

**Teaching Chinese through integrating songs in Task-based learning:
A Teacher Action Research Project**

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Declaration

I declare that, except where due acknowledgement has been made, this research proposal is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree at any university or other institute of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.



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Abstract

This research focuses on the exploration of integrating songs in the Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach to enhance the learnability of Chinese. The aim of this study is to develop a series of effective curriculum resources, including songs and tasks and a novel framework combining songs and tasks in language teaching. This research is also designed as an action research to improve the teacher-researcher proficiency of the researcher with his teaching experience in Pianpi High School. In this study, different types of songs were experimented with and different tasks were utilized to allow the language to be used in life-like contexts. Finally, an adjusted framework of TBLT, including the Pre-task phase, Song phase, Core task phase and Post-task phase, is developed to combine songs and tasks, and to move the learning of songs to a higher plane of practice and application.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 ROSETE program

This thesis is a documentation of the researcher's journey as a volunteer Mandarin teacher in a government high school of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. In 2015, the researcher participated in the Research Oriented School Engaged Teacher Education (ROSETE) Program, which is jointly organized by the Department of Education in Australia, the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau in China and Western Sydney University. The general principle of this program is to make Chinese easier to learn for monolingual English speaking students in NSW public schools, and to prepare the teacher-researchers of this program to be professional teachers in the Australian context.

The researcher was, like most of the volunteers in this program, not an experienced language teacher before he came to Australia. In this program, all volunteers were required to teach Mandarin in NSW public schools for 10 hours per week and to explore approaches to make Chinese easier to learn for Australian students. Meanwhile, they conducted research with a diversity of specific focuses on how to enhance the learnability of Chinese with help from supervisors at Western Sydney University.

1.1.2 Australian context

Over the past decades, China and other Asian nations, as emerging economic powerhouses, have been gaining increasing influence in various fields globally. Australia has been experiencing significant impacts from its Asian neighbours in many aspects. For instance, the composition of Australian immigration sourced from Asia is increasing; a considerable number of tourists from the newly emerging Asian

countries are flooding into Australia; and the growing need for its geo-political security requires negotiation and co-operation with its Asian neighbours. These catalysts are gradually causing Australian public policies to appreciate the educational systems, languages and cultures of Asia (ASC, as cited in Liu & Bianco, 2007). Some Australian public officials have considered whether Australia could be grouped with Asian nations, and some have started to describe Asia as “our region” (Garnaut, as cited in Liu & Bianco, 2007; Fitzgerald, cited in Liu & Bianco, 2007).

To engage the younger Australian generation with Asia and enable them to participate in, and benefit from the “Asian century”, the Australian government decided that Australians needed to become “Asia Literate” (MCEETYA, 2008). The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians confirms the clear demand to engage young Australians with Asia through school education. That is to say, Australian students should be exposed to Asia in the classroom to build their knowledge, skills and understanding about their Asian neighbours (MCEETYA, 2008; DEEWR, 2012).

This declaration also identifies Asian languages, especially Chinese, as significant parts of the Australian language curriculum. The Australian curriculum set the goal that the Asia-literate citizen would be equipped with the language ability to “communicate and engage with people of Asia so they can effectively live, work and learn in the region in future” (ACARA, 2012). Relevant studies have shown that the brain of a multilingual person is more flexible and more resourceful than that of a monolingual person, and they have an advantage in reasoning, at multitasking, at grasping and reconciling conflicting ideas (Kluger, 2013). In addition, the multilingual person is more receptive to different costumes, traditions, people and lifestyles. The bilingual or multilingual person is able to gain a competitive edge in fierce global competition, especially in China, which represents a market of more than 1.3 billion people and whose economic development will result in unprecedented markets for Australia and intensified competition (AEF, 2011). The

Asia-Literate policy urges young Australians to seize the opportunities offered by China and gain economic and social benefits from its development. A large number of Australians who are proficient at Chinese and have a deep understanding of China, are therefore required in the fields of economy, policy and culture (Orton, 2010). Hence, the Asia-literate policy gives the learning of Chinese top priority.

In the Australian context, it is suggested that second language (L2) learning needs to focus on what may contribute to the success of the greatest number of learners. In other words, for these young Australian learners at the initial stages of Chinese learning, it is imperative to develop practical communication skills rather than book knowledge (AEF, 2011). Therefore, Chinese teaching in Australia at this stage should be based on students' daily lives.

Although the Asia-literate policy has generated wide and profound influence, enabling Australians to have a deeper understanding of a different type of consciousness, today the influence of Asian literacy has declined (ASAA, 2002). Unfortunately, the frequent changes in previous Australian language policies have contributed to a weakening in the sustained planning and resource investment that long term educational policy requires (Liu & Bianco, 2007, p. 97). Apart from policy changes, the lack of continuity of language programs from primary school to high school weakens the effectiveness of language learning (Liu & Bianco, 2007, p. 103). Most secondary school students generally have no experience in learning Chinese at primary school, which results in their level of Chinese being quite distant from the expected goals in the Chinese syllabus for Australian secondary students (Liu & Bianco, 2007, p. 104).

1.1.3 Refining the research questions

The development of the research questions was largely influenced by the researcher's own educational experience and his observation and teaching practice in a Chinese

class in Australia. The researcher finished all his primary, secondary and tertiary education in China, where the Chinese education system is teacher-centred and based on textbooks, and the standard examination is the preferred approach to demonstrate learning outcomes. Under this education system, teachers and students pay attention to pursuing a high examination score, which is the key to further study. Due to this target and fierce competition, even if there is lack of interest in a specific subject or poor teaching quality, students still spare no effort to learn. However, the Australian education system has marked differences from the Chinese system. During observation, the researcher often heard complaints from Australian high school students such as “Chinese is too hard!”, “Why do I have to learn Chinese? I will not go to China anyway”, or “Chinese is so boring”. Because of inadequate motivation, Australian students tend to give up learning Chinese if they are not interested in it. As a report concerning the study of Chinese in Australian high schools revealed, 94 per cent of Chinese language learners in Australia dropped out before Year 12 (Sturak & Naughten, 2010). Therefore, as a Mandarin teacher in Australia, it was crucial for this researcher to stimulate their interest in Chinese learning and let them value the class experience.

In addition, the way that the researcher’s secondary school English teacher taught him English left a deep impression on him. The English teacher often employed English songs to teach the language. Even now, the researcher can still clearly remember most of those songs. Learning English songs was not a burden but a kind of entertainment for him. Similarly, it is common to see that Australian students wear earphones and indulge in music during recess or lunchtime. Moreover, a girl who was a big fan of Justin Bieber even sneakily played her icon’s song in Chinese class. As songs have such a popular attraction, the researcher considered the use of songs in his Chinese class to enhance the learnability of Chinese.

As his teaching practice developed, the researcher noted that helping students to apply the language they learnt through songs and tasks could be a potential tool to

solve this issue. Therefore, he explored integrating songs in a Task-based language teaching approach to promote the learnability of Chinese for Australian Year 7 beginning learners.

1.2 Research questions

The main research question is:

How can the use of songs integrated in Task-based learning make Chinese learnable for students in a NSW high school?

The contributory research questions are:

1. What kinds of songs are effective curriculum resources for teaching Chinese for Year 7 students in a NSW high school?
2. How can songs be integrated in Task-based learning to improve students' Chinese?
3. What learning outcomes can be achieved through applying language knowledge from these songs?

1.3 Significance of the study

1.3.1 Significance for enriching teaching resources

In an effort to encourage and promote the development of Chinese teaching in Australia, the Hanban, (Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language), has published a number of textbooks. However, these textbooks have not generally met the curriculum standards in Australia and most of them actually were not adopted by Australian schools in Chinese teaching (AEF, 2010). Thus, these textbooks offered limited support for the teaching of Chinese in Australian schools. However, the Chinese K-10 Syllabus (2003) designed by the Board of Studies Teaching and Educational Standards NSW, is the foundation for every Chinese teacher in Australian public schools to design their curriculum resources. The Chinese K-10 Syllabus provides a blueprint of Chinese teaching for different stages but when it comes to practice, the teachers are supposed to design a detailed

teaching plan and resources which are suitable and appealing to the learners.

This research explored a Task-based teaching approach using songs in Mandarin to make Chinese more learnable. By investigating classroom practices, the researcher could connect this teaching approach to the real educational situations in an Australian high school and provide first-hand information for the implementation of the Australian foreign language curriculum and the improvement of teaching documents. A wide range of curriculum resources, such as songs, tasks and musical or unmusical activities were developed especially for Australian Year 7 beginning learners. Timely reflections and feedback from students enabled the resources to be revised and refined along with the pedagogy processes. Finally, the detailed curriculum materials produced in the Australian context will hopefully contribute to enriching Chinese teaching and learning resources in Australia.

1.3.2 Significance for improving teaching practice

As a graduate majoring in International Business and a naive Chinese language teacher in an unfamiliar country, the researcher lacked enough experience and the skills of language teaching in the Australian context, resulting in some problems. Some common problems which might be experienced by teachers who are from China and teaching Chinese as a foreign Language include:

1. Unfamiliarity with Australian “cultures of learning”.
2. Perceived low levels of learner motivation.
3. The consequent additional responsibilities required in planning in order to engage learners.
4. The need to see language learning from the learner’s perspective rather than from the teacher’s first language perspective.
5. The difficulties in teaching the first language in the second language, English.

(Scrimgeour, 2010, p.130)

As a Mandarin teacher in Australia, the researcher also experienced the problems and difficulties mentioned above. Therefore, one of the primary significances of this research lies in developing his teaching practice and equipping him to become a qualified teacher in the Australian context. During the span of 18 months, the researcher implemented Mandarin teaching and action research in an Australian high school. The research findings informed his teaching and helped to engage his students in learning Chinese, enhancing their memorization of this language and the ability to apply the language. Furthermore, the researcher's growth from a beginning Chinese teacher probably could provide a reference for individuals who have similar experiences. In addition, this thesis makes a contribution to the use of songs in teaching and task-based language learning by describing what impact the use of songs has in the teaching of Chinese language.

1.3.3 Significance for the students involved

Despite strong support for the development of Chinese language learning from the Australian government, the high attrition rate of about 94 percent dropping out before Year 12, shows that the process of popularizing Chinese in Australia has not been smooth (Sturak & Naughten, 2010). In view of the intrinsic difficulties of the Chinese language for English speakers and the traditional teacher-centred teaching methods, these beginning learners generally are not motivated and do not gain a sense of achievement to continue Chinese learning. Furthermore, there is inadequate provision of time needed for Chinese learning and a lack of frequent and sustained opportunities to practice Mandarin in a natural context (Sturak & Naughten, 2010).

For 18 months the researcher spent 10 hours per week teaching Chinese in an Australian high school. He employed a wide range of songs, tasks and activities in the framework of TBLT, attempting to promote student interest in learning the Chinese language and enhancing their language memorization and speaking fluency, as well as promoting their ability to apply linguistic items. With consistent reflections, the researcher continuously refined his teaching practice, towards achieving better learning outcomes.

1.4 Outcomes

This study contributes to enhancing the learnability of Chinese in an Australian context. The outcomes of this study were:

1. Developing effective musical resources for Mandarin teaching which are suitable for the Australian Year 7 school student's level and characteristics.
2. Fostering students' abilities to apply the Chinese language in their daily lives through the utilization of tasks.
3. Establishing a framework combining songs and tasks for teaching Mandarin.

1.5 Thesis outline

The thesis is composed of 6 chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the background to this research including the ROSETE program, Chinese learning in Australian contexts and the researcher himself. In addition, research questions are defined and the significance of this study is explained.

Chapter 2 reviews the previous literature concerning the relationship between language and music. In addition, three points of key benefits of the use of songs in a language classroom are clarified, including creating a positive learning environment, providing useful language materials and enhancing language memory. Moreover, the methods employed by previous educators to select and utilize musical resources for language learning are explained. This chapter also points out the concerns about using songs to teach language and introduces a Task-based language teaching approach that is likely to be a solution.

Chapter 3 explains and justifies the methodology of this study, including the features of action research, detailed information of the research design and data collection methods. The researcher employed reflection journals, interviews with classroom teachers, online surveys with students, and students' work sample collections as the methods to collect data. In addition, the validity of action research is considered as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 begins with an explanation as to why the researcher gave up the idea of using pop songs and selecting songs based on the Chinese syllabus. Secondly, it describes the selection and utilization of songs for Mandarin teaching during two teaching cycles, and it presents the researcher's reflections and the improvements he made as the teaching practice developed. At last, three key factors behind choosing songs, and eight features of songs drawn from the researcher's teaching experiences, are identified and explained.

Chapter 5 describes why and how the researcher combined the songs and Task-Based Teaching Approach (TBLT) to achieve better learning outcomes. The researcher adapted Nunan's (2006) three-phase TBLT model into a four-phase model, which integrates songs and moves the song learning to a higher plane of practice and application.

Chapter 6 discusses the most valuable findings with regard to integrating songs in a TBLT approach to make Chinese learnable. Apart from providing key findings for each research question, the implications and recommendations for further study are presented as well. Moreover, the researcher puts forward some recommendations and challenges for further study.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 The relationship between music and language

Koelsch (2011) suggests that the human brain actually regards speech as a special form of music, instead of speech and music as two strictly separate domains. Musicality is an innate ability of the human brain, which plays an important role in processing speech information and acquisition of language. Infants are able to sense the emotion of expressions through a variety of prosodic cues (Koelsch, 2011, p.16). Along similar lines, Leowy (2004) holds the view that the “music of speech is the earliest dimension of language understood by children” (p. 61). To some extent, transmission of meaning is not exclusively the work of the linguistic domain, but music can also convey meaningful information (Koelsch, 2011, p.15). Likewise, speech is generally perceived as music, even though people are not aware of this in their daily lives. For example, it is usual in African culture to communicate through music (Igbokwe & Ugwu, 2011).

In terms of forms, speech becomes more rhythmical with emphasis on the utterances. Some forms of music, such as rap and recitatives, are also speech (Koelsch, 2011, p.16). Both speech and music involve the segmentation of rapid and dynamic acoustic signals. Musical melodies are segmented into rhythm and pitches, while words can be segmented into phonemes, syllables, and tones (such as the four tones in Mandarin). Both music and language are also integrated into a larger meaningful unit, such as a piece of music or a sentence. Both stimuli have connections between grapheme and sound, with correspondent abstract symbols, such as notes and characters (Lee et al., 2015, p. 13). Furthermore, both tone languages such as Mandarin and non-tone languages such as English require the precise capture of speech prosody to comprehend the meaning of speech. Apart from prosody, Mandarin mostly depends on accurately decoding pitch information (Koelsch, 2011, p. 16).

Many previous studies provide evidence that the brain areas governing speech and music processing overlap. For example, “neuroanatomical regions ... typically associated with language-specific operations (e.g., semantic / syntactic processing) are also recruited for processing the melodic and harmonic relationships of music” (Bidelman, Hutka, & Moreno, 2013, p.1). Moreover, Koelsch (2011) claims that the processes of encoding music and speech not only overlap in brain regions, but also share neuron resources. Similarly, Ayotte (2004) argued that both music and language share the “same auditory, perceptive, and cognitive mechanisms that impose a structure on auditory information received by the senses” (p.10).

Long-term music engagement can generate changes in the area of the brain which overlaps and the changes impact the capability of processing speech. Evidence suggests that music and language are so intimately entwined in brain aspects such that experience or training in one field can influence experience or training in the other field (Bidelman, Hutka, & Moreno, 2013). Long-term musical experience can change both cortical and subcortical brain circuitry which facilitates sensory perception and cognitive control of speech information. Compared with speech, music requires more intense processing function on the overlapping domain, generating more robust neural plasticity. The neural plasticity shaped by musical training promotes the magnitude, resolution and efficiency of speech information processing (Bidelman et al., 2013).

Hallam (2010) believes that “These changes reflect not only what we have learned but how we learned” (p.270). These changes produce effects on language skill development and other fields. However, the transfer effects from one domain to another are conditional. Transfer between tasks is a function of the degree to which the tasks share cognitive processes. Hallam (2010, p.272) conducted a study regarding the transfer effect of music skill on other activities. The findings suggest that musicianship enhances the development of perceptual processing systems which facilitate the processing of speech information. Furthermore, earlier and longer

exposure to music engagement enables a greater impact on language development. In addition, transfer of these skills is automatic.

