitioner in China and Australia. The author then sought a theoretical framework through a comprehensive literature review to enable his examination of the Chinese language and literacy curriculum through a theoretical lens. Of interest and relevance, in particular, were Western literacy studies focusing on literacy and power.

While the bulk of this project was dedicated to longitudinal and cross-sectional text analysis of three decades of syllabus and textbooks changes as well as the synchronic comparison of the two most influential sets of textbooks, the fieldwork featuring interviews with teachers of two selected schools in China was also undertaken.

This study contributes to current literacy scholarship as well as providing practical guidance

to the Chinese language and literacy curriculum development in Mainland China, overseas Chinese communities and other countries and regions where Chinese is taught as the first language.

This concluding chapter falls into four parts. The first part summarises the major findings in answering the research questions on the basis of the data analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In the second part, I discuss to what extent my findings contribute to the current literacy studies that have mainly evolved and been developed in Western social and educational contexts. The third part reflects on the limitations of this research. In the fourth part I present suggestions for the further development and improved implementation of the senior high school *Yuwen* curriculum in China.

## **8.2 Key arguments and major findings**

As Apple (1986) argues, curriculum study is the study of power. My central concern in this project was the multilayer of power relations in the *Yuwen* curriculum design and implementation. That is, about the legitimization of knowledge: the legitimate knowledge as well as skills in the literacy (*Yuwen*) subject. In more concrete terms, my concerns were how the *Yuwen* (Chinese language and literacy) curriculum has been controlled and directed by social and political domination, and how the teachers and schools accept or react in their teaching practices to the top-down curriculum changes. This central research question was further particularized in three sub-questions addressing three most important aspects of the curriculum: 1) syllabus, 2) texts (textbooks) and 3) teachers' belief (or disbeliefs) and practice in the curriculum implementation. The major findings are summarised and discussed as follows.

8.2.1 The politics of language and literacy is still heavily overshadowed by the State politics: How do the syllabuses change with the social and political transformation?

### *8.2.1.1 State control and politics of language and literacy as a school curriculum*

In their study of the politics of literacy Lankshear and Lawler (1989) differentiated the politics of literacy in narrower and wider views informed by Raphael's political philosophy (Raphael 1970 cited in Lankshear & Lawler, 1989). That is, politics as state jurisdiction and politics as power and conflict. The analysis of the syllabuses from the 1980s to 2010 and the

review of the major debates of language and literacy from the 1950s in this study indicate that the main form of politics in the curriculum field still features a strong version of state jurisdiction. This is evidenced in the major shifts of educational policies and philosophies in the CCP's guiding documents and in the Ministry of Education's official pronouncements, which then appear in the syllabuses and curriculum documents of the subject of *Yuwen*.

The power relationship in China's current political context remains vertical or top-down in contrast to the horizontal form of Western societies, where different interest groups contest for the symbolic, representational and materials rights in literacy. Western scholars (e.g. Gee, 1990; Green, 1993; Musprat, Luke & Freebody, 1997; Street, 1984) are more concerned with the "equity of access" of literacy for the disadvantaged groups, while the main tension in the Chinese language and literacy curriculum is between State control and the autonomy of the subject. There is no denying that there is an equity issue in language and literacy education in China, such as for minority groups and regions in China (e.g. Chen, 2008; Leibold & Chen, 2014; Tsung, 2014), but this is beyond the scope of this research.

My research suggests that the State still firmly controls the definition of *Yuwen* in the syllabus, including its central as well as peripheral areas such as in literacy education and political, moral and ideological inculcation. The *Yuwen* syllabus designers struggle for an independent identity for the subject, but also voluntarily align the curriculum discourse with the State's prevailing political and educational discourses appearing in the syllabus documents. The *Yuwen* syllabus is the official guideline of the curriculum. It is the most evident site of what Apple (1975) terms a "slogan" system. It is the embodiment of the prevailing political and educational discourse of the State's political agenda, such as the "four modernizations" in the late 1970s (science and technology, industry, agriculture and military defence), or *Suzhi* education in the 1990s. As I argued in Chapter 5, *Yuwen* has been highly tied to politics. Even the de-association from the State's power politics and the outmoded Maoism socialist ideology, which happened after 1978, can be viewed as a trend of de-politicization in one sense. However, these changes are still politics dependant as analysed in Chapter 5 where it was shown that the new curriculum reflects the new ideologies of the post-Mao's Party-State. The *Yuwen* syllabus remains closely in the grip of and controlled by the State's current political ideology, education policy and discourse, because the *Yuwen* subject, with its teaching of reading, writing and thinking throughout the various stages of children's school education, is the most suitable subject for the State to inculcate its prevailing

ideology. As suggested in Chapter 5, the changes in the syllabus are obviously not merely educational and pedagogic shifts, but are evidence of alignment to the state's transformation from a socialist society to a modern market economy, with the purpose of preparing the workforce and citizenry for international competition by equipping them with high qualities (*Suzhi*) including literacy competency.

Although we have to acknowledge fully that absolute power is exercised by the State and its delegates including the education publishing houses and the curriculum authorities and examination administrations, the relative autonomy of the *Yuwen* curriculum experts has still existed in varying degrees at different periods in the trajectory of the evolution and development of the *Yuwen* curriculum as a modern school subject. In the first phase, from 1978 to 2003, as suggested in Chapter 5, all the syllabuses were based on the matrix of the 1963 model. The strong state political discourse cohabited peacefully with “instrumental” literacy theory in the syllabuses. The takeup of “instrumental” literacy theory, as I argued in Chapter 2, was an attempt to resist the intense political pressure from the state exerted from the 1950s on.

The second phase, from 2003 to the present, when the “New Curriculum Standards” were released, features the greater autonomy of *Yuwen* education. The curriculum experts strategically integrated the State's *Suzhi* education policy with the aims, objectives and approaches of *Yuwen* education, achieving the enhancement of the status of the *Yuwen* subject.

#### *8.2.1.2 The State's foreign policy defines the tension of “native Chinese thoughts” and “Western educational thoughts”*

My research also indicated that the *Yuwen* syllabus has sensitively responded to an increasingly liberal social and economic context and has been receptive to Western educational thoughts. However, the connection to Western scholarship is partial and selective, for which the underlying reason is also the CCP's political stance. For instance, humanism has been incorporated and emphasized in the language and literacy syllabus and curriculum since the 1990s. On the other hand, critical literacy has never been touched upon in the syllabus, textbooks or assessment, mainly because the purpose of the changing governing party and society has been to encourage the personal development of youth of high *Suzhi* (personal qualities) fit for a changing market economy. The government's purpose was

definitely not to encourage the development of literate citizens equipped with critical and reflective capacities for seeking a just and fair society. My observation is in line with Yang's (2005) review on the internationalisation and indigenisation of educational research in China. One of the factors that distances China's social research from the international community is the state's tight control of the social science research, therefore "critical voices are rare". (p.75)

*Yuwen* was assumed to be a purely indigenous subject by its founders (Li & Gu, 2000). With China's irreversible economic and cultural integration into the world, guided by the paramount leader Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s, Western educational thoughts and ideas have been more and more accepted. This is also evidenced in the "native" subject *Yuwen*'s syllabus, in particular the phase 2 curriculum development after 2003.

Constructivist dimensions are stressed across all the school syllabuses including *Yuwen*, such as "process and methods", "emotion and attitudes" and "knowledge and skills". However, the *Yuwen* syllabus still fails to incorporate or acknowledge emerging international literacy theories including critical literacy, new literacy and other literacy theoretical frameworks. For instance, the 2003 "Curriculum Standards" advocates the role of *Yuwen* in the students' or youth development, but neither the syllabus nor the research concerning the syllabus formation makes reference to Dixon's growth model. Further, although the *Yuwen* syllabus emphasises ethical and aesthetical education throughout the curriculum, its failure to include critical thinking in the literacy or critical literacy, which is widely accepted in Western literacy education curricula, results in an elitist and conservative orientation. Its partial and selective reception of Western scholarship is not random, but an expression of the State's ambivalence and caution about encouraging the youth critical thinking and interpretation of historical and modern Chinese texts.

8.2.2. The interplay of the State, market and epistemological powers – language and literacy as liberating and oppressing power: How have the prescribed texts changed with the socio-political and economical changes?

The interplay of the State, market power and epistemological authority is well represented in the language and literacy curriculum in a changing China. I argue that the State's status remains dominant, although it does concede some power and territory to market demands and

to requests by intellectual elites, mainly in the universities, for more discursive power. The concessions of power by the State are conditional: the conceded power should not constitute any challenge to the legitimacy of the governing party and the political configuration. The State not only channels the ideological orientation, but also manipulates the collective memories and the history represented in the language and literacy textbooks.

The findings of the analysis of the changes in the *Yuwen* prescribed texts are outlined in the following three subsections.

#### *8.2.2.1 Language and literacy as a liberating and oppressing force shaped by the State, the market and the knowledge base.*

With the advent of modern society and the public education system, the teaching of literacy to the public is meant to break the monopoly of knowledge of the elite group. However, I agree with Levinson's (1997) argument, "Literacy probably constitutes the most significant monopoly of knowledge in human history" (p. 12). The State inherited the privilege of the monopolization of knowledge through its power of approval and direct publication of textbooks. So, in this sense, the *Yuwen* textbooks or the selected official texts (adapted from Apple's concept of official knowledge) function as both the liberating and controlling mediums. In China's case, the trajectory of the approval, adoption and publication of *Yuwen* textbook mirrors the above contradiction or dilemma from the birth of *Yuwen* as a modern school subject.

Here I also draw on Innis's (1952) concept of monopolies of knowledge: the State retains the authority of editing as well as approving and distributing the textbooks as official texts. The recent changes in the publication and adoption of textbooks in China suggest an obvious trend of de-centralization, but this definitely does not mean the de-regulation of the exclusive rights of the State in the textbook production and distribution. Rather, it only reflects the new power configuration between central and local governments (at the provincial level). The competition between PEP and JEPH and other local publishing houses is the new feature of the market economy focused on profit sharing. When China embraced a market economy, the central government and its agencies began to pass down, share or give up some power and interests. The PEP, as the agency of the MOE, has to share the market with local publishing houses supported by the local education administrations.



The state still monopolizes the production and circulation of knowledge, texts and profit, with, however, some of the absolute power de-centralized from the central government to the provincial governments. But the power is still in official hands, because the provincial government is also part of the official state apparatus. As I emphasized in Chapter 6, the data comparisons suggest that selecting the authors and their texts is still ideologically controlled. Language and literacy textbooks not only reflect the shift of the higher knowledge base and academic fashions imposed on the high school curriculum, but also the political and ideological changes. The text compilers use a variety of re-contextualization strategies to manipulate the themes to cater for the state's ideological orientation and even specific policies. In this sense, the school language and literacy (*Yuwen*) subject is meant to empower students on the one hand, and control and oppress the new generation on the other, no matter how much the curriculum discourse claims to promote the development of the students.