Specifically, this transfer effect works between music and Chinese. A study by Wong and Kraus (2007) provides evidence to support this idea. In this study, non-Chinese background English speakers listened to a recording in Mandarin and then measured the electrical responses in their brains. The test result showed that examinees with musical backgrounds produced more intense electrical waves in response to Mandarin speech compared with the participants with lower musical abilities. The finding suggests that individuals with musical backgrounds are more attuned to learning new languages.

Furthermore, Bidelman, Hutka and Moreno (2013) conducted a study which illustrated that there are bidirectional influences between the domains of music and language. They compared the abilities of tone language (Cantonese) speakers, musicians and English speaking non-musicians on auditory pitch acuity, music perception, and general cognitive ability (e.g. working memory). The results provided evidence that tonal language background and musical experience is related to superior music perception and general cognitive abilities.

As an aural activity, music requires more powerful functions to process information on shared networks, compared with typical speech communication. Music experience extends neural plasticity and enhances the efficiency of processing speech information (Bidelman et al., 2013). For example, musicians have a superior function in auditory abilities, which benefits encoding linguistic sounds (Hallam, 2010, p.272). Music increases neuronal interconnections, and as a result it enhances language development, namely language production, text comprehension and vocabulary (Vera & Luna, 2013).

Pitch in music also helps to manage tones in language, such as the four tones in

Mandarin. Neurophysiological indices show that music training facilitates pitch processing in language (Bidelman et al., 2011). Musical training improves the brain's ability to distinguish between rapidly changing sounds and presents superior brainstem encoding of linguistic pitch patterns (Hallam, 2010, p.272). Moreover, Hutka, Bidelman and Moreno (2015) argue that both musical training and tone language (Cantonese) experience improves the pitch expertise, while musicianship improves both pitch and timbre-related brain processes (Hutka et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Bidelman, Gandour and Krishnan (2011) conducted a study to investigate the impact generated from music experience and language experience on the encoding of pitch. They recorded responses of native Mandarin speakers, English speaking musicians and English speaking non-musicians when they listened to musical pitches and Mandarin tones. The result indicated that pitch experience in either music or language can transfer from one domain to the other. This transfer effect occurred as long as the domain with exposure in long-term experience shared acoustic features with the other one.

Particularly, the study by Tsai (2011) provides evidence that music experience helps in mastering Mandarin tones. She analysed the nature of tones and how native non-tonal language speakers learn the four tones of Mandarin. The conclusion suggests that practicing tones through music can help to develop and strengthen the brain regions governing tones. As for young language learners, they can easily recognize pitch and rhythm and they favour songs more than speech. Thus, singing is likely to make language learning much easier and more interesting.

2.2 The similarities and differences between Chinese and English

The difference between the nature of native language and a target language causes mother tongue interference. The interference involves transferring linguistic features

(i.e. intonation, stress rhythm, etc.) from one language to the other, resulting in either positive or negative transfer (Igbokwe & Ugwu, 2011). Simply transferring the prosodic or supra-segmental patterns of one's mother tongue to a foreign language results in making a person sound foreign and may lead to misunderstandings by other speakers (Igbokwe & Ugwu, 2011).

Vera and Luna (2013) argue that communicative competence in a second language entails an awareness of similarities and differences between the second language and the mother tongue. As two different types of language systems, Chinese and English have quite a few marked differences, which makes learning Chinese a tough challenge for native English speakers. English is an alphabetic language, and each phoneme is represented by its corresponding letters, and a word presents one or more syllables. In contrast, Chinese orthography is character-based without a definite letter-phoneme correspondence, and characters are monosyllabic.

Most aspects of the Chinese phonological system cause difficulties for English-speaking learners. For example, some Chinese phonemes do not exist in English and the stress and intonation patterns are different. In addition, as a tone language, pitch discriminations of tones in Mandarin decide the meaning of words. However, in English, changes in pitch are only used to stress or convey emotion.

Although Chinese and English are both rhythmic languages, the nature of word segmentation has a marked difference. In English texts, lexical morphemes and word boundaries are delimited by white spaces. In Chinese, there is a silence or short pause at the boundary between word and word phrase during reading. For instance, the sentence “我喜欢吃炒饭” consists of four words (我/喜欢/吃/炒饭 I/like/to eat/fried rice). Furthermore, Chinese word segmentation determines sentence stress that greatly influences the rhythm of Chinese reading (H.-Y. Lee, Sie, Chen, & Cheng, 2015).

Similarly, Richards (1969) points out that the difference of the stress-timed rhythm between the first language and the second language can result in foreign accents. Second language learners tend to stress syllables more or less equally, acquiring one of the characteristics of a foreign accent. However, he also suggests that songs can help establish a feeling for the rhythm and the stressing of spoken language.

2.3 Benefits for the use of songs in L2 classrooms

Many educators have been aware of the potential benefits of the use of songs and have employed songs in their language classrooms. Through reviewing current literature, three key advantages that songs could bring to a language classroom are presented below.

2.3.1 Positive Learning environment created through songs

Affective Filter Hypothesis is one hypothesis developed by Krashen (1982), which explains how affective factors relate to language learning. When students feel anxious, tense, or bored with learning, their affective filters are high and learning becomes a negative experience. It prevents learners from gaining maximum linguistic input. Conversely, when students feel comfortable and motivated toward learning, their affective filter is low and it enhances the efficiency of learning. Similarly, Reid (1999) points out that L2 learners respond better in a positive classroom community. This point is reinforced by Lake (2002, p.1) who maintains that ‘optimum learning occurs in an environment of high motivation, self-confidence, and low anxiety’. Therefore, it should be in ‘the interest of the L2 teachers to consider the affective filter and provide an environment which evokes positive emotions’ (Medina, 2002, p.2). The practical application of the Affective Filter Hypothesis is that teachers must provide a positive atmosphere conducive to language learning.

Songs are one method for achieving a weak affective filter and promoting language learning (Li & Brand, 2009; Rosová, 2007). Songs are a source of emotional experience for people and can be a factor influencing students' attitudes. Lo and Li (1998) offer similar suggestions, that learning English through songs develops a non-threatening classroom atmosphere in which the four language skills, namely reading, writing, listening and speaking, can be enhanced. Likewise, Paquette and Rieg (2008) claim that songs have a magical power to transform the classroom into a positive learning environment where children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Songs can help to create an atmosphere for effective language learning and a positive attitude in the learners that reflects genuine interest and motivation to learn the language (Young, 1991). Kao and Oxford (2009) believe that strategically learning language with music can build up confidence and motivation (the learner's will to learn), which in turn foster learning.

Specifically, one important benefit of the use of songs is to minimize learners' anxiety (Young, 1991; Šišková, 2009). Songs create a relaxing atmosphere which helps lower students' tension and anxiety in the pursuit of a foreign language. Hijazi and Al-natour (2012) conducted a study to investigate the impact of using music in English learning on university students' performance. Their findings indicate that the use of music in instruction can help to decrease stress and motivate learners.

Language learning is often regarded as tedious. Due to the short attention spans of young learners, they cannot concentrate on tedious classroom activities for long durations (Ara, 2009). Ara (2009, p.168) further argues that 'although young learners have an innate ability to learn a language they do not learn properly if they find their lessons boring and unexciting'. However, music can bring variety to the everyday classroom routine (Millington, 2011). This variety stimulates interest, maintains classroom motivation, and prolongs attention span, thereby helping L2 learners to reach higher levels of achievement (Millington, 2011; Hijazi & Al-natour, 2012; Lee & Lin, 2015). For students who are timid or more introverted, music offers a variety

of safe ways for them to participate (Lee & Lin, 2015). Lems (2005), a teacher with more than twenty years' experience as a language teacher, discussed music in the language class:

Enjoyment of music, however, has universal appeal and creates a welcoming embrace for all, including those who cannot yet find the words. Anyone can enjoy a melody, whether by listening, humming, whistling or singing to it, or even by dancing along. Music, in its joyful din, welcomes all learners in and gets toes tapping, hands clapping, heads nodding, and faces smiling. It is in plentiful supply for minimal cost and can relax a whole roomful of people in a minute (Lems 2005, p.16).

Richards (1969) argues that most children enjoy singing, and songs are often a welcome change from the routine of classroom activity in learning a language. Pleasure for its own sake is an important part of language learning, a fact which is often over-looked by the teacher in his quest for teaching points, or by the course designer focussing on presentation or repetition. Songs make the experience of learning English student-centred and enjoyable. As Parker (1969) argues, the use of songs can 'break the monotony of the daily practice routine' (p.96) and enable the learners to 'forget they are still practicing their language skills and just enjoy themselves' (p. 95).

In addition, songs can enhance the motivation of learners in language learning. As Shen (2009) states, motivation is vital in language learning and it can be 'triggered by internal causes such as the learner's interest, enthusiasm and desire or by external influences such as peer pressure' (p.90). Dörnyei (2009) developed a second-language motivational "self-system," through which learners can manifest various types of motivation:

- 1) To become the desired, “ideal self” who speaks the language.
- 2) To prevent negative consequences by doing what others demand (the “ought-to” self).
- 3) To enjoy the immediate experience through “bottom up” motivation based on the sense of competence and on positive attitudes toward the activity, the setting, etc.

Likewise, Vera and Luna (2013) claim that musical activity welcomes and motivates L2 learners to actively participate in class and enhance relationships between classmates. It provides students access to interacting with other classmates, sharing their emotions and gaining mutual trust and respect (Paquette & Rieg, 2008).

2.3.2 Songs as useful language learning materials

Songs can serve as a genuine source of teaching materials in a second language classroom (Shen, 2009), which provides learners with authentic vocabularies, phrases, grammar and expressions in an appealing way (Li & Brand, 2009; Saricoban & Metin, 2010). Songs provide those fundamental bricks needed for daily communication, which is critical if students are to scaffold their language learning (Coyle & Gracia, 2014). For example, “^{Tóujiānbǎngxīgàijiǎo}头 肩 膀 膝 盖 脚 Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes” is a useful song to introduce body parts and the song “^{Shí gè xiǎo péng yǒu}十个小朋友 Ten Little Indian Boys” is suitable to practice numbers and measure words in Chinese.

When communicating, vocabularies and grammars are used within sociocultural contexts of the target language to ensure correct usage. Therefore, in the process of learning a new language, learners not only learn vocabulary and grammar but also experience culture and emotion underlying the language (Vera & Luna, 2013). Lems (2005) indicated that music is created in a culture and that music reflects its culture in turn. Songs including nursery rhymes, chants and anthems, are an indispensable part of a human being’s daily life and it presents real-life experience in language

learning (Vera & Luna, 2013, p.17). In Brand's (2007) words, song lyrics provide a natural speaking environment, which helps learners comprehend the language in culture. In addition, Hijazi and Al-natour (2012) argue that songs present vocabularies with "emotional and contextual flags" (p.301), which enable students to have positive attitudes, self-perceptions and cultural appreciation of language learning.

The exposure to authentic language is an important factor in promoting language learning. If students are exposed to songs that they enjoy, more learning is likely to occur since they may seek out the music outside of the classroom. Since songs are valuable learning materials which connect classroom learning with students' daily lives, students are likely to feel more motivated to learn.

The repetitive nature of songs provides 'wonderful opportunities to expand vocabulary and gain familiarity with colloquial expressions and certain grammatical structures' (Milano, as cited in Diakou, 2013, p. 45). Likewise, Richards (1969) suggests that songs offer 'a pleasant way of giving repetition to words of a particular centre of interest or situation' (p.163).

Moreover, the use of songs as a vehicle for L2 learning is consistent with Reid's (1995) learning style model and instrument called Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ), particularly for learners of a foreign language, based on how students learn best by using their perceptions. Students maximize their learning outcomes by using their preferred perceptions. Sensory preferences can be broken into four main areas: visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic (movement-oriented), as well as tactile (touch-oriented).

Table 1: Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire

Sensory preference	Definition	Performance
Visual	Visual students obtain a great deal from visual stimulation.	They learn better through reading, pictures, imageries, and spatial perceptions.
Auditory	Auditory students are comfortable with auditory input.	They learn better through conversations, oral directions, role-plays and similar activities.
Kinaesthetic & tactile	Kinaesthetic students like hands-on movements.	They learn better through body, hands, and tactile sense and prefer frequent breaks and movement around the room.

Students might prefer one, two, or all three learning styles. It is important for teachers to incorporate in their curriculum activities related to each of these learning styles so that all students can succeed in their classes. Cuaresma (2008) argues that in order to help all students learn, we need to teach to as many of these preferences as possible. Songs are valuable vehicles to present different learning styles individually or together through listening, singing and dancing with the songs.

2.3.4 Enhancement of language memory through songs

A study conducted by Racette and Peretz (2007) provided a contrary view by indicating that songs have little favourable impact on verbal learning since remembering texts and melodies are two separate tasks. Their argument was that learning language through singing a song might increase the burden for learners, resulting in lower efficiency.

However, studies which claim music has no benefit for language learning are rare. Most studies prove that music enhances memory of a new language. According to

O'Donnell (1999), the linguistic input activates the left brain of human beings, while the music activates the right brain, and the simultaneous stimulations to left and right brain maximise retention of linguistic information. Similarly, Šišková (2009) holds the view that songs could enhance the ability of the mind to recall linguistic items.

In addition, Medina (2002) argues that music and its subcomponent, rhythm, benefits the rote memorization process, when various types of verbal information are presented simultaneously with music. Young (1992) also confirms the supports from music on memorizing target language. He suggests that music seems to leave a particularly deep trace in learner memories and that melody is likely to act as a path or a cue to evoke the information when particular knowledge is retrieved. From another point of view, Šišková (2009) points out, 'the retentive effects of rhythm can be maximized when the targeted verbal information carries meaning' (p.33).

Millington (2011) argues that singing songs makes vocabulary of a foreign language memorable and much easier to learn. Evidence from many studies prove the benefits of using songs. Lee and Lin (2015) also drew similar conclusions from their study that music can bounce around in a student's head long after the language lesson is over. Likewise, Purnell-Webb and Speelman's (2008) study revealed that, compared with speaking, both rhythm and melody were more effective for text memorization. Introducing melodies into language learning makes memorizing easier even though students may not figure out the exact meaning of the words (Lee& Lin, 2015, p.15). Ludke, Ferreira, and Overy's (2014) study provides experimental evidence that singing facilitates memorization of foreign language phrases. They compared the performance of three groups of participants learning through speaking, rhythmic speaking and singing respectively. Participants in the singing group presented superior performance in recalling a series of short paired-associate new language phrases.

In addition to the aids of melody, lyrics of songs can be an ideal platform for

exposing students to new words repeatedly, and as repetition is one of the basic ways the brain remembers, they can help students learn and retain new structures. Murphey (1992) argues that songs can ‘activate the repetition mechanism of the language acquisition device’ (p.7). During the process of learning, if an instruction is repeated a sufficient number of times, indicating the instruction is significant, the repetition can influence the growth of axons and dendrites and the number of synapses connecting neurons in the brain (Fields, 2005). Many song lyrics are characterized by repetitive simple sentence structures (Millington, 2011, p.136; Li & Brand, 2009) and frequently repeated words and expressions (L. Lee & Lin, 2015, p.20). Repetition offers greater exposure to the target language and produces a frequent stimulus in the brain to enhance memory in L2 learning (Ludke et al., 2014, p.3).

Highly frequent repetition might lead to the “Din in the Head” phenomenon (Krashen, 1983). Musical din is a common and well reported phenomenon, whereby a catchy piece of music, having been heard frequently, is continually repeated in the subject’s head after it is no longer playing. According to Krashen (1983), as for language, din is an involuntary rehearsal of language, which occurs mentally and “is a sign that language acquisition is taking place” (p.173). Salcedo (2010) studied whether text recall would be increased when text was learned through songs. It turned out that linguistic din occurs at a significantly high frequency when music is added to language learning. These studies demonstrate that music does enhance memory in language learning.

In summary, music is a mnemonic device with the potential to influence memory during language learning.

2.4 Design of appropriate musical material for language learning

Selecting songs

In terms of song types, different genres of music, including songs, action songs, chants, nursery rhymes and anthems can be employed to cover teaching phases, learning styles and preferences (Vera & Luna, 2013). Similarly, Schön et al (2008) concluded from their experience that all kind of songs, from nursery rhymes to pop songs can be used in the classroom.

However, concerning preparing appropriate musical materials for language teaching, it is essential to take the learner's age, interests, needs, the difficulty of lyrics and the purpose of activities into account (Vera & Luna, 2013).

The participants of this study were a group of young adolescents aged 12-13 years. Young adolescents are a wonderful group, usually energetic, curious and adventurous. It can be both a delight and a challenge for teachers to motivate them, to hold their attention, and to channel their enthusiasm and energy into real learning. Young adolescents draw on a wide range of experiences when they come to school. Helping students to use their strengths in the classroom to achieve valuable learning is every teacher's challenge (Atkinson & Sturges, 2003). In addition, young adolescents are rapidly growing in various areas and forming some remarkable features, as per Table 2 on the following page. In summary, the types of songs that engage adolescent students are active (with movement), rhythmically interesting and catering to their needs and experience.

Table 2: Characteristics of young adolescent learners

Intellectual	Young adolescent learners are curious, motivated to achieve when challenged, and capable of critical and complex thinking. They show intense focus on a new interest, but often lack discipline to sustain it.
Social	Young adolescent learners have an intense need to belong and be accepted by their peers.
Physical	Young adolescent learners go through rapid physical growth and need physical activity.
Emotional and Psychological	Young adolescent learners are vulnerable and self-conscious, and often experience unpredictable mood swings.
Moral	With their new sense of the larger world around them, young adolescent learners are idealistic and want to have an impact on making the world a better place.

(National Middle School Association, 2010, p.7-8)

Moreover, as Kao and Oxford (2014) suggested, the most common method of selecting music in language learning is to select songs related to learners' interests. If the learning material is not interesting, the passion for learning might fade away quickly after any minor obstacle (Kao & Oxford, 2014).

A song's complexity is one important consideration that may influence verbal learning and memory through song (2014). If a song's melodic and rhythmic structures are difficult to learn, it might be detrimental for verbal learning and memory (Racette & Peretz, 2007). To magnify the benefits of using songs, the lyrics should be just slightly above the learners' current proficiency level (Vygotsky, as cited in Lems, 2005). Besides this, the priority should be given to songs that are

closely related to the themes being studied by the class and the lyrics should consist of target expressions (Millington, 2011). In addition, a song with frequently repeated target words or sentences enables students to practice more and to provide a stimulus for memorization (Millington, 2011).

Apart from selecting from ready resources, creating original songs also allows the teacher to integrate more songs into the curriculum. By slightly altering the vocabulary, grammar, or sentence structure while maintaining the original rhythm, an old song can be adapted to suit a particular theme or part of the curriculum (Millington, 2011). McCammon (2008) argues that when creating a new song for students, it is important that the genre of what is created is within their musical experience. Especially for adolescents, the song should be similar to other popular culture pieces of music so they can be immediately familiar with the basic style and structure (McCammon, 2008). In order to compete for the students' attention, the music must be comparable, both in genre and quality, with what they hear on the radio or download from iTunes. If the songs are inferior in quality, they are inferior in impact (McCammon, 2008).

Using songs

Songs can be employed in a variety of useful teaching methods for language teaching. As for a new song, students can simply listen silently and look at the words at the beginning. Then the teacher points out the new vocabulary and provides pronunciation examples and the students repeat the words after the teacher without singing them. Alternatively, as Abbott (2002) suggested, the teacher introduces vocabulary and background before the class listens to the music or songs. Finally, the teacher plays the song and encourages students to sing along with it. This technique encourages listening and rehearsal for imitation (Millington, 2011). Or else, the teacher teaches one line at a time and allows students to follow the song lyrics while singing (Abbott, 2002).

Richards (1969) suggests that it is important to teach the words and sentence patterns before using songs in a language classroom. Songs soon cease to be enjoyable if they are only an excuse for the introduction of new vocabulary. Similarly, the students should get familiar to the rhythm and music of the song before the lyrics are sung. To teach the rhythm, it is practical to underline the words that carry the beat, and then clap the rhythm of the song. The music can be taught by singing the song to “la” or any simple syllable. Finally, the song is sung through, practising a few times, until the class can sing it with confidence.

To reinforce different areas of language skills, educators (Abbott, 2002; Lems, 2005; Paquette & Rieg, 2008) recommend the use of music activities, such as singing, listening, creating different verses of song lyrics, clapping syllables, doing body movements, discussing cultures, and doing musical role play. Furthermore, follow-up activities can contribute to reinforcement the comprehension of songs (Abbott, 2002; Lems, 2005). Lems (2005) recommends that the strategy of matching lyrics can be a useful game suitable with any age and level. For instance, several copies of a chosen song’s lyrics can be written and cut into lines, then students in small groups need to arrange the lines in the correct order as they listen to the song.

Alternatively, developing songs as tasks can maximize the potential of songs in language teaching and learning. Murphey (1992) points out that no matter how enjoyable or memorable listening and singing songs can be, the song itself will not teach learners to use the language. Therefore, Millington (2011) developed songs into tasks in his language classroom to build up the students’ ability to apply the language. Developing a song into a task or game or other follow-up activities might be one way to help students use the expressions in a new context and maximize the effectiveness of their learning (Millington, 2011). As Ara (2009) stated, by providing ample opportunities to work with interesting tasks and activities, the repetition and the fun involved in songs could increase motivation levels.

2.5 Concerns of the use of songs in a language classroom

The use of songs in language teaching brings about a series of benefits, but there are some concerns that are worth noting.

Firstly, the teacher needs a good stock of songs to maintain variety in Mandarin teaching. Students' interest may fade away soon if one song is used too often (Millington, 2011). The ready-made musical materials that are appropriate for a particular group of learners are scarce. Thus, the teacher must take primary responsibility for their creation and their effectiveness and this might consume a great deal of time (Diakou, 2013). One way to minimize this limitation might be to develop songs into language learning tasks (Cameron, 2001). Although this alone will not help teachers develop a greater repertoire of songs, it can help turn a song into a useful tool for language learning and teaching.

Secondly, a teacher needs to take care in selecting a suitable song for his or her class. Richards (1969) argues that some problems might be produced by difficult language that features low frequency, outdated or dialect words, or irregular sentence structures. Some songs are likely to serve as a distraction because of their complexity (Šišková, 2009). As for the language teacher, teaching the stress and timing of songs correctly might bring a great deal of pressure, which leads to the use of certain songs that they feel comfortable with (Millington, 2011), but which might not be the most appropriate for learners.

Thirdly, Coyle and Gracia (2014) argue that the impact of songs might not be sufficient for long-term language development without further work to strengthen learner's memory. Similarly, Murphy (1992) points out that even though the use of music improves enjoyment and memorization, singing songs in itself is unable to give students the ability to communicate in a new language, and the words in songs

unfortunately do not always transfer into use automatically.

Moreover, students have different tastes in songs and they may disagree about the songs the teacher chooses (Murphy, 1992). While there might be some students who feel uncomfortable singing in the classroom, the singing should not be regarded as a performance but rather as a learning tool (Lems, 2005, p.17).

2.6 Task and the Task-based teaching approach

Tasks are generally used in language classrooms and are likely to counterbalance the concerns for the use of the songs mentioned in the last section. Ellis (2013) claims that “Tasks are workplans that provide learners with the materials they need to achieve an outcome specified in communicative rather than linguistic terms”. David Nunan (2006) holds a similar view that “a pedagogical task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form.” The definition indicates that the final aim of using tasks in language learning is to apply the language instead of only memorizing the linguistic items.

Ellis (2003) identified six criterial features of a task:

- A task is a workplan.
- A task involves a primary focus on meaning.
- A task involves real-world processes of language use.
- A task can involve any of the four language skills
- A task engages cognitive processes.
- A task has a clearly defined communicative outcome.

(p.9-10)

A task constitutes a plan for learner activity. In addition, it seeks to engage learners in using language pragmatically. To this end, a task incorporates some “gaps” (information, reasoning and opinion gap) which require learners utilize language to close it. A task allows participants choose the language needed to achieve the outcome of the task. The language activity should relate to the real world and can be found in real life. A task may require a dialogic or monologic language use which both suits a task and an exercise. In addition, cognitive processes like selecting, classifying, ordering, reasoning, and evaluating information are involved in a task. The workplan should have a non-linguistic outcome which determines when learners have completed a task.

Task types

Ellis (2003) points out that one major issue for TBLT is whether the tasks should be focused or unfocused, which means “whether a particular grammatical structure is required in order for a task to be completed successfully”. In an unfocused task, students are allowed to employ any linguistic resources to complete the task. In the teacher-researcher’s class, he has used both focused and unfocused tasks. As all the participants are beginning learners, the grammar will be clarified and provided, so that students can acquire the use of the grammar when applying it. Apart from focused or unfocused, tasks can be categorized according to different standards (Nunan, 2004, p.57; Ellis, 2003).

Table 3 Categories of the tasks

Information-gap task	students exchange information to complete the form
Opinion-gap task	students express their own opinions
Reasoning-gap task	to solve a new problem with the information they have been given
Unfocused task	providing opportunities to communicate
Focused task	providing opportunity to communicate using some specific linguistic item
Input-providing tasks	Receptive skills of listening and reading, also give the teacher opportunities to introduce/explain the language
Output-prompting tasks	stimulate students to write or speak meaningfully

Framework of a TBLT lesson

The common way to divide any mini-sequence within a task is into three phases: a pre-task phase, a task-proper task phase and a follow-up phase. Pre-task is the phase aimed to prepare the main task performance cognitively and socio-emotionally. Cognitively: the teacher introduces the topic and the goal, and mobilizes the prior knowledge (both content knowledge and useful linguistic knowledge). Socio-emotionally: the teacher “addresses students’ interest and motivation” and encourages the students to take the risk to speak out.

In the task-proper phase, students work on the tasks individually, in pairs or in groups. The teacher deals with the misconceptions; answers form-focused and meaning-focused questions; monitors the process; maintains students’ motivation, self-confidence, and task-engagement.

In the post-task phase, the students receive the feedback from the teacher. This phase may also act as a segue into the pre-task phase of the next task cycle.

Table 4 Three-phase TBLT Model of Nunan (2006)

Phase	Function
Pre-task phase	introduce the topic mobilize the prior knowledge generate interest rehearse essential language
Task-proper phase	Complete the task
Post-task phase	Report and review task outcome Receive corrective feedback from the teacher

The procedural sequences within a task can be divided into three phases: pre-task phase, a task-proper phase and a follow-up phase. The pre-task phase fulfils the function of preparing the learners and introducing the main task in larger instruction sequences. “It orients the learners to the task, generates interests and rehearses essential language that will be required to complete the task. The learners complete

the task in the task-proper phase. In the follow-up task phase, the students receive corrections or feedback from the teacher. The last phase also acts as a transition into the pre-task of the next task cycle” (Nunan, p.128).

Van den Bransen (2016, p.242) summarized a three-phase model in TBLT, which consists of pre-task activities, the actual task performance and post-task activities. The teacher-researcher adapted this three-phase model into four phases for his Task-based Chinese teaching using music. The new model is composed of the pre-task phase, song phase, applying task phase and post-task phase. The table of the four-phase model is demonstrated above.

Task-based teaching can facilitate the language in the classroom to be truly communicative, rather than simple practice in the classroom activities without direct connection to real-life situations. Prabhu (as cited in Leaver & Willis, 2004, p.7-8) believes that “tasks were a way of tapping into learners’ natural mechanisms for second-language acquisition, and weren’t concerned with real-life communication per se”. Nunan (2006, p.35) has outlined seven principles for task-based language teaching, as summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Nunan’s 7 principles for task-based language teaching

Principle One: Scaffolding	Lessons and materials should provide supporting frameworks within which the learning takes place.
Principle Two: Task dependency	Within a lesson, one task should grow out of, and build upon, the ones that have gone before.
Principle Three: Recycling	Recycling language maximizes opportunities for learning and activates the “organic” learning principle.
Principle Four: Active learning	Learners learn best by actively using the language they are learning.

Principle Five: Integration	Learners should be taught in ways that make clear the relationships between linguistic form, communicative function and semantic meaning.
Principle Six: Reproduction to creation	Learners should be encouraged to move from reproductive to creative.
Principle Seven: Reflection	Learners should be given opportunities to reflect on what they have learned and how well they are doing.

All the seven principles emphasize the sequencing of the TBLT from different perspectives. Principles one and two indicate that the sequencing of the task cycle should be stepwise and different phases should be connected logically. Scaffolding is necessary in TBLT since students often encounter some difficulty beyond their capacity. However, Nunan (2006) also points out that if scaffolding lasts too long, it hinders the development of the independence and autonomy of the students in language learning. Principle Six also implicates that the sequencing should be from reproduction to creation. As for the difficulty, the students need to go through simple imitation and repetition and then mobilize the knowledge to solve specific problems. Nunan (2006, p.125) argues that the tasks should be “increasingly demanding, moving from comprehension-based procedures to controlled production activities and exercises, and finally to ones requiring authentic communicative interaction.” Therefore, at the beginning, students focus more on listening and reading and this prepares them for later engagement in productive works (Nunan, 2006).

As for the controversy of focus on form and focus on meaning, Nunan (2006) suggests that it is necessary to integrate the form, function and meaning in language learning. The teacher provides language models which are designed carefully in form, meaning and function for the learners to imitate in the reproductive task and recreate in creative tasks.

Songs and tasks are both aimed to achieve active learning (Principle 4). Nunan (2006) argues that the learning outcome is maximized most when the students actively construct their knowledge rather than passively receive from the teachers. Students are learning and memorizing the linguistic items initially in singing and applying the language to sort out problems in tasks. Songs and tasks increase the opportunities to recycle the linguistic items and this enables students to reinforce the knowledge frequently and in different situations.

The post-task phase is one process through which students can reflect (Principle Seven) on their performance in singing and applying task phases and maximize the learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the input hypothesis claims that “we acquire languages when we understand messages (input) in the target language that are just a little beyond our current level of acquired competence”. The difficulty of the whole task cycle is increasing. As for the main applying task, the difficulty should be just a little beyond their current capability.

According to the Chinese syllabus, the Year 7 students are supposed to complete stage 4. The final difficulty should be in accordance to the outcomes regulated in the syllabus and shown below.

Listening and Responding

Outcome 4.UL.2: A student demonstrates understanding of the main ideas and supporting detail in written texts and responds appropriately.

Outcome 4.UL.3: A student establishes and maintains communication in familiar situations.

Writing Stage 4

Outcome 4.UL.4: A student applies a range of linguistic structures to express own ideas in writing. Students learn to: plan, draft and edit when constructing their own text; use available resources to

access structures and vocabulary to build a message.

(The Chinese syllabus K-10, 2003)

2.7 Discussion

Music and language share similarities in forms, and the areas of human brains which process the information of music or speech overlap. Besides this, musical experience facilitates the acquisition of languages.

Songs are valuable tools in a second language classroom and they bring many benefits. Firstly, songs help to form a positive language learning environment, reducing anxiety, increasing enjoyment and motivation. Students tend to regard songs as entertainment rather than learning or practice. Secondly, songs provide repetitive target vocabulary combining different forms, including visual, auditory and movement. Thirdly, songs enhance memory of target language. The nature of songs is repetitive and this enables the learners to be exposed to key words frequently. Moreover, the melody and rhythm of songs are likely to reinforce long-term memory of the language and aid in quick retrieval of language information. A large number of researchers and educators are aware of the benefits that the use of songs can bring to language learning and many studies have investigated its effectiveness. However, the evidence of the effectiveness of using music in language teaching has come mainly from studies on teaching English or French and some other languages, there are few studies which have researched how to use songs to teach Chinese as a second language in a Western country.