#### *8.2.2.2 Official texts and shifting social, cultural and political contexts*

Power sharing and more varieties of texts: The State still formulates the national syllabus, which stipulates the framework of the curriculum. However, due to the de-centralization of *Gaokao*, and subsequently of textbook compilation and publication, the emerging although limited competition in textbook compilation and publication creates a cultural space for the official texts: there are more (although limited) varieties of sources for the "official texts". In effect, more text genres, authors and themes can appear in the textbooks. The so-called native subject has become more receptive to foreign writers and texts, with more open attitudes towards foreign cultures in the mother tongue education that had hitherto been deemed an entirely indigenous subject (Lai, 1995; Li & Gu, 2000).

Power sharing and more discretion for experts: The text selection is to a great extent decided by the compilers' knowledge base, literature or linguistics orientations, and aesthetic tastes. The new power configuration also gave the non-PEP curriculum experts (non-MOE authorized or nominated experts) more discretion to apply their expertise, knowledge and tastes in compiling the non-PEP textbook series. The rising cultural power as opposed the political and administrative power is shared in the hands of experts, but not in the hands of the classroom teachers, either in the sense of teachers as a group or as individual practitioners. As I suggested in Chapter 6, the knowledge base of the compilers, to a greater extent, decides the structure and vision of the textbooks, although both series that I analysed

(PEP and JEPH) claim that their textbooks address and are guided by the same national syllabus. The PEP textbook stresses the connection with old versions focusing more on linguistic and literacy skills in the traditional sense, while the JEPH textbook focuses more on emotional and human development which is attributable to the line-up of JEPH compilers and editors, most of whom specialize in literature or are engaged in literary writing.

### 8.2.2.3 *New ways of assessment in the Gaokao*

The third trend affecting the texts indicated in my research is that the authority of the text selection in the official textbook has been offset by the new way of assessment in the *Gaokao*. The compulsory texts in the official textbook are actually not tested and examined in *Gaokao*, which makes them pedagogically and pragmatically, no longer as highly respected as they were in the 1980s and 1990s. That is, the texts selected in textbooks have more impact in the media than on the teachers.

8.2.3 Historical or biographical – the individual, the State and the institution: Have the new syllabus and the new textbooks changed the teachers' teaching philosophy and teaching practice?

As I narrated in the introduction of this thesis, the personal motive for this research started from my bewilderment as a practising teacher over time, space and institutions at the “normative issue” of Chinese language and literacy teaching. My concern at how the teacher as an individual and as a member of the professional group survives, copes and develops in face of the shifting socio-political and institutional changes is well-addressed in my data collection and analysis of the syllabus, textbooks and, more importantly, in the face-to-face interviews with practising teachers in China.

My thoughts at the end of this project can be firstly expressed through Collins and Bolt's (2003) distinction of “literacy and literacies”. That is, the “canonical” and “normative” literacy that I was trained to believe in is a myth and the texts selected for textbooks are inevitably channelled to the prevailing ideology and social taste. In China, in particular, the textbook has to be aligned with the governing party's ideological shift. So, the questions of whose texts and which texts are represented, underrepresented or overrepresented in the textbooks are politically decided. The decisions are official and teachers are powerless, as was the prevailing situation at least at the time I was conducting this research project in

China.

My reflections can also be phrased using Mills' (Mills, 1959, cited in Lankshear & Lawler, 1987) insightful linkages between "personal" and "political", "biography" and "history". According to Mills, my personal feeling of powerlessness and entrapment when I started teaching language and literacy in the late 1980s in China should be examined in the context of the changing social structures. Starting from my exodus from high school teaching in China and ending with my fieldwork as part of this research project, I needed to explore the high school *Yuwen* teachers' insights into their power relations with the institutions and their immediate social milieu, with students and parents, with the imposed textbooks and syllabus, with the schools, and the university entrance examination..

My fieldwork data indicate that the power relation between teachers of *Yuwen* and the State and its institutions is heavily directed by the university entrance examination. and its technologized approach to examination success. One of the most apparent effects of this trend is that teachers' ideological and pedagogical autonomy is weakened, as is their personal independence and critical judgment of the curriculum. At the same time, the technologisation of classroom teaching has obstructed the State's intended objectives and goals embodied in the curriculum and other innovations.

In literacy education as well as in other subjects in the secondary education system, teachers and their teaching practice function as the medium agent: on the one hand, teachers are subordinated to the syllabus compilers, textbook compilers, the university professors directly or indirectly involved in curriculum formation and the whole associated body of linguistic and literature knowledge. On the other hand, they are agents of the hegemonic body of knowledge imposed on them: they are power-holders in front of their students.

These motivations, thinking, reflections and observations were translated into my third sub-question, which became the starting point and my personal motivation for this research: Have the new syllabus and textbooks empowered teachers and changed their teaching philosophy, giving teachers and individual schools more freedom in their teaching practice?

My textbook analysis, reported in Chapter 6, and more importantly the teachers' interviews, reported in Chapter 7, specifically addressed this sub-question. As I argued in Chapter 7, the teachers' teaching philosophy and literary tastes start to develop and take shape in their

teachers' training period in university (or mostly teachers college) in China. However, the formation and maturation of their teaching philosophy are decided by 1) the examination system and 2) the tradition of the profession. Teachers who survive in the school system, as the participants indicated in their interviews, have to compromise their ideals of literature, (ideal texts and authors) that they developed during their teacher-training period. They also have to adapt the official curriculum with their working environment.

I also contended in Chapter 7 that teachers create their own unarticulated curriculum deviating from the intended ideas and aims claimed in the published new Curriculum Standards, because of the external examination, the university entrance exam system, *Gaokao*, that has the final say on their career course. The *Gaokao* system not only forms teachers' perceptions of their professional identity, but also of the nature of the *Yuwen* subject. Compared to the 1980s and 1990s when I entered this profession, my interview data conducted in 2013 suggests that nowadays teachers are much less ideologically sensitive to the changes and ideological shifts in the texts. Instead, they are more concerned with the technical aspects of the textual practices because what matters for their survival and career success are the formulated or well-established strategies and techniques in reading and writing for the *Gaokao* examinations.

In addition to the imposed and external directing force of the *Gaokao*, the profession's tradition also contributes to the formation of teachers' teaching philosophy, in particular of the new teachers, immunizing them against innovation and change, even the innovation and change initiated top down such as the *Suzhi* or whole-person education that is the intense focus of the current official syllabus. In contrast to an idealist and romantic perception of the *Yuwen* subject, the older teachers sometimes assume the role of realistic mentors for new teachers. *Yuwen* is first and foremost viewed as a subject being tested in exams, in particular the *Gaokao*. No matter how the texts change and how much new ideas such as *Suzhi* education are touted and humanism and emotional education integrated in the syllabus, these concepts will only be regarded as something fancy and additional, but not essential.

### **8.3 Contributions to Chinese language and literacy studies**

The contribution of this project to the language and literacy studies in the school system is summarised in the following three subsections.

### 8.3.1 Widening the scope and range of the social approach of literacy study

I reviewed a range of approaches to literacy studies, mainly in Western societies, with an emphasis on the social approaches. My empirical research in the Chinese context nevertheless presented a different picture, because a changing China and the developed Western societies are confronted with different social issues and priorities affecting literacy education. Critical and new literacies advocates like Lankshear and Lawler (1987), Green (1993), Luke and his colleagues (Muspratt, Luke & Freebody, 1997), Collins and Bolt (2003), and others are predominantly concerned with class, race and gender conflicts in Western societies. They all address the fundamental question of who is benefitted or disadvantaged in the existing or reforming literacy curriculum. It is, therefore, understandable that the purpose of critical literacy and the new literacy studies, which can be identified as the social approach to literacy studies or education, is ultimately to nurture and prepare the citizen for the equity of the access to literacy education and therefore for the betterment of the society.

As shown in this thesis, the social perspective and social approach to China's literacy education are faced with different priorities. The first context is the State's direct ideological and administrative control and the literacy educator's response, reaction and compromise; the second context is the literacy and literature educator's interaction with the persistent drive of upward social mobility. The autonomy of the *Yuwen* (literacy) subject and the significance of *Yuwen* to the education and formation (*Suzhi*) of the subject (citizen) constitute the focus of literacy studies in China. Thus, my research reinforced my view that a cultural and historical study of literacy and literacy education in China is vital to the advancement of literacy studies that hitherto have mainly been based in the Western educational context. I agree with Apple's (2003) call for a cross-cultural and cross-nation study in education. My work echoes his findings in Korea with his co-researcher, that critical approaches in the school subject of social studies, albeit sanctioned in the official curriculum, were received passively or even resisted in Korea by students and parents due to an examination and selection system similar to *Gaokao*. My fieldwork data has similarly suggested that innovative ideas and approaches in language and literacy, especially critical literacy, although prescribed in the official curriculum, can be predicted to face similar trouble if the selection examination system persists and the critical approaches are not adequately reflected in the examinations or selection results.

### 8.3.2 Contextualizing the literacy discourse – beyond the translation

My research also illuminates the different meanings in Chinese contexts of the same set of literacy discourses, as I discussed in the Chapter 3. For instance, functionalism or functional literacy in the Western context is critiqued for “neutralizing” or “masking” the social inequality in literacy education or the “unequal” access to the literacy education in the Western education system (Muspratt, Luke & Freebody, 1997). Again, the cognitive approach of literacy study is deemed to stress only “reading and writing” as innate competences to be developed through literacy or language education. In the broad context, the functional and cognitive approaches are critiqued by the “new literacy” school and critical literacy school for perpetuating the unequal access to literacy education in the Western context (e.g. Albright & Luke 2008; Collins & Blot, 2003; Gee, 1990; Green, 1993; Lankshear & Lawler, 1987; Muspratt, Luke & Freebody, 1997; Street, 1984).

However, as I recorded in Chapter 2, in the literature review of China’s literacy development and major debates from the mid-20th century, it is apparent in the Chinese context that functionalism is not intended to purely “isolate” literacy education from its social connotation, but rather, is a strategy to defend the “autonomy” of literacy education from the grip of the State’s political, ideological and administrative control and domination. It is China’s political and power configuration that renders different meanings for the same discourse; therefore the seemingly connotation of de-politicization has a new political and social reference in the Chinese context.

### 8.3.3 Highlighting the significance of the examination system in controlling literacy education and texts

In Chapters 2 and 7 I identified and emphasised the significance of the selective examination (*Gaokao*) system to the literacy education at the senior high school level. The examination system is, of course, part of the State’s institutional control of students’ and teachers’ thinking, as had also been the case in the pre-modern civil service examination. In the contemporary literacy curriculum the State not only proposes or approves texts and authors in the textbooks, but also promotes and prescribes how students should write compositions. As in the *Keju Kaoshi* (the civil service examination in imperial times), the *Gaokao* also decides what to write about (themes and topics) and how to write (the way of writings or the genres). Hence a new genre of writing only for the *Gaokao* has emerged and sets the ambit of

ideological orientation and prevailing ethics as well as writing style. Students are trained to be able to elaborate a kind of poetic but structural way of writing in a range of favoured techniques on limited themes and topics, but they are not trained in critical and reflective thinking about their immediate world or the wider society.

#### **8.4 Limitations of the study and directions for future research**

This project is essentially a qualitative research. It is limited by the selection of data and the field. Therefore, the universality of the findings also has limitations. Below is my reflection on the limitations and restriction of this research and my suggestions for future research in this area based on this project.