In terms of designing musical materials for language learning, it is important to take the characteristics of the age group, needs, learning level of learners and the difficulty of songs into consideration. Considering the characteristics of adolescents, songs are ways that the adolescent participants might feel they 'belong', they can focus on a new interest (learning language) and they are motivated to achieve when

challenged. Through reviewing the previous literature, however, the researcher found that most of the studies focus on the language learning of children or adults, but few of them target young adolescents. In this study, the researcher investigated how to promote the learning of Mandarin for teenagers aged 12-13 years, an age range that so far has not been addressed in the literature. Furthermore, the researcher not only experimented with the use of songs in his Mandarin class, but also came up with conclusions from his experience on the criteria of appropriate songs for teaching use. This contributes to filling the gaps in previous studies.

The procedures for learning songs should be stepwise and employ scaffolding. It is important for learners to get familiar with the target vocabulary and melody or rhythm in advance, so that the learners can feel relaxed and gain more enjoyment in the singing phase. Moreover, a wide range of musical activities, such as creating different verses of song lyrics, clapping syllables, and doing body movements can be introduced to the classroom to reinforce the learning outcome.

Nevertheless, there are some concerns regarding using songs in a language classroom. First of all, songs that are ready-made and appropriate for language learning purposes are scarce, and students' interest is likely to fade away if the songs are frequently used. Thus, how to maintain the interest of young adolescent learners is a major concern. Additionally, even though students can sing fluently, this does not mean that they acquire the ability to communicate in the target language fluently. Therefore, the researcher decided to combine songs and tasks in this research. Millington (2011) developed songs into tasks in his teaching but the application of the language only assumed a very limited portion thereof, such as gap-filling activities or situational role-play in the follow-up stage. In this study, the researcher integrated songs into the TBLT framework to enhance the effectiveness. Students practised target vocabulary and sentence structures through singing and applied the knowledge in tasks which provided lifelike contexts. This is an innovation of this study which is different from the approaches of previous studies, as shown in the research questions: How can the

use of songs integrated in Task-based learning make Chinese learnable for students in a NSW high school? 1)What kinds of songs are effective curriculum resources for teaching Chinese for Year 7 students in a NSW high school? 2)How can songs be integrated in Task-based learning to improve students' Chinese? 3)What learning outcomes can be achieved through applying language knowledge from these songs?

Chapter 3 Methodology and methods

There is a famous saying from The Analects of Confucius : “工欲善其事，必先
gōng yù shàn qí shì bì xiān
利其器。” It means “To do a good job a person must first sharpen his device.”

Appropriate methodology enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of research.

In this chapter, the researcher introduces the methodological approach in the study. It presents both theoretical and practical aspects with regard to the theme of this research. First of all, it clarifies definitions and features of action research, and gives the reasons why these approaches are used in the study. Then principles guiding the research procedures are reviewed. After that, the research design will be delivered in detail, which will provide a clear blueprint about the implementation of this research. Finally, data collection and analysis are introduced as they underpin the whole research.

3.1 Qualitative research

“Research is the systematic process of attempting to find solutions to specific problems using an acceptable methodology” (Tomal, 2010, p.1). Qualitative and quantitative approaches are the two basic methods used to seek solutions. Qualitative research explores the answer of ‘what’, ‘why’, and ‘how’ questions, while quantitative research focuses more on ‘how often’ or ‘how many’ (Buston et al, as cited in Tomal, 2010). Moreover, qualitative research is generally used to address the problems that occur in a specific educational environment (Tomal, 2010, p.9). The qualitative researcher tends to get himself/herself involved in the study and observe the real-world setting. As in this study, the researcher implemented Chinese teaching and employed a Task-based approach using songs at a high school in Western Sydney. The attempt to apply this approach to Chinese teaching is experiential. Qualitative research enabled the researcher to observe experience and implement by himself.

3.2 Action research

Action research, as Tomal (2010) defined, “is a systematic process of solving educational problems and making improvements” (p.10). This process involves systematic data collection, data analysis and feedback to the subjects (i.e. participants) so that action research is distinguished from other research methodologies (Tomal, 2010, p.15). The use of action research aims to solve a specific classroom problem and gain better insight into how to improve the quality of instructional practice and achieve expected educational outcomes (Mertler, 2013, p. 13). This is the rationale for the choice of action research in this research with its three research questions. Action research also provides a process by which improved outcomes can be attained. Action researchers could intervene by various methods to collect and analyse data and to implement actions to address educational issues and adjust current practice into better practice. The methods of data collection in this action research project involve the researcher’s self-reflection journal, lesson plans, ongoing interviews with the classroom teachers, online surveys with the students, and students’ work samples.

Action Research confirms John Dewey’s belief that the classroom is a “democratic community” and that teachers should keep reflecting on their teaching and attempt to make improvements. Action research is a democratic orientation to professional practice, a way of learning and improving oneself and one’s practice. It is a self-directed journey, guided by a commitment to building a democratic learning community (Tomal, 2010, p. 13).

A collaborative nature is one important feature of action research (Tomal. 2010, p. 15). Action research is usually conducted by a teacher who works with specific subjects (e.g., students) within the context of a group (e.g., classroom). In the process of the research, researchers are supposed to access different perspectives, especially from students and other teachers (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005, p. 43).

In addition, the cycle of reflective practice also characterizes action research's uniqueness. Many forms of research end after completing the processes of planning, data collection, analysis and conclusion. The process of action research proceeds differently. Researchers put forward a specific idea and then put it into action, then observe and reflect. Subsequently, researchers try out revised ideas based on significant findings from former stages. As the research moves on, procedures of acting, observing as well as reflecting can be implemented again and again. Moreover, the process itself is educational (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005, p. 40). The cycle of reflective practice generates deeper understanding for teachers of their own classrooms and knowledge of teaching. On the reflection process, the researchers can ponder and refine the original ideas and how to implement them in the classroom.

Action research is generally adopted by educators. Tomal (2010) argues that in some ways, action research is more suitable and practicable for educators since "it does not require complex statistical analysis or lengthy narrative explanations but is more concerned with addressing problems in an efficient and feasible manner" (p. 15). Similarly, Mertler and Charles (2011, p. 339-340) hold the view that action research provides educators with alternative ways of approaching educational problems and with new perspectives on assessing educational practices. In action research, researchers often participate in studies directly, as an integral member rather than an outsider. Thus, researchers are able to study their own classrooms and collect first-hand information, such as the learning styles of the students or the teaching methods of the teachers (Mills, as cited in Mertler, 2013; Tomal, 2010) and employ appropriate interventions to collect and analyse the data so as to apply a revised plan. Consequently, researchers could acquire a better understanding of their own classrooms and address the educational problem.

Johnson and Mertler have outlined the significance of action research as follows:

- a) Action research helps to connect theory to practice. Findings of an action

research contribute to better instructional practice, and in turn, the analysis of instructional actions in the classroom can inform theory (Johnson, as cited in Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005).

- b) Action research can contribute to the improvement of teaching practice. Consistent reflection provides the stimulus for changing and improving practice. Since each student is a unique individual, action research can be a powerful problem-solving tool to adjust and make it appropriate for individuals (Mertler, 2013, p. 23).
- c) Action research enhances professional growth. “Action research affirms the professionalism of teaching by giving teachers a real voice in their own professional development” (Mertler, 2013, p.24). Action research provides researchers with an approach to examine their own practice and explore what is practical and useful in teaching.

To sum up, the rationales for using action research as the method in this study can be condensed into three points.

First, the research problem was derived from real concerns in a Chinese class in an Australian high school, whose students had shown little interest in learning Chinese and had short retention of learning, which inspired the teacher researcher to think what teaching approaches and curriculum resources were more effective in this classroom. This problem required further investigation.

Second, action research explicitly engaged the researcher’s role as a Chinese teacher and a researcher at the same time. It provided an approach for the researcher to integrate these two different roles together. Therefore, the researcher was able to collect and analyse data derived directly from his own class and take advantage of his findings to inform teaching solutions in the Chinese class. In this study, action

research allowed the teacher researcher to keep experiment with different types of songs and integrating songs in Task-based language learning in his class and the feedback from his research aid to generate effective curriculum resources and the teaching method involving songs and tasks.

Third, action research is a cyclical process. By planning, acting, collecting and analysing as well as reflecting in cycles, the researcher could come to a better plan to improve the process again and again. In addition, the teacher researcher can keep investigating the learning outcomes for the use of this teaching approach.

The three rationales summarized for using action research work for the three Research Questions in this study

3.2.1 Validity of action research

Validity refers to the extent to which the data is accurate and useful. In action research, it is important to ensure the quality of data. If the data collected is imprecise, or not exact for the research focuses, the data could be misleading (Mertler, 2013).

There are three methods the researcher used to ensure the validity of data in this study. First, the researcher used multiple data sources and multiple data-collection methods to support the trustworthiness of final findings (Glesne, 2015; Hubbard & Power, as cited in Mertler, 2013). If the data from different sources support each other, the findings can be regarded as more accurate. For instance, the researcher could evaluate the credibility of interview data through a comparison with findings from observation and students' work samples (Mertler, 2013, p.137).

A second practice is member checking, which requires the researcher to share data sources with participants in order to ensure the researcher has represented participants' ideas precisely. This method involves sharing interview records,

observation notes, and drafts with participants in the study (Glesne, as cited in Mertler, 2013).

The final method is to maintain prolonged engagement and persistent observation. The researcher needs to spend time with students to establish mutual trust and know them better. It is impossible to achieve such trust by observing or interviewing only two or three times (Glesne, as cited in Mertler, 2013).

3.3 Principles guiding research procedures

3.3.1 Ethical considerations

Researchers have the duty to prevent the participants from any harm caused by the study and ensure that all the participations are voluntary and no one would feel compelled to participate in the study (Mertler, 2013). Moreover, it is a prerequisite to get permission from students and their parents or caregivers for data collection. In this study, apart from the researcher himself, the participants included the students of Class X in Pianpi High School (which is an alias) in NSW, and classroom/supervising teachers (a music teacher and a Chinese teacher of this school) who would supervise the researcher's Chinese class. All the participants were invited to this research voluntarily and they were informed about this research before it took place. As students are a vulnerable group, the permission from students and their guardians was sought and obtained. Furthermore, only de-identified information of students was used in this research to protect their confidentiality (Flick, 2009, p. 40).

Zeni (as cited in Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005, p. 169) argues that the action researcher needs to pay attention to the consideration below:

Table 6: Ethical considerations

Representation	How students and schools are represented to others and how do others feel about the way they are presented?
Ownership	Who owns the data and the right to determine how to use it? “How is potential abuse, of those over whom we have power and whose trust we have gained, minimized?”
Responsibilities	The researcher’s main responsibility is to the students. How is potential abuse, of those over whom we have power and whose trust we have gained, minimized?

3.3.2 Triangulation

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of conclusions and judgments made, it is useful to triangulate multiple sources of data collected systematically (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Glesne, as cited in Mertler, 2013). In light of the research design, the researcher collected data from three types of participants, including students of Class X, the classroom teacher (a music teacher and a Chinese teacher) and the researcher as well. Data from these different sources laid a solid foundation for this research. Meanwhile, data was collected all along within the two cycles of this action research. In this study, the triangular data from the self-reflection journal, observations, interviews, online survey and students’ work samples contributed to its trustworthiness and reliability.

3.4 Research design

The main research question of this study is: How can the use of songs integrated in Task-based learning make Chinese learnable for Year 7 students in a NSW high school? Therefore, the research design investigated the improvement of Chinese teaching strategies based on the task-based language teaching and the use of songs.

3.4.1 Site selection

Pianpi High School (alias), one of the partner schools of the ROSETE program, was selected as the research site in this study. The researcher implemented Chinese teaching and meanwhile conducted the research in this public high school to investigate the teaching strategies enhancing the learnability of the Chinese language. Pianpi High School provided strong support for the implementation of the researcher's Mandarin teaching and research. One Year 7 class, class X (alias), was involved in this research and the researcher delivered one 50-minute lesson to this class every week.

3.4.2 Participants

Table 7: Three types of participants of this study

Participants	27 students of Class X
	The music teacher (Classroom teacher)
	The Chinese language teacher (Classroom teacher)
	The researcher

There were three types of participants in this research. The first group was the students of the Class X. This class consisted of 27 students who were all beginning Mandarin learners, 12-13 years old. While some students had Asian backgrounds (Vietnamese, Indian and Filipino), none were Chinese. There were also Australian Aboriginal and Middle Eastern cultures. The gender balance favoured girls: 15 girls and 12 boys. These Year 7 students had no previous experience learning Mandarin.

The second group was the classroom teachers, including a music teacher (who is a Mandarin learner) and a Chinese teacher. Either the music teacher or the Chinese teacher would remain in Class X to supervise the teacher-researcher. They observed

and supported the researcher's lessons and provided feedback and suggestions on the researcher's teaching. In addition, the researcher himself was also an indispensable part of this research. He focused on solving the educational problems in this class.

3.4.3 Cycle implementation

While action research has a clear beginning, it does not have a clearly defined endpoint. Ordinarily, researchers design and implement a project, collect and analyse data to monitor and evaluate a project's effectiveness, and then make revisions and improvements to the project for future implementation (Mertler & Charles, 2011). The process and the cyclical and spiral natures of action research are portrayed in the following picture.

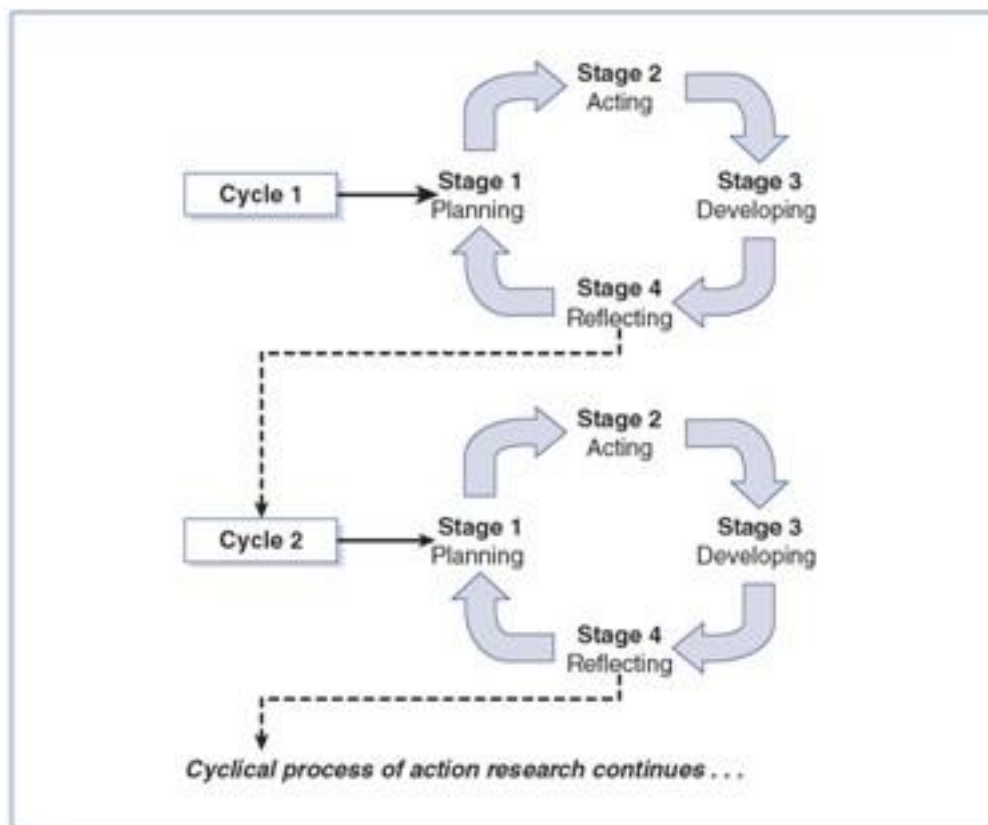


Figure 1: Action research spiral model (Mertler and Charles, 2011)

As demonstrated in the figure above, one cycle consists of four stages, namely planning, acting, developing and reflecting. In the planning stage, the very first and

essential issue is to decide the exact topic to be investigated in this action research (Mertler, 2013). The initial research topic and research questions have significant impact on shaping and deciding the development of the research (Hubbard & Power, as cited in Mertler, 2013). The aim of any action research is about making things better and correcting things that are not working. Thus, with a specific topic, the researcher can start to gather preliminary information and review relevant literature, which contributes to developing research questions and making decisions on methodology in the planning stage.

In the acting stage, the researcher needs to collect data by employing a variety of data collection techniques or instruments, such as observations, interviews and existing documents or records (Fraenkel & Wallen, as cited in Mertler, 2013). Johnson (2008) argues that, after data collection, data analysis is conducted by looking for themes, categories, or patterns that emerge. This initial analysis can influence further data collection and analysis (Mertler, 2013). In the developing stage, the researcher makes revisions or improvements regarding the changes or problems encountered in practical situations. By reflecting, the researcher reviews what they have done, evaluates the effectiveness, and makes revisions for future implementations (Mertler, 2013). Additionally, reflection is not limited to the last stage of one cycle but is conducted throughout the entire cycle to inform the research. For example, the researcher could reflect on the teaching plan both before delivering the lesson and after the lesson. Therefore, reflection could be integrated into every step throughout the action research.

In this study, the researcher first spent one term to observe his supervising teacher's Chinese lessons and his supervising teacher would play the role of one of his classroom teachers in the following teaching terms. After observations, the researcher started to teach the Chinese language to Class X for two terms, which could be regarded as two cycles. Each cycle consisted of ten weeks and one Chinese lesson per week and each lesson was about 50 minutes. The length of the cycles was

determined by several factors: advice from the supervising teacher, the complexity of the songs (they became more complex). The second cycle began the systematic use of TBLT.

The researcher planned and prepared before each term. He would choose one theme and develop detailed plans and teaching resources for this term. Most of the songs were developed on the basis of the plans. The songs selected concerned the themes in the Chinese syllabus, e.g. greetings, numbers, colours and family members. Delivery of lessons can be seen as the process of the acting stage. Meanwhile, the researcher observed his own class and collected first-hand information on students' performance and heeded their feedback, which might contribute to the improvement of his teaching practice and provide solutions to the research questions. In addition, the researcher adjusted and developed lesson plans in line with real situations in the class. After these three stages, the researcher reviewed and analysed the whole cycle, and the summarized merits and flaws of the prior cycle contributed to the development and optimization of the next cycle.

Furthermore, each lesson can also be considered as a small cycle. In the light of the term plan, the researcher wrote detailed lesson plans including what to say word for word for each lesson. His supervising teacher suggested modifications for his lesson plans. Then the researcher delivered lessons with improved lesson plans. In addition, the researcher adjusted his teaching in light of the real classroom situations. After class, the researcher reflected on his teaching in self-reflection journals and evaluated the effectiveness of the lesson.

In the attached lesson plan (Figure 2), not all of Ellis' characteristics of a task are present. The reason for this is that the process of the lesson evolved. The themes and the two action research cycles are shown in Chapter 4 Table 10, p. 61.

LESSON PLAN FOR 7E			
DATE: 10 May, 2016			
Period	Today we will:	Lesson	Resources
P3-4		<p>Line up. <i>two straight lines</i> 7</p> <p>请排队。Two straight lines. We won't go inside till everyone stand in line and keep quiet.</p> <p>As you come inside, put your bag on the ground, stand behind your chairs waiting quietly for our greeting.</p> <p>(if some students keep talking) we are waiting. Some students are still talking.</p> <p>Today we have two teachers, so you need to say "lao shi men hao".</p> <p>Tong xue men hao.</p> <p>Qin zuo.</p> <p>Can I have two volunteers to help me hand out the booklets? Thank you.</p> <p>Now I am going to mark the roll, please listen carefully.</p> <p>(Input roll into computer) Now let's have a look at daily notices from Millennium</p> <p>Please copy down today we will. Today is 五月十日, third May. (10-13 mins)</p> <p>Revise clothing rap</p> <p>Last week, we learned a clothing rap. we'll do some revision before we learn new words..</p> <p>Here are some extra words</p> <p>bào bèi: baby, chuān: wear, yī fú: clothing, wà zi : socks, dài: put on (hat)</p> <p>write the name of the clothing items to complete the rap lyrics. I'll give you 30 secs. Raise your hand if you finish.</p> <p>五四三二零, put your pens down</p> <p>Now let's check the answers together. (write answers on white board)</p> <p>Ok, class read after me (read these lines). I'll give you 2 mins, you can practice this rap with your classmate sitting next to you. Then I'll invite two students to give the clothing rap in their own style.</p> <p>(ask whether Mr. Camrass could help to give some drum beats, invite two students and then give them rewards) (10 mins)</p> <p>How to say what you want to buy 我想/ 要 买 ...</p> <p>Turn to P11</p> <p>When buying something during the excursion, you need to know how to say what you want. You can use "xiang yao" in a sentence to say what you want to do. Xiang yao are auxiliary verbs, which means they come before the main verb in a sentence to add to the meaning of that verb. For example,</p> <p>I want to buy a jumper Wo xiang yao mai mao yi.</p> <p>Pronoun first, then auxiliary verbs xiang yao, next main verb mai, at last add the thing you want to buy.</p> <p>With this structure, how to say "I want to buy jacket/t-shirt/shoes"?</p> <p>Turn to p12</p> <p>Look at these pictures in p12. Write sentence in Pinyin for what these people are thinking. What do they want to buy? Use the pattern: wǒ xiǎng yào mǎi... (I want to buy...) add the clothing item in the picture.</p> <p>wǒ xiǎng yào mǎi T- xù shān/ xié zi/ kù zi/ máo yī</p>	<p>I'll print out 30 copies worksheets for revision of the rap.</p> <p><i>no need. Only for P. 1A.</i></p> <p><i>competition who need faster?</i></p> <p><i>don't put them together. Present them as 2 alternative words</i></p> <p><i>only go to here.</i></p>

Figure 2: One example of the lesson plan revised by the supervising teacher

3.5 Data Collection

Table 8: Four factors of designing data collection

Factors	Suggestions	Methods of data collection
Who	It is important to have a clear understanding of the characteristics of the subjects in this study.	Work samples Interviews Online survey Reflection journals Observation
What	It is important to have a clear judgment about <i>what data</i> to collect. The data collected should be <i>assessable</i> and <i>collectable</i> consistently.	
Where	Two types of data are necessary in action research. <i>Raw data</i> : It describes the actual cause of a problem and initiates the action plan. <i>Benchmarked data</i> : It provides possible solutions to develop the action plans and make improvements.	
How	The researcher needs to consider and ensure that data will be <i>secured</i> .	

A variety of methods of data collection is available but it is crucial to select appropriate methods for the research, which ensure the acquisition of accurate and trustworthy data. Tomal (2010, p.36) suggests that four basic factors, namely who, what, where and how, should be emphasised during designing data collection and the detailed suggestions are demonstrated in the table above.

As for the characteristics of the participants, the methods of data collection could depend on the number of them and their ages or grade levels. Since there were only two classroom teachers and they had the duty to supervise the researcher's teaching,

he decided to conduct quick and ongoing interviews with them after each lesson to get their feedback on students' performance and his teaching practice. As for the students, given that there were 27 of them and there were concerns for those young participants, an online survey was more appropriate than interviews for this study.

In addition, since the study concerns the utilization of songs and TBLT to make Chinese learnable, it was important to observe and record the reactions of students to the songs and tasks and collect evidence of their learning outcomes. Thus, the researcher employed observation, reflection journals and work samples of the students.

Briefly, the following data collection methods were used to collect materials for analysis and further study: student work samples, interviews with the classroom teachers, self-reflection journals, online surveys and observation. Each of these is explained and justified below.

3.5.1 Student work samples

The learning outcome can be demonstrated directly by student work samples from formal and informal assessment. This links with contributory Research Question 3. Additionally, the worksheets on the songs linked to contributory Research Question 1. Formal assessment for learning was organized at the end of the second term. The assessment evaluated a student's learning outcomes focusing on speaking. In addition, music games or tasks based on lesson content were organized during the daily teaching. Students' performances or work samples were collected as a source of feedback.

3.5.2 Interview

The interview is a powerful technique often applied in research. As Schmuck (as

cited in Mertler, 2013) defines, interviews are conversations between the researcher and participants of the study in which the researcher poses questions to the participants. It provides an approach to obtain the perspectives of participants through formal or informal conversation. Interviewees, an individual, or a group of people give verbal responses to express their opinions on the questions from the interviewer. The interviewer directly records the conversations (Tomal, 2010, p.44).

Furthermore, interviewing offers opportunities to directly observe respondents' behaviour during responding. It can be valuable information which cannot be obtained from questionnaires. In addition, it allows the researcher to structure his or her questions based on particular focuses or interests, which can draw out different answers. Interviewing enables two parties to have an in-depth discussion to gain richer and more useful information (Tomal, 2010, p.44). The interviews were linked with the overall Research Question about songs in TBLT and the contributory Research Question 2.

3.5.2.1 Semi-structured interview

Interviews can be typically classified as structured, semi-structured, or open-ended. In structured interviews, a set of predetermined questions are prepared and only these questions will be asked in the interview, for the purposes of consistency. However, when collecting data in action research, it is more desirable for the researcher to have some flexibility and ask some questions that are not initially planned (Leedy & Ormrod, as cited in Mertler, 2013). Therefore, the researcher adopted semi-structured interviews in this research. By this method, the researcher could not only ask predesigned questions but also dig into a given answer. When designing interview questions, it is important to keep questions concise and clear, and stated in simple language (Johnson, 2008; Schwalbach, as cited in Mertler, 2013). The questions set in the research consisted of both open-ended questions and closed questions. Open-ended questions give more freedom and space to express ideas (e.g., what did

you think about the lesson today?). Closed questions could be applied when the researcher desires a brief and certain yes or no answer (Tomal, 2010).

In this study, the researcher had quick ongoing interviews after each lesson with either the music teacher or the Chinese teacher who supervised his class. This allowed the researcher to gather immediate feedback from them. As the witnesses of the researcher's lessons, they became familiar with his teaching, students' performance, and educational problems existing so that they could provide credible and valuable feedback. The questions were mainly concerned with the evaluation of the volunteer teacher's performance, assessment of the effectiveness of the teaching strategies, students' performance and suggestions for improvement. The ongoing nature of these interviews provided an external lens by which the teacher researcher could examine the impact of his teaching.

3.5.3 Online survey

Surveys can be used to collect a variety of information including participants' opinions, attitudes, feedback and evaluation of programs (Fink, as cited in Efron & Ravid, 2013). The survey is one commonly used method to collect large-scale responses efficiently and with minimal expense. The data in a survey can be analysed easily and quickly (Efron & Ravid, 2013). In the field of education, surveys can help teachers and other stakeholders make informed decisions (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

To design a survey, researchers should carefully define the purpose of the survey, the information to be gathered and the respondents to be included (Stringer, 2013). Then researchers can begin to structure the questions that will help to capture the information needed in the study. Survey questions consist of two general categories:

- 1) Structured questions, also called forced choice or fixed choice. The respondents need to choose from a series of answers provided by circling, checking

off, rating, or rank ordering the response choices (Mertler, 2013). Structured items have the advantage of being completed more easily and quickly so that the response rate is higher than for unstructured questions, especially those that require long answers (Stringer, 2013). This type also allows more control for researchers over the responses chosen, which facilitates comparisons in the data analysis stage.

2) Unstructured questions, also known as open-ended questions. For unstructured items, the respondents have to write their own responses in a blank space to answer a statement (or question) (Stringer, 2013).

Additionally, String (2013) offers eight suggestions for designing survey questions.

1. Write simple, concise, clear questions. Some experts suggest questions of no more than 10 to 20 words.
2. Make sure the response choices provided are appropriate for that question.
3. Make sure the respondents are knowledgeable about the topics of the questions asked.
4. Avoid including two ideas or thoughts in the same item.
5. Avoid questions that can bias the respondents.
6. Avoid using words or stereotypes that might be offensive to some groups of respondents, and avoid using clichés and slang words.
7. Avoid presumptions in writing questions.
8. Provide clear directions for answering the survey items. (p.122)

The online survey in this study consisted of two sessions. The first session aimed to test the students' memory of the vocabulary learned through the songs and the second session focused on their opinions on the use of songs and tasks in the Chinese class. The researcher originally planned to interview the student participants but finally replaced the interview with an online survey. The online survey was utilized because not every potential participant might feel comfortable with or be available for a focus group interview, and it was a more efficient way to collect the data. The online survey in this research linked to contributory Research Questions 1 and 3.

3.5.4 Self-reflection journal

Zenzi, a famous ancient Chinese philosopher as well as one of Confucius' favourite disciples, said “wú rì sān xǐng wú shēn wéi rén móu ér bù zhōng hū yǔ péng yǒu jiāo ér bù xìn hū chuán bù xī hū吾日三省吾身--为人谋而不忠乎? 与朋友交而不信乎? 传不习乎? ”. That is to say that I reflect three times per day: did I serve others whole-heartedly; was I a sincere friend; did I review the knowledge learned from teachers and put it into practice? This ancient quotation emphasises the significance of reflection in development. Mertler (2013) also argues that the successful teachers and experts are those who constantly and systematically reflect on their own actions and the consequences of their actions. Constant reflection leads to the acquisition of new knowledge as it pertains to the teaching and learning process.

Especially for a researcher, consistent reflections are indispensable. Self-reflection journals can become ongoing attempts to maintain narrative accounts of the teacher's reflections on instructional practice (Mertler, 2013; Mills, 2011). A self-reflection journal can be a reflective professional document and rich descriptive data source (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005), which “records and presents the researcher's plans, perceptions, and explorations, as well as interpretations” (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005, p.145). Furthermore, the self-reflection journal, as a personal document, is a potent tool for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. In this research, the journals were mainly written in English but as a Chinese teacher and being bilingual, Chinese also appeared in his journals, especially when the original meaning may have been changed upon translation.

In this study, the researcher wrote entries in a self-reflection journal after every lesson. The journal consists of the lesson plan written prior to the lesson, descriptions of the lesson situations, and the reflections. For the first part, the researcher designed detailed lesson plans before the lesson and sent it to his supervising teacher for suggestions. For the second part, the researcher recorded details of every lesson,

especially students' responses, and the problems encountered. Then he analysed the information and made reflections on what was successful and what needed to be corrected or refined. The journal reflected on the main Research Question and linked to all three contributory Research Questions.

3.5.5 Observation

Direct observation enables researchers to acquire first-hand information in a real-life situation and the data is more credible than that gained from third parties (Tomal, 2010). Before starting to teach the researcher's own class, he spent one term observing his supervising teacher's Chinese language class and other Australian teachers' lessons. During the course of conducting the research, the researcher also had direct access to observing his own class since he normally stayed a whole day in the school with the students rather than only Chinese language lesson. The observation informed the contributory Research Questions 1 and 2.

3.6 Data Analysis

With sufficient precise data, analysis of data can contribute to the outcomes of the whole research. In this study, the data collected by interview, online survey, self-reflection journal and observation was analysed and interpreted through inductive methods.

When conducting an inductive analysis of qualitative data, it is a challenge to reduce the massive amount of information and classify it in accordance with patterns and themes (Johnson, 2008). Parsons and Brown (2002) suggest three steps to systematically organize data and extract the key findings: organization, description and interpretation. In the organization step, the researcher needs to categorize data that provides various information in different groups (Parsons & Brown, 2002). The

categorization can be accomplished by searching for words and phrases for specific events and observations (Mills, 2011; Parsons & Brown, 2002). This step codes the data and describes the features of the categories (Parsons & Brown, 2002). By categorizing, massive amounts of information derived from interviews, observations, self-reflection journals as well as any existing documents or recordings, can be reduced into a user friendly form (Mertler, 2013, p.163). It is crucial to connect the categorized data with the research questions. In other words, categories should assist the researchers to understand the research topic deeply and answer the research questions (Mertler, 2013, p.165).

The final step is to interpret the results. The researcher summarizes relationships, similarities and contradictions from events, behaviours as well as others' observations, into categories (Parsons & Brown, 2002). This is achieved by looking for aspects of data that answer the research questions, that provide challenges to current or future practice, or that actually may guide future practice (Mertler, 2013, p.165). In the process of inductive research, it is important to step back and to ensure that all the work remains objective and closely related with research questions (Schwalbach, as cited in Mertler, 2013).