##### 8.4.1 The textbooks

The differences in significance of the *Yuwen* textbooks over the period confirm the value of studying them. Due to the last curriculum change in 2003, senior high schools only use the compulsory textbooks for three semesters. For the remaining three semesters, schools are required to use elective textbooks. The data analysis in this study was restricted to the compulsory part of the textbooks. The importance of the texts decreased compared to the 1980s and 1990s, so the validity of the textbook analysis is somewhat affected. But I believed that analysing in-depth of the textbooks or materials used by individual school would enhance the validity of the textbook analysis.

##### 8.4.2. The schools

The two schools that I selected and visited are typical “good” senior high schools with good reputations locally and fairly good results in the *Gaokao*. However, they are not top schools in their respective cities, and therefore, the data and samples are representative and convincing for similar schools in Jiangsu Province as well as in most parts of China. Two kinds of exceptions are obvious. One kind is the top elite schools that can tap into the pool of top students across the city or even throughout the whole province. With such a student population, teachers’ approaches to and beliefs about *Yuwen* teaching may rightly be different from those of the teachers that I visited. Furthermore, these top elite schools also enjoy the privilege of being granted more places in prestigious universities for students directly recommended by the schools without needing to compete in the *Gaokao*. This would more

than likely alter the methods of teaching and learning in these schools.

The other extreme of the spectrum is the kind of industrialized mega schools openly claiming that their aim is simply to assist their students to succeed in the *Gaokao*, notoriously the Maotan High School in Anhui Province, the Huanggang High School in Hubei Province and the Hengshui High School in Hebei Province. This kind of school is usually located in the less developed areas in China and initially appeals to the local students who have strong motivation and ambition to take advantage of the examination system to change their life chances and trajectories. These schools also attract inter-city and inter-province students due to their claims of success in the *Gaokao*. For this kind of school, the key to success is a combination of practical training in answering mock questions emulating the *Gaokao* questions and the imaginative anticipation of the *Gaokao* questions by experienced teaching staff. This kind of school presents an overtly utilitarian and commercialized orientation, ignoring or de-emphasising the State's official slogans and designated aims and goals including *Suzhi* education.

#### 8.4.3 Exam papers and exam guidelines

As my research progressed, and in particular when my fieldwork unfolded, I started to realize the significance of the selective exam (*Gaokao*) to the implementation of the curriculum. A systematic collection and analysis of the *Gaokao* questions and *Gaokao* guidelines (I briefly discussed the *Gaokao* essay questions in Chapter 3) would deepen our understanding of the relationship between the syllabus, textbook, classroom teaching and the *Gaokao*.

### **8.5 Suggestions for future developments of high school literacy education in China**

The following suggestions for the future development of the literacy curriculum in China for senior high schools are based on my study of the trajectory of the literacy syllabus and textbooks and my empirical study of the teachers in Jiangsu Province. As the textual and fieldwork data both suggest, the direction of the high-level literacy education (such as at senior high school) has been highly dependent on the configuration of State politics and the social economic development of the nation as well as the changes in literary fashions and tastes. However, in general, the teaching approaches and text selection still feature conservatism and elitism. Therefore, I would suggest the following potential areas for change in the future.



### 8.5.1 The expansion of the definition of *Yuwen* as a school subject.

In Chapter 3 I reviewed the debates over the definition and nature of literacy. It is acknowledged that literacy is no longer confined to the narrow sense of reading and writing of print and handwritten texts. Also, the meaning of text itself has also expanded to visual and digital texts including films, TV programs and even computer and on-line games. As Green (2008, cited in Dixon, 2012, p. 20) pointed out, school English today is informed by a range of disciplines including cultural studies, media studies, communication studies as well as the traditional areas of linguistics and literary studies. To enhance and foster media, digital and visual literacies, the *Yuwen* curriculum must address the challenge of the demand for the multi-literacies in an increasingly digitally and visually saturated world. A cultural-historical perspective (if not approach) should be respected and canonical literary texts should be exposed to students, while at the same time, visual and digital texts should be incorporated into the classroom teaching and assessment. Further, the sources of the texts should be more flexible so that texts from media sources can also be included in the textbook or supplementary texts.

### 8.5.2 Functional literacy vs. youth literacy and youth culture in contemporary society

Functional literacy, as I argued, was invoked to resist the State's direct political control after the foundation of the PRC and to ensure the autonomy of the subject. However, the over-emphasis on functionalism resulted in a literacy over-stressing utilitarian functions and the de-skilling of literacy education, which led literacy education losing touch with the students' lives. To inspire students' thinking about and interest in reading and writing, it is literacy education's responsibility to include texts concerning their own lives if not about contemporary social or political issues in China. The scope of text selection can still be further widened, such as, by including Han Han and Guo Jingming's adolescent novels (Han Han's book *San Chong Men* was selected as prescribed reading in NSW, Australia's Higher School Certificate's (HSC) syllabus for the subject of Chinese Background Speakers (BOSTES, 2012). It should be acknowledged that such changes are yet to come, given China's current power configuration in the literacy education and literature study with experts who are predominantly favouring the "mature", canonical and well-established literary texts.

### 8.5.3 Civic society and critical literacy

Literacy is construed by Luke and his colleagues not only as technology for public life, especially for full membership of the citizenship of a community, but also and more importantly and more inspirationally, critical literacy is expected to help to identify the issues of equity of access and of change or transform of the community. In Luke's words, such discourse and literacy make it possible to "critique and reform the rules for the conversion of cultural and textual capital in communities and workplaces, and to explore the heteroglossic social contracts and hybrid cultural actions" (Luke, 1997, p. 9).

It is regrettable that the language and literacy curriculum designers in China have selectively adopted Western education theories, in particular constructivism, but not other elements such as critical literacy, which is essential in the construction and formation of functional and responsible citizens in a modern civic society. As indicated in this research, the literacy curriculum has changed significantly with China's integration with the outside world. However, there is still space for reform in the sense of combining reading and writing competence with civic competence in order to produce citizens who contribute to the betterment of the society.