Chapter 4 Factors considered in song selection

Through one term of observation and two terms of teaching practice, the researcher noted that four vital factors should be taken into consideration in song selection for Chinese learning for Year 7 students, namely the Chinese Syllabus, students' learning level and characteristics, and students' interests.

Table 9: The song selection used in two teaching terms

Song	Topic	Feature
Term One		
gōng xǐ gōng xǐ 恭喜恭喜 (Congratulations)	Chinese New Year	Chinese culture; Simplicity; Repetition; Action
Greeting Vocabulary Song	Greeting	Simplicity; Repetition
Nǐ jiào shénmemíng zì 你叫什么名字 (What is your name?)	Greeting Ask and state names	Familiar melody; antiphonal singing
yúnyúnhé lù lù 云云和路路 (Yunyun and Lulu)	Number one to five	Pros: Authentic Chinese rhyme; Chinese culture Cons: Not rhymed; Extra vocabulary/ difficulty
Yoyo Number Song	Number one to ten	Strong rhythm; Repetition; Visual impact; Simplicity; Instrument (drum); Familiarity
yī èr sān sān èr yī 一二三, 三二一 (One two three, three two one)	Number one to ten	Rhymed; Simplicity (no extra vocabulary); Repetition
Term Two		
The Clothing Song	Clothing items	Cons: Extra vocabulary;

		Difficulty of target vocabulary; Complicated melody (fast) Pros: Rhythm; Repetition
The Colour Song	Colour words	Visual effect; Simplicity; Repetition; Rhythm; Slow and gentle melody; Drum beat
The Position Song	Position words	Body movements; Strong rhythm; repetition
wǒ de péngyǒuzài nǎ lǐ 我的朋友在哪里? (Where are my friends?)	Ask and state positions; Number	Simplicity; Strong rhythm; Bright melody
liǎng zhī lǎohǔ 两只老虎 (Two tigers)	Body parts	Familiarity; Instrument; Rhythm; Culture

4.1 Selection of songs based on the Chinese Syllabus

Before the researcher started to implement his teaching, he spent one term observing his supervising teacher's Chinese language classes. Through observation, the researcher noted that the NSW syllabus was the foundation for designing teaching content and sequence for the teachers in NSW high schools. Furthermore, the selection of songs should be based on and serve the teaching contents and sequence. As a naive teacher, the researcher did not form a clear understanding that the main purpose of using songs in a Chinese class is to facilitate Chinese learning rather than entertainment. Therefore, the researcher initially chose the songs that he thought students might be interested in such as pop songs, but neglected the significance of referring to the Chinese K-12 Syllabus. This was likely to result in the logical connections between the lessons being weakened and the learning contents not being suitable for the student's ability.

During observation, the researcher noted the Year 7 students in Pianpi High School were fond of pop songs such as “7 Years” (Lukas Graham), “Sorry” (Justin Bieber), “Work” (Rihanna) and “Watch me” (Silento). In the researcher’s opinion, these pop songs are bouncy, melodious and danceable. This suggested to the researcher that the use of Chinese pop songs in his Chinese class might prove engaging. Pop songs have the advantage to provide updated authentic words and phrases used among the young Chinese generation. Thus, the researcher planned to use some Chinese pop songs which were popular among Chinese teenagers, like “小苹果 The little apple” (Chopstick Brothers), “青春修炼手册 Manual of Youth” (TF Boys) and “朋友 Friends” (Huajian Zhou) and so forth. However, during the song selection, the researcher gradually realized some deficiencies of using pop songs in his Year 7 Chinese class. Firstly, these pop songs generally involve a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures and most of them are beyond the requirements of the Chinese Syllabus for the Year 7 students. In the light of the NSW Chinese K-10 syllabus, Year 7 students' level is supposed to be at stage 4. However, as a matter of fact, this group of students were all beginning learners without any prior Chinese language learning experience. In this case, it was urgent to start from basic understandings and lead them to approaching stage 4. This aligned with Koelsch’s (2011) argument that songs needed to convey meaningful information. The teaching contents for this group of students needed to be basic and simple, and the songs as part of the teaching resources should be in accordance with the teaching contents. The researcher’s supervising teacher in the high school, who had over ten years of Chinese teaching experience, suggested that the difficulty of most pop songs was beyond the capability of beginners and pop songs were not a good introduction to teaching materials at the initial stage. Secondly, the themes of these pop songs were not in accord with the Chinese Syllabus. At this stage, as suggested by the Chinese syllabus, the students should achieve the speaking outcome of being able to “establish and maintain conversation in familiar situations” (4.UL.3 NSW Chinese K-10 Syllabus, p.16). The familiar situations, in other words, are the topics closely related to students’ real lives.

Additionally, the students are supposed to demonstrate an understanding of the key features of Chinese-speaking communities, such as family, food, clothing and festivals (3.MBC.2 of the Chinese Syllabus, p.16). Therefore, the researcher designed his teaching plan based on the syllabus, selecting the themes related to the students' daily life.

The topics were chosen in accordance with the students' needs in daily communication. Each term had a major theme. All the teaching contents designed were focused on the theme and the sequence of content was progressive. In the first teaching term, the topic was "My family and I". The students learned greetings in normal and respectful ways and introduced themselves including their names, ages and birthdays as well as members of their families. One of the most significant language points of this term was number words since they are employed in age, birthdays and numbers of family members. These language points would be useful when the students communicated with Chinese speaking friends. In the second teaching term, the topic was "Shopping". The students focused on inquiring about and stating the prices in Chinese for some common clothing items and describing them. Then song selection was basically carried out according to the teaching plan. These language points would be handy if the students travelled to Chinese-speaking countries.

Table 10: Themes and plans for two teaching cycles

Term	Theme	Items
Term One	wǒ hé wǒ jiā 我和我家 My Family and I	Chinese New Year (greeting) Basic greeting phrases Ask and state name Numbers 1-10,11-99 Age Family member Simple conversation tasks based on song Reflection on learning
Term Two	gòuwù 购物 Shopping	Number review Beginning systematic use of TBLT Chinese money (unit) Ask and State price Clothing items Describing words (colours) Position words Bargaining Role play as more complex task Reflection on learning

As no ready textbook is provided in Australian schools, the researcher had some flexibility to select and create the teaching resources for his Chinese class. As suggested by Nation's book, “teachers can draw on a bank of existing materials from which they select the most appropriate material for the course” (Nation, 2010, p.140). During these two terms, the researcher utilized and experimented with a series of songs as one main type of his teaching resources. Through continuous reflection and analysis, the researcher kept refining song selection and drew conclusions about some criteria for choosing effective songs for this group of students.

4.2 Selection of songs based on students' learning levels and characteristics

As mentioned in section 4.1 regarding the selection of songs based on the Chinese Syllabus, the goal for the Year 7 students' Chinese language level was to reach stage 4. However, these Year 7 students were beginning learners and had little Chinese language learning experience in primary schools. In this case, it was urgent to start from basic understandings and lead them to achieve proficiency at a higher stage. As one of the key teaching materials, songs should reflect the tendency to go from simple to complex. This would align with the study by Vera and Luna (2013) which found that songs could enhance language development. In the first term, most target vocabularies in the songs were single syllables, and the amount of novel words was small, such as various numbers. While in the second term, an increasing number of two or three syllable words were introduced into the class, such as “^{Hóng sè} 红色 (Red)” and “^{niúzǎi kù} 牛仔裤 (Jeans)”. As the learning developed, and students gradually knew more of the Chinese language and became more confident, the complexity of the songs increased accordingly.

Additionally, it was important to consider the characteristics of the students when selecting songs. As the researcher pointed out in the discussion in Chapter 2, most previous studies focused on adults and children in pre-school or primary school, but young adolescents did not get much attention from researchers. However, in this study, the learners were composed of 27 Year 7 students who were aged from 12 to 13 years, from Pianpi High School in Western Sydney NSW.

The characteristics of young adolescents are quite different from children and adults. As stated by the National Middle School Association (2010), young adolescents are a wonderful group with many marked features. They have many positive aspects, such as being energetic and adventurous, but these can also cause trouble for teachers if they employ these features in learning without appropriate guidance. Understanding some key areas of the young adolescent learner's development could contribute to

the teaching material design, including the song selection.

Table 11: Four key aspects of the development of young adolescents

Four aspects of development	Characteristics	Implications
Intellectual	Young adolescent learners are <i>curious</i> , motivated to achieve when <i>challenged</i> , and capable of critical and complex thinking. They show intense focus on a <i>new interest</i> but lack discipline to sustain it.	Songs and related musical activities could provide changes from routine of language classrooms.
Social	Young adolescent learners have an intense <i>need to belong</i> and <i>be accepted</i> by their peers.	Group works like chorus, group singing performance might encourage social learning. The two themes concerning making friends and shopping are suitable for their social discussion.
Physical	Young adolescent learners go through rapid physical growth and need <i>physical activity</i> because of increased energy.	Songs involve a wide range of movements.
Emotional	Young adolescents are vulnerable and self-conscious.	Songs have the advantages of creating positive emotions. More encouragement and appropriate teaching material should be offered.

(Lounsbury, 2010; Atkinson & Sturges, 2003, p.7-16)

The students were developed in four areas, namely intellectual, social, physical and emotional. Intellectually, they are curious and interested in new things. A song is a welcome change from the routine of a language classroom (Richards, 1969) and the various attractions inherent in songs, such as body movement, culture, and instruments are likely to stimulate their interest in learning this language. Socially, they have the strong need to be accepted by their peers. Year 7 students have just graduated from primary school and are attempting to fit into the new life in high school, so that acceptance from their peers can be very important to them. Therefore, team work such as group singing performance can increase their social interactions. Two topics were introduced; “My family and I” and “Shopping”. These were likely to facilitate them to interact and establish relationships with new friends, and potentially benefit them during future employment and travelling. Given their fondness for physical activities, songs involving a great amount of clapping or body movements are likely to be effective. Songs can make language learning an enjoyable experience and create positive emotions (Richards, 1969). As for emotional needs of students, more genuine encouragement and praise can help them gain a sense of achievement and persevere with Chinese learning. Meanwhile, considering they are vulnerable, the difficulty of the teaching content should be appropriate and advance in steps, in case they give up easily and produce a negative attitude towards learning.

4.3 Selection and utilization of songs

The songs used in these two terms were mainly sourced from YouTube. The researcher used his reflection journals to evaluate the use of these songs in classroom situations. The reflections contributed to the selection and employment of the following songs.

In the first term, the researcher taught the students a song “^{gōng xǐ gōng xǐ} 恭喜恭喜 (Congratulations)” for celebrating the Chinese New Year, which was a big success. The researcher considered that it was the cultural element of this song which mainly led to engagement of the students. Thus, he used a traditional Chinese rhyme “^{yúnyún} 云云 ^{hé lù lù} 和路路 (Yunyun and Lulu)” to introduce Chinese numbers. However, this number rhyme was not successful in engaging the students and it made the researcher realize that culture was not the vital factor to consider in selection, and the song lyrics should be simple for the students. Therefore, he used a more western-style “Yoyo number rap” whose lyrics were simple and repetitive to replace the rhyme “Yunyun and Lulu”. In order to investigate the factor “rhyming”, he used another number rhyme “^{yī èr sān sān èr yī} 一二三, 三二一 (One two three, three two one)” which featured simple lyrics and strong rhyming.

In the second term, the researcher used a Clothing Song and found that the fast speed of the melody could influence the learning outcome. Hence, when he taught colours, he chose a Colour song whose melody was slow and easier to sing. By reflecting on the students’ performance of the prior two songs, he considered that the song originally selected was too difficult and he re-selected a Position song which featured body movements. Due to the development of the students’ language ability, the researcher selected the song “^{liǎng zhī lǎo hǔ} 两只老虎 (Two Tigers)”, which involves a more complex vocabulary and sentence pattern. Through the employment of this song, the researcher explored the use of instruments in song teaching and he found that their familiarity with this song reduced the difficulty of learning it in another language.

4.3.1 The first cycle

gōng xǐ gōng xǐ 4.3.1.1 恭喜恭喜 (Congratulations)

gōng xǐ gōng xǐ gōng xǐ nǐ ya gōng xǐ gōng xǐ gōng xǐ nǐ
恭喜恭喜恭喜你呀，恭喜恭喜恭喜你。

(Gongxi, written by Yu Qing, Composed by Gexin Chen)

名字: _____ 月 _____ 日

Song: Happy New Year!
新年歌: 恭喜! 恭喜!

měi tiáo dà jiē xiǎo xiàng, měi gè rén de zuǐ li,
From big streets to little lanes, On every person's lips,

jiàn miàn dì yí jù huà, jiù shì gōng xǐ gōng xǐ ā!
the first thing they say when they meet, is "Congratulations x2" Hah!

gōng xǐ gōng xǐ gōng xǐ nǐ ya gōng xǐ gōng xǐ gōng xǐ nǐ
Congratulations, Congratulations, Congratulations to you! Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations to you!

120

gōng xǐ gōng xǐ
Figure 3: Sheet music of “恭喜恭喜” song

At the first week of the teaching term, the Chinese New Year of 2015 was just around the corner, as was the first Chinese lesson. Hence, the researcher decided to teach the

students a traditional Chinese song “恭喜恭喜 (Congratulations)”, which is a classic and authentic song for the Chinese New Year. Through this song, students

could learn the Chinese New Year greeting and get to know some traditional customs. What follows is an excerpt from the researcher's journal, describing the classroom situation.

At the beginning, the students were asked to watch the music video of "Gongxi Gongxi". Most of the students were fascinated by the exotic scenes, like the colourful traditional Chinese costumes, New Year decorations, dragon dance, the traditional Chinese greeting and so forth. The students stared at the screen with concentration and showed great interest. When the climax-refrain of the song "Gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ ya, gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ" was played all the students started to boogie to the music and some of them imitated the movements of the Chinese New Year greeting. The refrain was played on a wide range of traditional instruments.

Since the refrain consists of the target greeting words, in the song phase, the students were asked to practise the refrain three times with the video. The tone of the refrain is bright and full of the joys of festivals so the students were laughing and wriggling when they were practising.

Then I combined the lyrics, namely the greeting words " ^{gōng xǐ gōng xǐ} 恭喜恭喜 " with the greeting action called " ^{zuò yī} 作揖 ". Students were asked to make a bow with their hands folded in front. They had great fun singing and doing this gesture. In addition, the classroom teacher and I rewarded each student who came to the front to perform the greeting with a red envelope with a chocolate gold coin inside. Most of the students put up their hands eagerly and they did a very good job.

(Reflection Journal from Term One)

The researcher considered that this song had the advantage of bringing authentic Chinese culture into the classroom. At first, the Chinese elements drew students' attention. Through the music video, the students employed three senses: watching, listening and acting actively.

The Chinese New Year greeting as one symbol of the culture is vivid and attractive. Furthermore, the combination of the words and the greeting gesture catered to the

characteristic of the Australian students who were energetic and active. The integration of body movements might promote the effectiveness of the learning of students who are inclined to kinaesthetic style learning.

As for the song, the melody is bouncy and joyful and especially the chorus is catchy. The song helped to create a relaxing learning atmosphere where students seemed to like engaging in the class enthusiastically. The lyrics of the chorus part are simple which only involved two words "恭喜 (Congratulate)" and "你 (you)" and the key greeting word "恭喜" is quite repetitive.

This song left a deep impression on them. About five months later, at the exam of the second term, when they were asked how to make a Chinese greeting during Chinese New Year, most students still remembered "恭喜恭喜".

By reflecting on the classroom situations, the researcher summarized some features of this song which might contribute to the success of the lesson, including culture, action, simplicity, repetition and a catchy melody. As a beginning Chinese teacher, the researcher attached more importance to the culture, because he believed it was very important to present an authentic China and Chinese language in the classroom. Therefore, at the initial stage, he intended to choose some traditional or famous Chinese songs.