A circular question may arise in this context: Will critical literacy and critical thinking emerge in the curriculum after a civic society has been established or vice versa? My research in this project shows that a more positive environment for language and literacy teaching depends on the macro-socio-political context and in present day China the State's current ideology still decides what authors, what heroes, and what themes should be represented in the textbook. We still see traditional patriotism as the duty to the nation, as are diligence and dedication to the family, State and workplace. Recently we have seen such themes emerging as environmental awareness as national and global citizens (against fast-paced industrial development), but we have yet to see such themes as democracy, civil rights and gender equality. These changes await more fundamental changes in Chinese politics and culture.

#### 8.5.4 Investigation for more curriculum participants

This research focused on the evolution of syllabus, textbooks and teachers' teaching philosophy in modern China, which I believe are the most important and fundamental aspects of curriculum studies. As I illustrated in Chapter 5, there are other curriculum participants and stakeholders, and study of their roles in curriculum formation and implementation would provide new insights into how language and literacy curricula are formed. The data from the

top of the curriculum production process should provide a new picture of the power dynamic in the field so that we can have firsthand data showing how the State and its administrative offices initiate curriculum change, and organize the textbook compilation, checking and approval. These participants include education publishing houses, curriculum authorities at different levels and the syllabus and textbook writers. Such a study would illuminate other directions in the ethnographic studies of the *Yuwen* curriculum.

Future ethnographic fieldwork could also involve the interview of students although this may require more stringent procedures of ethical approval. The opinions and responses of students, in particular of senior high school students, would provide a more complete picture of the curriculum implementation. Students' responses and resistance to the texts and approaches imposed by the powerful adults would create a new dimension in follow-up research in the future.

#### 8.5.5 More comparative studies at various scales

As I mentioned above, restricted by the textual data, schools and regions, the findings of this research are most representative of the "average schools" in an economically developed region in China; therefore it is imperative to conduct research on a larger scale. The textual data can be extended from textbooks and syllabuses to examinations, while the participants of the research can also be extended from teachers to students and curriculum writers as well as textbook compilers.

The comparative research on Chinese language and literacy can also be extended beyond Mainland China. As I stated in the introduction of this thesis, this project was inspired by my teaching and curriculum experience in China and Australia of Chinese language and literacy as a first language, and I was personally shocked by the contrast in terms of what to teach and how to teach the same subject, Chinese language and literacy for high school students. As a matter of fact, I have already conducted some comparative curriculum research (see Tao & Wang, 2013). Future comparative research can be further extended from Mainland China to Australia which has fairly large Chinese migrant population, but also to all the Chinese communities beyond Mainland China including Taiwan, Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities, in the hope of exploring in more depth the teaching of the mother tongue or first language and literacy and its curriculum.

Lastly, a study comparing Chinese language and literacy with English as school subjects may deepen and widen our understanding of the role of language teaching in shaping and controlling youth's linguistic identification and the interplay of State politics and language and literacy education.

## **8.6. Conclusion: Text and power**

I argue in this thesis that the knowledge about and insights into language and literacy in the new curriculum is not simply the negation of the knowledge and understandings reflected in the previous curricula and syllabuses, rather, as I stressed in my title of the thesis, it is an outcome of compromise or synthesis. The compromise is reached as a result of the governing of the bigger fields: demands and requirements of the domestic political and economical system and the global competition and interaction that China chose to face from the 1980s. The emerging of *Suzhi* discourse as I discussed in Chapter 5 amply illustrated this.

The compromise embodied in the curriculum is also the result of the power struggle and negotiations among agents in the field of the *Yuwen* education. As Dixon (2012) argued in his report regarding the shaping of the national curriculum of English: school English should be built around three interrelated strands or elements of language, literature and literacy. It comprises so many disciplines including literature, linguistic, cultural studies, media studies and studies of visuality. What are included in the curriculum is the compromise of agents of various disciplines with varying body of knowledge and pedagogical traditions. Chinese language and literacy curriculum coincidentally points to a similar synthetic trend. The latest Curriculum Standards in China, as I discussed in Chapter 5, emphasizes the nature of *Yuwen* of linguistic, literature and humanities. Because of this, the knowledge and skills embodied in the syllabus also render *Yuwen* a status of mega-subject of multi-disciplines.

This research was inspired by the conundrum of teacher and text. It then extended to the central issue of text and power in the domain of the senior high school curriculum in China. That is, who made certain texts legitimate and politically and aesthetically respected and what texts are meant to empower the learners to become socially and symbolically distinctive (Bourdieu, 1975). My text and textbook analysis, and the fieldwork data all suggest that in

China teachers as individuals or as a social group have very limited control over the texts in the curriculum: the party-state decides at different historical periods what kind of texts are legitimate in the textbook, and academic fashion decides what kind of language and texts are models for the younger generation to emulate. Senior high school students must master these model texts to ensure their success in the university entrance examination. Very recently, the Chinese President Xi Jinping gave a specific directive about the selection of texts when he visited Beijing Normal University:<sup>xx</sup>

I don't wish to remove classical poetry and essays from the textbook and add Western stuff: I feel that "de-sinicization" is a miserable thing. We should embed these classics into our students' minds and make them become our Chinese cultural gene.

One hundred years ago, modernist intellectuals believed that the classical Chinese language and texts were a hindrance to the State's agenda of popular education and modernization, and classical Chinese and Confucianism were removed from the new curriculum in the New Cultural Movement. Now, traditionalism and nationalism are reviving after China's 30-year economic boom, and the classics will again become preponderant. President Xi's words depict vividly the relationship between power and text and predict the coming trend of the *Yuwen* curriculum in China.