4.3.1.2 云云和路路 (Yunyun and Lulu)

云云和路路 (Yunyun and Lulu)

河边去种树 (Went to river to plant trees)

种了几棵树 (planted how many trees)

yī èr sān sì wǔ
一 二 三 四 五 (One two three four five)
(The lyrics of the rhyme “Yunyun and Lulu”)

Encouraged by the success of the last song “^{gōng xǐ gōng xǐ}恭喜恭喜”, the researcher chose a number rhyme called “^{yúnyúnhé lù lù}云云和路路 (Yunyun and Lulu)”. This rhyme is commonly used among Chinese students who are in the beginning level. Moreover, it is a classic Chinese rhyme in accordance with the form of Tang Poetry---five characters form a line and the ending words of each line have corresponding sounds producing the effect of rhyming. The researcher considered that the form and the culture behind the rhyme might be attractive to the students.

“Yunyun and Lulu” is the story of two friends Yunyun and Lulu who planted trees along the riverside and wondered how many trees they had planted. So they counted from number one to five. The target words, namely number one to five, are embedded in the story which provides a context for using the numbers. The story-like lyrics was also one of the reasons why the researcher selected this rhyme.



yúnyúnhé lù lù

Figure 4: Music sheet of the song “云云和路路”

The class situation was described as follows:

I read the rhyme for the students first and then explained the meaning sentence by sentence. When I asked them to read after me, I noted that students read it brokenly resulting in the rhyming of the rhyme weakened largely. The students looked like getting bored after trying twice. Some of them started drawing on the paper or chatting with their desk mates. At that moment, I thought that this rhyme sounded too plain and not rhyming for them. Thus, I attempted to fix this

problem. I asked the students to add “嘿 嘿 (hey, hey)”^{hēi hēi} at the end of each sentence, trying to make the rhyme more rhythmic and bouncy. However, it turned out not working effectively. (Reflection journal from Term One)

The number rhyme “Yunyun and Lulu” did not achieve the outcomes anticipated, as the researcher expected to engage students in learning. As for the failure to engage the students by this rhyme, the music teacher, who was the researcher’s classroom teacher for this lesson, gave the researcher his feedback. He considered that it took more time to comprehend and speak the first three lines fluently since they were composed with extra vocabulary. During this process, students had lost their interest to keep practising. From the music teacher’s view, the story-like lyrics were considered as an advantage of the song before the lesson. However, it turned out that they probably became the obstacles keeping students engaged in learning.

As can be seen in the reflection and the feedback from the music teacher, there are two main reasons why this rhyme failed. Firstly, it was not simple enough. Even though the first three sentences offer the background of the story, they are made up with extra words, rather than the target vocabulary. Since the researcher only had one lesson with this class per week, the researcher needed to ensure students concentrated on obtaining the target words in a limited time. This rhyme is relatively complex under this circumstance. Second, the rhyming is not strong enough. The researcher considered that if the lyrics were simpler, students were likely to read it more fluently and accurately which could strengthen the rhyming. All in all, the rhyme was not simple enough for the Year 7 beginning learners. And the culture conveyed by the first three lines hindered the language learning to some extent.

4.3.1.3 Yoyo number rap

yī
 —,
 èr èr
 — —,
 sānsānsān
 — — —,
 sì sì sì sì
 四四四四,

wǔwǔwǔwǔwǔ
 五五五五五,
 liù liù liù liù liù liù
 六六六六六,
 qī qī qī qī qī qī qī
 七七七七七
 bā bā bā bā bā bā bā bā
 八八八八八
 jiǔ jiǔ
 Qiki qiki 九, Qiki qiki 九,
 shí
 十—Are you sure?

Figure 5: *The lyrics of the Yoyo Number Rap*
 (<http://www.yoyochinese.com/learn-Chinese/beginner-Mandarin-Chinese-lessons/Lesson-4-Numbers-0-10-Music-Video>)

Given this failure, the researcher abandoned the number rhyme “Yunyun and Lulu” and adopted a number rap created by “YOYO Chinese”. Different from the last traditional Chinese rhyme, this rap is a Western-style song and it employs beat boxing which enjoys high popularity among the younger generation. (Beat boxing is a form of vocal percussion primarily involving the art of mimicking drum machines using one's mouth, lips, tongue, and voice. Beat boxing produced a strong rhythm for this song.) In addition, one marked feature of the song is that the lyrics are only composed of numbers zero to ten, so that the students could focus on the target words in the limited class time.

The class situation was described as follows:

When the music video started to play, the beat boxing caught everyone’s attention immediately and they watched the video full of interest. Some boys seemed enthusiastic to show off their beat boxing skills and started to beatbox with the video. Some students waved their bodies with the beat just like hip-hop singers. I was very delighted that students counted the Chinese numbers after the video automatically and enthusiastically. In the music video, each number was read as many times as the number itself. The students quickly kept up with it.

After practicing with the video three times, I closed the video and wanted to investigate the effect of singing without the background beat boxing. However, without leading beats, even though students were enjoying themselves, the class sounded chaotic.

Fortunately, the music teacher jumped in and suggested that he could play the drum as accompaniment. Thus I led the students to do the number rap at the front. The students all got very excited and everyone joined in eagerly. Also, they did a wonderful job on rapping the numbers fluently and accurately. Even when they were leaving the classroom, they still kept rapping “Yī (1), èr èr (2,2), sān sān sān (3,3,3,)” (Reflection Journal from Term One).

As shown in the excerpt from the journal, the students showed great interest in the “Yoyo Number Rap”. There are three possible reasons for this. Firstly, the visual effect of the video was striking. The background was colourful and the modellings of the numbers were creative. Secondly, rap and beat boxing were popular among the teenagers, which made this song closer to their life and made them feel that it was not like studying but enjoying. Thirdly, the combination of the drum and the rap gave them more freedom to rap and be themselves. Also, the students acquired this song efficiently. The researcher considered that first of all, the lyrics of this rap were simple and without any extra words, so that the students concentrated on practising the target words. In addition, the video presents the pinyin, characters and Arabic numerals at the same time and the students can connect the pronunciation and meaning directly and easily. Besides this, the repetition of the rap was simple but catchy.

In comparison with the former rhyme, this rap sounds and looks more "cool" and fitting to the tastes of the students who are 12 or 13-year old teenagers. With its fewer lyrics, the rap reduced the study burden, which tends to make learning more efficient. The interesting use of repetition might also contribute to the quick learning of the song. Additionally, even though the lyrics of the rap do not rhyme, the strong rhythm produced by the beat boxing is a big attraction for the students. Rhythm and the visual effects of the video created both visual and audio impacts to promote

engagement and learning outcomes. The combination of the instruments and the songs is probably a good alternative to the music video. As can be seen in the reflection journal, the students were more willing and focused on singing the song.

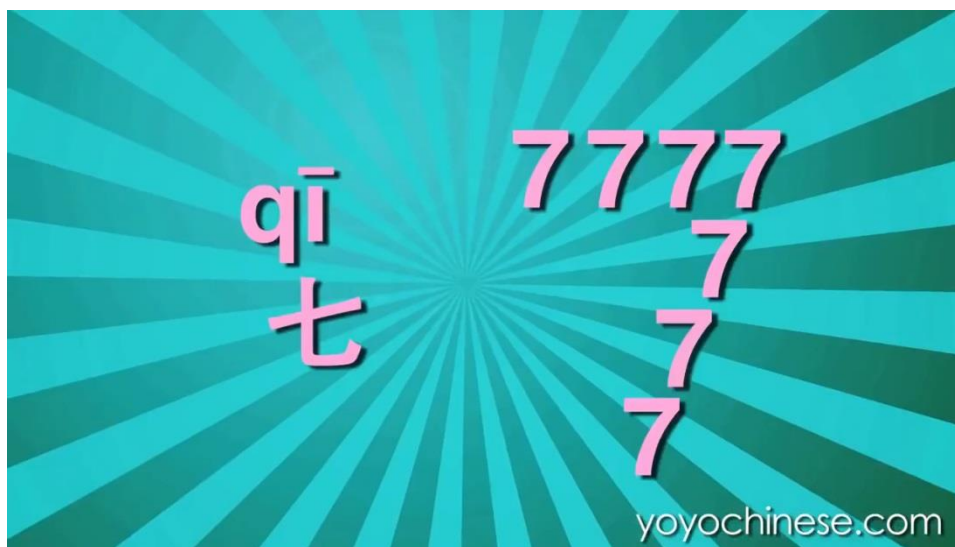


Figure 5: The Yoyo Number Rap
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eLP3FuuEVs>

4.3.1.4 $\begin{matrix} yī & èr & sān & sān & èr & yī \\ 一 & 二 & 三, & 三 & 二 & 一 \end{matrix}$ (One two three, three two one)

$\begin{matrix} yī & èr & sān & sān & èr & yī \\ 一 & 二 & 三, & 三 & 二 & 一 \end{matrix}$

One two three, three two one

$\begin{matrix} yī & èr & sān & sì & wǔ & liù & qī \\ 一 & 二 & 三 & 四 & 五 & 六 & 七 \end{matrix}$

One two three four five six seven

$\begin{matrix} èr & sān & sì & sì & sān & èr \\ 二 & 三 & 四, & 四 & 三 & 二 \end{matrix}$

two three four, four three two

$\begin{matrix} shí & wǔ & liù & qī & bā & jiǔ & shí \\ 十 & 五 & 六 & 七 & 八 & 九 & 十 \end{matrix}$

Ten five six seven eight nine ten

(The lyrics of the rhyme “Yi Er San, San Er Yi”)

Reflecting on the rhyme “Yunyun and Lulu”, the weak rhyming partly led to the problem. Thus, the researcher wondered whether strong rhyming would work better if it was not disrupted by extra vocabulary. In this case, the researcher decided to use a new number rhyme “^{yī èr sān sān èr yī}一二三, 三二一 (One Two Three, Three Two One)”. The lyrics of this rhyme only contain numbers one to ten and the rhyming is stronger. Three numbers form a short line and seven numbers form a long line. The structure of “Short-short-long” might have made the rhyme sound bouncier and bright.

The class situation is described as follows:

Some students were nodding or shaking their heads with the tempo of the rhyme. The students had fun singing this rhyme, especially when the whole class sang together. It sounded neat and full of energy. The students already knew numbers one to ten so that they only needed to master the repetitive pattern of the rhyme.

Then the students were given ten minutes to practise with their desk mates and then came to me or the classroom teacher to perform this rhyme. Most of the students made it and recited this rhyme fluently. (Reflection Journal from Term One)

To the researcher’s surprise, this rhyme seemed to stick in the students’ minds. Every time the researcher mentioned number “One two three”, some students would start to sing this rhyme. Even in second term, they could recite the number rhyme fluently.

From the students’ reaction in the class, the researcher considered they were engaged by this rhyme. The researcher thinks that the rhyming factor made this number rhyme “Yi Er San, San Er Yi” singable even without the support of a video, beat boxing or instruments. Plus, with the simplicity of the lyrics, the process of teaching and learning was concise and efficient. Additionally, the students developed solid memorization of this rhyme.

Reflecting on these songs, the researcher noted that the lyrics would be better if they only consisted of target vocabulary, which would lower the difficulty of the lyrics

and save the learners' time to focus on the linguistic items. In addition, interesting repetitive patterns of the lyrics were likely to make the process of repeating the lyrics more pleasant and the students' attention could be retained longer. The factors such as culture, rhyming, the instruments and visual impact were likely to promote the learning as well.

And two students commented that "Sir, this song is stuck in my mind". Every time when the teacher-researcher reminded them "Yi er san", the whole class would start singing this rhyme by themselves fluently.

Rhymes are likely to form a loop in the learner's mind, "haunting" them again and again. The situation of forming a loop in someone's mind is also known as "Song Stuck in My Head Phenomenon" (SSIMHP) (Murphy, 1990). From the perspective of language learning, an involuntary mental rehearsal of a language, also called the *ding* in the head hypothesis (Krashen, 2008), occurs after we have had extensive comprehensible input in that language. The lyrics of the second number rhyme are very comprehensible and rhyming. The most important aspect is that the simple numbers keep repeating, which generates frequent inputs to the brain. It facilitates the form of the long-term memorization.

The teacher researcher reflected that song selection that was most successful was memorable (stayed in the mind) and featured in simplicity and in terms of lyrics and melody, used repetition and had strong rhythm. This informed the second cycle.

4.3.2 The second cycle

Through the learning in the first term, the students had formed some basic knowledge about the Chinese language and they learned greetings and numbers. Therefore, at the second teaching term, the language points required were getting harder so that the difficulty of the songs also rose. During this term, the researcher

mainly taught three songs, namely “the Clothing Song”, “the Colour Song” and “the Position Song”.

4.3.2.1 The Clothing Song

bǎobèi bǎobèi chuān yī fú yī fú yī fú yī fú
宝贝宝贝 穿 衣服，衣服衣服衣服

Baby baby put on your clothes, clothes clothes clothes

bǎobèi bǎobèi chuān kù zi kù zi kù zi kù zi
宝贝宝贝 穿 裤子，裤子裤子裤子

Baby baby put on your trousers, trousers trousers trousers

bǎobèi bǎobèi chuān qún zi qún zi qún zi qún zi
宝贝宝贝 穿 裙子，裙子裙子裙子

Baby baby put on your skirt, skirt skirt skirt

bǎobèi bǎobèi chuān wà zi wà zi wà zi wà zi
宝贝宝贝 穿 袜子，袜子袜子袜子

Baby baby put on your socks, socks socks socks

bǎobèi bǎobèi chuān xié zi xié zi xié zi xié zi
宝贝宝贝 穿 鞋子，鞋子鞋子鞋子

Baby baby put on your shoes, shoes shoes shoes

bǎobèi bǎobèi dài mào zi mào zi mào zi mào zi
宝贝宝贝 戴 帽子，帽子帽子帽子

Baby baby put on your hat, hat hat hat

(The lyrics of the clothing song)

As scheduled in the term plan, the students were to learn the clothing items which they might purchase in the shops. Thus, the researcher selected a clothing song which included various common clothing items.

At the lesson plan stage, the researcher already realized that the Clothing song would be probably quite challenging for the students from the aspects of both the lyrics and the melody. Hence, to simplify the lyrics, the researcher got rid of the second part of the song, which involved some extra vocabulary. The melody of the song has a strong and bouncy rhythm.

The class situation was described as follows:

When they were watching the video, some students were shaking their body with the rhythm of the song. Then students learned and read the lyrics several times. However, when the students were asked to sing after the video, I noticed that the students could barely follow the video. They seemed like they were losing their enthusiasm after trying to sing with the video twice. Some of the students just leaned on the chair and watched the video silently. I thought it probably was because the melody was too fast and complicated to sing with. (Reflection Journal from Term Two)

The researcher believes the difficulty of the song could be due to two factors. In terms of the lyrics, all the clothing words learned were two or three syllables like “Xié zi”, “Jiá kè” and “Niú zǎi kù”, which were more challenging than single syllable number words. As for the melody, it was rhythmic and lively and students enjoyed listening to the song. However, the speed of the melody made it difficult for students to pick this song up, especially when some students still struggling couldn’t speak the lyrics fluently.

Since the target vocabulary could not be changed, the researcher decided to simplify the melody. He was thinking about abandoning the video so that the students could gain more flexibility on the speed of singing. However, it also meant this song lost one important attraction to the students. Simply reading the lyrics would be tedious. Therefore, in order to decrease the difficulty and retain the students’ interests at the same time, the researcher was determined to transform the Clothing song into a rap without melody and combine the song with the form of games. He organized a competition named “Who Can Rap Faster” in the next lesson. The students were given 15 minutes to practise reading the lyrics accurately and as fast as possible. Then they would be invited to the front to rap the lyrics as fast as they could and the one who used the shortest time would be the winner. The class situation of the second class was described as follows:

The students were excited when I announced that we were going to

have a rap competition today. To my amusement, several students could not help bragging how fast they could read and showing off their speed. During the 15 minutes of practice, the students were practising rapping the lyrics individually or partnered full of enthusiasm. And they kept asking me to help with their pronunciations of some words to ensure they get them right.