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<sup>xx</sup> Xi Jinping visited Beijing Normal University in September 2014 as reported by China Central TV station and other major media: <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2014-09-10/023930816145.shtml>

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Ethical Approval by Human Research Ethics Committee (USYD)



**Research Integrity**  
Human Research Ethics Committee

Monday, 9 September 2013

Dr Wei Wang  
Chinese Studies; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
Email: wei.wang@sydney.edu.au

Dear Dr Wei Wang

I am pleased to inform you that the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved your project entitled "**Changes in Chinese Language and Literature Curriculum in China -1980-2010**".

Details of the approval are as follows:

**Project No.:** 2013/718  
**Approval Date:** 9 September 2013  
**First Annual Report Due:** 10 September 2014  
**Authorised Personnel:** Wang Wei; Tao Min;  
**Documents Approved:**

Date Uploaded	Type	Document Name
06/09/2013	Advertisements/Flyer	Circular
06/09/2013	Advertisements/Flyer	Circular Tran
06/09/2013	Interview Questions	Interview questions
06/09/2013	Interview Questions	Interview questions tran
06/09/2013	Participant Consent Form	PCF
06/09/2013	Participant Info Statement	PIS
06/09/2013	Participant Info Statement	PIS tran
06/09/2013	Participant Consent Form	PVF tran
06/09/2013	Safety Protocol	Safety Protocol

HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

#### **Condition/s of Approval**

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.

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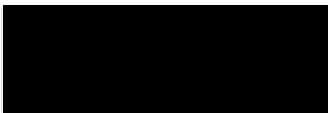
- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.
- All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
- Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

**Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities:**

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.
2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely



Dr Stephen Assinder  
Chair  
Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.

## Appendix 2: Interview questions

- Compared to other compulsory subjects in the University Entrance Examination (*Gaokao*), how do you rate the status of the subject Chinese language and literacy (*Yuwen*) in your school in terms of resources allocated, teaching hours, how the principals or headmasters of the school view the subjects, and students and parents' perceptions?
- To what extent, do you think the pre-service training including literary education, linguistic and teaching methodology is helpful and useful for your teaching in high school?
- How do you understand the relationship between *Yuwen* teaching and general education (*Suzhi* education)? How do the textbooks embody the philosophy of general education? How do your teaching practices implement the general education?
- How can the general education be linked to the preparation for the *Gaokao* in the *Yuwen* subject?
- Did you ever use the PEP textbooks? If, yes, can you compare the pros and cons of PEP and JEPH textbooks?
- What is your opinion of the JEPH textbooks? If, yes, can you compare their pros and cons?
- In your opinion, which text type (genre) is most important for senior high school students in terms of *Gaokao* exam and the needs of students' future life and their workplace?
- What is your opinion of the increased proportion of texts by foreign authors in the JEPH textbooks?
- What is your opinion of the increased proportion of pre-modern texts across all the versions of *Yuwen* textbooks?
- What is your opinion of the so-called phenomenon of the withdrawal of Lu Xun's texts from high school textbooks?
- What do you think of the role of *Yuwen* teaching and research at all levels?
- To what extent do you think the JEPH textbooks are relevant to the *Gaokao* in Jiangsu Province?
- How do you evaluate the role of classroom teaching and students' self-study and extensive reading in enhancing students *Yuwen* capabilities?

- How do you understand the concepts of *Yuwen suyang* and *Yugan* in the *Yuwen* curriculum?
- In your teaching, how do you cope with the situation when the prescribed texts are against your tastes politically, ethically or aesthetically? (How about students' resistance to the text?)

(Translated version for participants)



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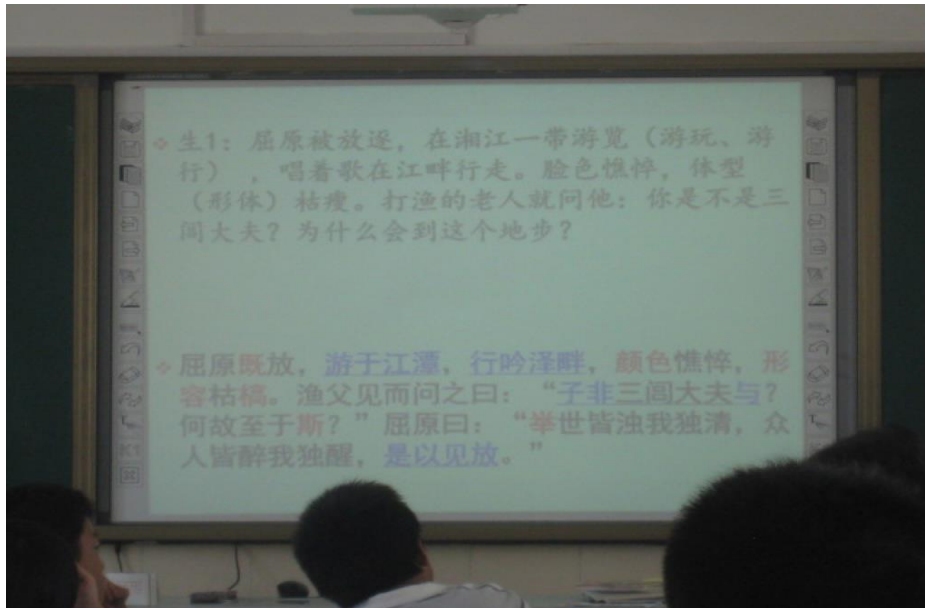
研究项目题目：语文课程变迁 1980-2010

以下问题用于采访语文老师

1. 和其他高考科目相比，你怎么评价语文在学校的地位。可以从资源的配置，教学课时，学校领导，家长和学生对语文的看法评价？
2. 你觉得在师范或者教师培训中，文学教育，语言学和语文教学法哪些课程对你在中学教学最有用？
3. 你怎么理解语文教学和素质教育的关系？教材是怎么体现素质教育的？你在教学中又是怎么贯彻素质教育的？
4. 素质教育怎么能在语文高考中体现出来？
5. 你用过人教版的高中课本吗？（2004年以前的），如果是，请你比较两套教材的优劣。

6. 你对苏教版用主题代替文体设立单元 有什么评价?
7. 分别从高考和将来工作的需要, 你觉得哪些文体对学生更重要。
8. 你怎么评价苏教版中外国作家比例超过 $\frac{1}{4}$  这一现象?
9. 你对中学课本里古文比例增加怎么看?
10. 你对鲁迅作品比例下降怎么看?
11. 在诗歌, 小说, 散文, 议论文这些文体, 你喜欢教哪些, 不喜欢教哪些? 为什么?
12. 你怎么看待各级教研室在语文教学中的作用?
13. 江苏高考和苏教版之间有什么联系, 是怎样联系的?
14. 请你分别评论课堂教学和学生自学以及课外阅读对提高语文水平的作用?
15. 你怎么理解语文素养, 语感在语文课程中的作用?

### Appendix 3: Photos taken during my fieldwork at J School (Oct-Nov 2013)



Yuwen class



Staff Library

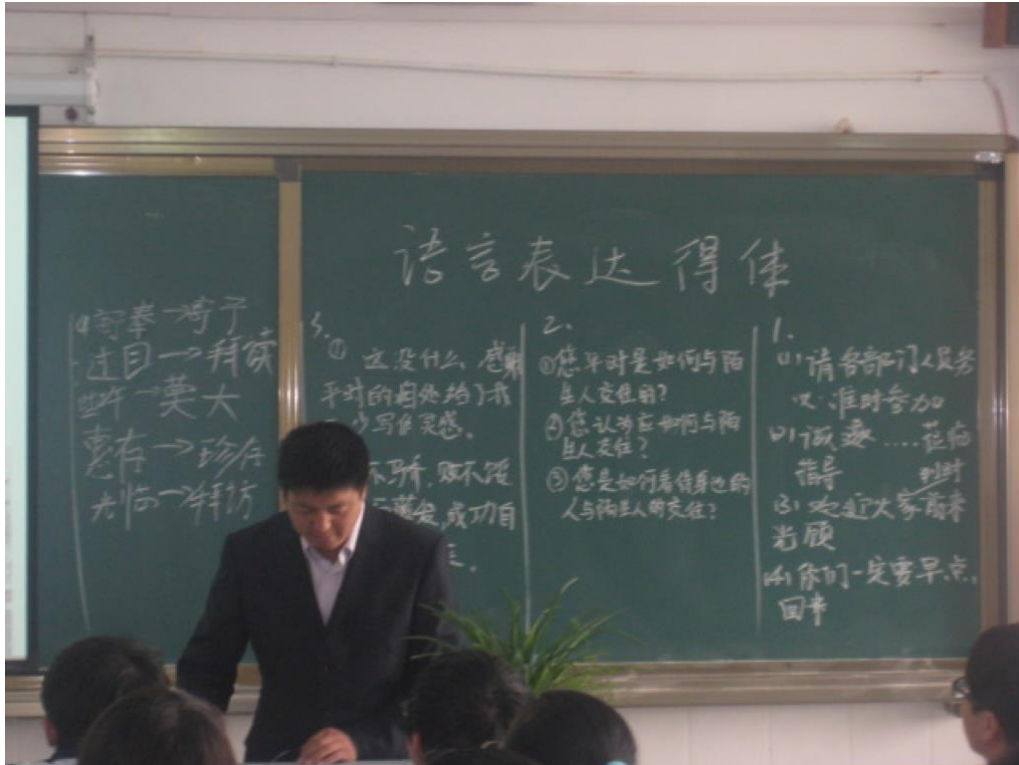




Students doing morning exercise



Appendix 4: Photos taken during my fieldwork at T School (Oct-Nov 2013)



Yuwen class



Staff library



Students doing morning exercise

## Appendix 5: Letter circular



Department of Chinese Studies  
School of Languages and Cultures  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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### LETTER CIRCULAR

**To: All Chinese Language and Literature Teachers at J High School and T High School**

**From: Dr Wei Wang, Lecturer, USYD  
Mr Min Tao, PhD Candidate, USYD**

**Subject: Changes in Chinese Language and Literature Curriculum in China -1980-2010**

Chinese Language and Literacy (Yuwen) teachers at your school are kindly invited to participate in an interview as part of a study of changes of Yuwen curriculum in Mainland China from 1980-2010.

The aim of this interview is to draw a clearer picture of internal relationships within the curriculum area: teachers' praxis and their response to the change of curriculum, text selection and to what extent their understanding and practice comply with or deviate from the aims, objectives and pedagogical goals prescribed in the new Yuwen syllabus and its accompanying textbooks.

The interview will be conducted by Mr Min Tao from the University of Sydney in October 2013. A short note of Mr Tao is attached. This is his doctoral study supervised by Dr Wei Wang at the University of Sydney.

The interview will be conducted on an individual basis with the researcher. It will be audio-recorded and transcribed. The participants will have the opportunity to preview the transcripts and make amendments before they are used. Time allocated for interview is 30-60 minutes for each teacher.

If you wish to attend this interview kindly send the following details to Mr Min Tao at [mtao5796@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:mtao5796@uni.sydney.edu.au) or on fax no: +61 2 9351 2319 with your full name and position

Thank you for your collaboration.