When the performing time was coming, a great number of students put up their hands eagerly. And the performers all spared no effort to read the lyrics as fast as possible. And the whole class gave every performer a huge applause when I declared the time they used. And I was so proud of them that they practised so hard and read the long lyrics fast and confidently. (Reflection Journal from Term two)

Reflecting on these two lessons, the researcher noted that a fancy melody could make a song more appealing, but it also tended to increase the difficulty of singing the song. Therefore, the researcher should not only pay attention to the simplicity of the lyrics but also of the melodies, ensuring the song is singable for the students. In addition, the researcher also noticed that he, as a native speaker, had a tendency to neglect the appropriate speed of the language for the beginning learners. That was the reason why he did not realize the speed issue of the song until the students failed to sing it. Additionally, his two classroom teachers, the Chinese teacher and the music teacher, also pointed out that he would speak Chinese faster and faster unconsciously sometimes.



Figure 6: The Clothing Song
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mfnnuyil974>

4.3.2.2 The Colour Song

Hóng sè lǜ sè huáng sè
 红 色 ， 绿 色 ， 黄 色 ，
 Red, green, yellow,
 lán sè bái sè hēi sè
 蓝 色 ， 白 色 ， 黑 色 ，
 Blue, white, black,
 chéng sè zǐ sè yán sè
 橙 色 ， 紫 色 ， 颜 色
 Orange, purple, colour
 (The lyrics of the Colour Song)

After learning some clothing items, the students were going to learn some colour words through a colour song to describe these items. Different from the previous song which has a strong rhythm and rhyme, the melody of the colour song is gentle and smooth. In the light of the visual effect, the researcher considered it was quite impressive and the video looked like a traditional Chinese wash painting, a big margin of the colour with corresponding Pinyin and characters. In addition, the researcher cut the latter half of the video whose lyrics involved using colours to describe some items beyond the requirements of the syllabus. Then the simplified

colour song consisted of colour words only.

The students reacted to the song but were not as excited as to the Yoyo Number Rap and the Clothing Song, but they seemed quite comfortable with the song. And the students picked up the song very quickly. The students sang the song smoothly and with ease. However, there was an interlude at middle of the song which was a solo of the instruments and it was kind of embarrassing that the students suddenly got silent in the interlude and waited for the second loop of the song. In this case, the Chinese teacher who is supervising my teaching, jumped in and suggested us to add some “drum beats” by tapping their desk gently during the interlude. The students were all engaged in producing the “drum beats” and it made the song sounds more energetic. (Reflection Journal for Term Two)

The researcher considered that there were three factors that led to the quick acquirement of the Colour Song. Firstly, compared to the clothing words, even though the colour words are all double syllables, they have a common word “Se (Colour)” which means the students actually only needed to acquire one syllable for each word which largely simplified the difficulty. Secondly, the melody of the Colour Song is much slower than the Clothing Song’. Thirdly, through the music video, the colour, the pronunciation of the colour word, the Pinyin and the characters of the word were presented at the same time. These various simulations might strengthen the short-time memory.



Figure 7: The Colour song
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHmkDmZVZt8>)

4.3.2.3 The Position Song

shàng xià zuǒ yòu
上 下 左 右
Up, down, left, right,
qián qián hòu hòu
前 前 后 后
Before, before, behind, behind,
zhōng
中
Middle
(The lyrics of the Position Song)

Along with the teaching process, the researcher was gradually developing a clearer and more accurate understanding of the learning level and capability of this group of students. Hence, the researcher would realize the design of the original plans was inappropriate and he adjusted them to fit his students better. After teaching the Clothing Song and the Colour Song, he noted that the song “摸摸指指拍拍 (Touch Point Pat)” originally planned to follow the Colour Song might be beyond their ability. This song involves 17 new words about body parts and actions. The amount of the new vocabulary was nearly double that of the previous songs. Moreover, the melody of the song is catchy and fun but not singable enough to pick

up within one lesson. In the light of students' performance of the previous song, the researcher was concerned that learning this song in a limited time would be overwhelming for them. Therefore, the researcher made up his mind to change this song and he consulted his supervising teacher's opinion about the adjustment. The feedback from his supervising teacher was as follows.

Your decision to change songs is fine. You have obviously made this choice based on the ability level of your students. This is an example of quality teaching because you are demonstrating that you “Know your students”. (The Reflection Journal from Term Two)

Eventually the researcher chose a song which is composed of only seven position words. One marked feature of these two songs is that they could be co-ordinated with lots of body movements, so that the researcher could investigate how actions in a song influenced the learning. In comparison with the song “Momo zhizhi paipai”, this Position Song involves fewer new words and each word is a single syllable. The lyrics are highly repetitive and all the position words repeat around 14 times during the two-minute song. Moreover, the video uses some interesting pictures to indicate positions, which may help the students to connect the meanings with the pronunciations. In addition, these position words could also contribute to the shopping session by describing the position of the products in a shop.

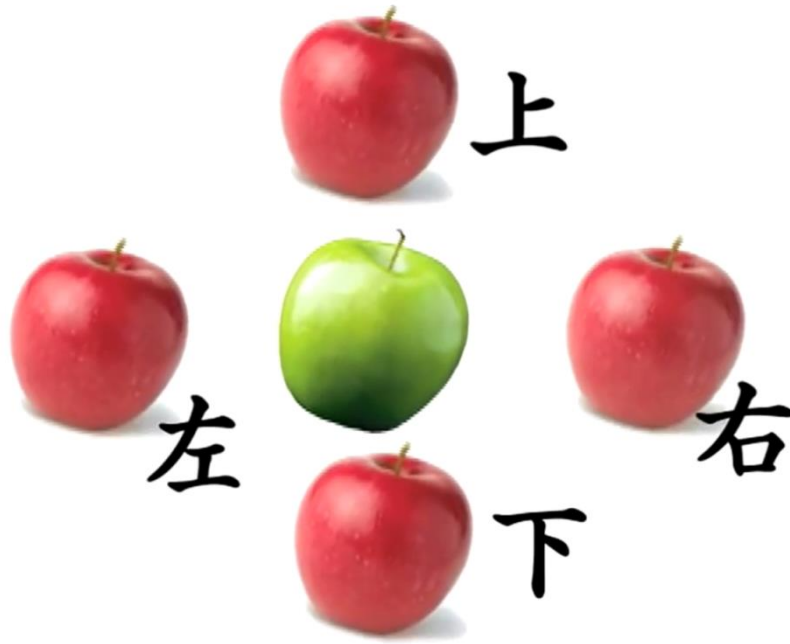


Figure 8: The Position Song
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_4Fg3jpUaM)

In order to investigate how actions impact the learning, the researcher added a series of body movements into the song.

Class please stand up and let's do some exercise with the song. When I say "shang"-above, clap your hands over your head; "xia"-below, lay down your arms then clap your hands; "zuo"-left, clap your hands in the left side of your body; "you"-right, clap your hands in the right hand side; "qian"-in the front of, stretch your arms then clap in the front of your body; "hou"-behind, put your hands behind your back and clap; "zhong"-in the middle, clap your hands in the middle your chest. (Lesson Plan from Term Two)

The lesson was described as follows:

When students finished the listening task they got familiar with the seven position words. I asked all the students to stand up and taught them how to do the claps with the song. All the students joined in and were singing and clapping with their full attention. Most of the students picked up the clapping pattern and matched it with the song

quickly. Even though some students were in a flurry at the beginning, they were amused by their own clumsiness and kept trying. To my surprise, at the end of the lesson, Alex (alias) who normally lacked interest in learning the Chinese language even gave me special thanks for bringing this song to the class. (Reflection Journal from Term Two)

As can be seen in the reflection, most of the students were engaged in the body movements. With clapping, they needed to understand the meaning of the lyrics and then transfer it into actions. It helped the students to memorize the new vocabulary through physical actions. In this way students could not only sing but also employ their actions to strengthen their memorization of new knowledge.

4.3.2.4 ^{liǎng zhī lǎo hǔ} 两只老虎 (Two Tigers)

liǎng zhī lǎo hǔ liǎng zhī lǎo hǔ
两只老虎□ 两只老虎□
Two tigers, two tigers

pǎo de kuài pǎo de kuài
跑得快□ 跑得快□
Run so fast, run so fast

yī zhī méiyǒu ěr duǒ
一只没有耳朵□
One has no ears

yī zhī méi yǒu wěi ba
一只没有尾巴□
One has no tail

zhēn qí guài zhēn qí guài
真奇怪！真奇怪！
So strange! So strange!
(Lyrics of Two Tigers)

Variation adopted from the French melody Frère Jacques)

The success of the combination of the drum and the Yoyo Number Rap in the first term inspired the researcher, who was an amateur ukulele player, to play the ukulele by himself to teach a song and investigate whether a non-professional musician can

use instruments to teach songs. Therefore, at the end of the second term, the researcher chose a famous nursery rhyme “^{liǎng zhī lǎo hǔ}两只老虎 (Two Tigers)”. Firstly, since the students were familiar with both the melody and lyrics, it would save time to learn the melody and they could transfer the lyrics from English to Chinese which really lowered the difficulty of this song. Secondly, in terms of the ability of the researcher, he was competent to play this song fluently. The class situation was described as follows. Thirdly, since the professional music video of this song is in a fast speed, the researcher’s playing of the ukulele could control the speed better and facilitate the students’ learning.

When I took out my ukulele, some students called out "Ukulele!" with excitement. I said "Yes, today we’re going to use the ukulele to play this song. We’ll start when everyone is quiet?". To my surprise, all the students stopped discussing at once and waited for me to start. I played the ukulele and walked around the classroom. It was brilliant to get closer to students rather than standing at the front all the time. When I noticed that students made mistakes on the pronunciation of “zh”, “q”, I played the specific sentence one or two more times to ensure they corrected themselves. This was more controllable than the music video. (The Reflection Journal from the Second Term)

The ukulele is a very suitable instrument for teaching purposes. Firstly, it helped the teacher to get rid of the constraints of the music video. One main problem of the music videos of this song was that the speed might cause difficulty in learning. Playing the ukulele allowed the researcher more control of the speed of the song and he could adjust the speed to meet students’ needs. At the beginning, he played the ukulele quite slowly and broke down every line into pieces because the students were attempting to link the words together. When they had nearly mastered this song, one student told the researcher that he played this song a little bit slow and it did not sound happy. Therefore, the researcher replaced the basic strumming pattern (4/4 Strumming Pattern) used at the beginning with a more complex pattern and fast pace. At the end of this lesson, when the students could sing very fluently, the researcher challenged them by changing the speed from the lowest to this maximum and the

students completed it with enjoyment. Using the ukulele was more convenient for the researcher to replay certain sentences, which the students did not pronounce properly.

Secondly, the instrument is portable so that the researcher can hold it walking around the classroom and playing it at the same time, rather than staying next to the computer to control the music video. Getting closer with students changed the atmosphere of the classroom and it minimized the sense of distance physically and emotionally (Seidel & Tanner, 2013). In alignment with Seidel and Tanner (2013), the teachers' behaviours such as moving around the classroom, physically reducing the distance between teachers and students, effectively decreased the social distance between themselves and their students. In addition, it offered a great opportunity for the teacher to interact with his students. The researcher could carry it and observe the situation of the students in every corner and the students also felt more involved in live music. With the ukulele, the researcher could repeat specific sentences more often and also control the speed. As described in the reflection journal, the researcher noted the students' pronunciation problems more easily when he was closer to them.

Initially, the researcher was concerned that the song "Two Tigers" might sound too childish for the students. After checking with most of the music video of this song on the internet, he discovered that most of the videos are made with cartoons. These might lead teenagers to dislike the song. However, the researcher considered that the use of the ukulele avoided the drawbacks of the music video, both visual and audio. The teacher could use his own voice and use different strumming patterns to alter the style of the song, which appealed to the students.

However, instruments are not always the best choice all the time. The researcher noted that the ukulele was able to attract students' attention and engage them in the class. When the quality of the music video is satisfying, a video might be more

effective. When the researcher was teaching a song "我的朋友在哪里 (Where

wǒ de péngyǒuzài nǎ lǐ

are my friends?)" , he originally planned to use his ukulele but through comparison of the effectiveness of the music video with his playing, he thought that the music video sounded richer and more appealing. The music video was in a Karaoke style and the lyrics were scrolling automatically on the screen. In this situation, the music video was a better choice.

Furthermore, using a song with which the students are familiar, but in the Chinese version, is an alternative to keeping the lyrics target vocabulary small in order to maintain the simplicity. The students were learning new knowledge based on their prior knowledge of this song so that they only needed to learn the Chinese words corresponding to the English version.

In the second cycle, the teacher researcher further proved the significance of simplicity and repetition, and reflected that song selection that was most successful involved body movements and visual effect. In addition, instruments were noted as a useful tool in language teaching. The reflection on the aspect of song selection from the two rounds of action research will be amplified in Discussion on p. 101-104.

4.4 Selection of songs based on the students' interest

The teaching and learning environments of Australia and China have marked differences. In China, learning is exam-centred and the students are under pressure from fierce competition, so that they will push themselves to learn even though the learning contents are tedious. However, in Australia, it is more student-centred and without the pressure of persisting to learn this language. The students tend to give up on Chinese language learning more readily if it is not engaging. Therefore, it lays more responsibility on the teachers to make the teaching contents more attractive to engage the students.

The researcher's supervising teacher clarified one of the reasons why the students normally do not choose Chinese and continue learning it in Year 9. Their peers think Chinese is not "cool" and they like to stay with their friends. Australian teenage learners generally lack motivation to learn Chinese. Motivation, as defined in the Oxford Dictionary, is "a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way". In Dörnyei's (2009) Second-language Motivational Self System, there are mainly three types of motivations for the language learners: firstly, the desire to become the ideal self who speaks the target language; secondly, the wish to meet expectations and avoid negative outcomes; thirdly, the enjoyment of the immediate learning environment and experience through the sense of competence and positive attitudes towards classroom activities. This third type is similar to intrinsic motivation, (that is, performing an action and behaviour because they enjoy the activity itself) the type of personal drive in which an activity is undertaken for its inherent interest and enjoyment (Deci & Flaste, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2013). This is the key type of motivation created by the use of music in language learning (Kao & Oxford, 2014).

As the students generally lack a strong desire to speak fluent Chinese and do not have pressure to learn the language, the researcher believes that in his teaching, it is vital to increase intrinsic motivation, which relates to the enjoyment of the students' learning experiences.

Most people enjoy singing or at least enjoy songs, and songs are often a welcome change from the routine of classroom activity in language learning. Richard (1969) believes that "pleasure for its own sake is an important part of language learning", a fact which is often neglected by teachers. Songs can make the experience of learning Chinese student-centred and enjoyable. In addition, the result of Schön's (2008) research points out that learning is optimal when the conditions for both the emotional and linguistic functions are fulfilled. Schön finds that "especially the first learning phase of language learning, wherein one needs to segment new words, may largely benefit from the motivational and structuring properties of music in song"

(Schön, Boyer, Moreno, Besson, Peretz, and Kolinsky, 2008).

Therefore, the researcher aimed to strengthen his students' willingness to learn through the use of the songs. Through ongoing experiments and analysis, the researcher summarized some features of the songs which appeared to attract and engage the students in Chinese learning. These features are: simplicity, the use of repetition, rhythmic drive, rhyme, action, visual effects, culture and use of instruments. Reflecting on the two action research cycles, the teacher researcher found that, as students progressed in their language learning, the use of different stimuli such as visual effects and the use of culture could be added to the findings from the first action cycle.

4.4.1 Simplicity

First of all, in making the song selection, teachers should refer to the Chinese Syllabus of NSW and the learning level and ability of the students. Both of these two prerequisites indicate that the songs should be basic and simple. From the perspective of interest, the simplicity of the songs is also a vital attraction to the students in Chinese language learning. Compared with complex songs, the songs with simple lyrics and an easy-to-follow melody tend to appeal to the students more.

In the second term, there were three songs utilized; the Clothing Song, the Colour Song and the Position Song. At the end of the second term, the researcher conducted an online survey to investigate students' opinions on these three songs and ten students were selected randomly to participate in this survey. They were required to evaluate which songs in the second term they liked the most and liked the least and the reasons why they thought so. Seven out of ten students liked the Colour song the most and three students were fond of the Position song. In terms of the most unfavourable song, the Clothing song ranked first with 6 points, followed by the Position song which got four points.

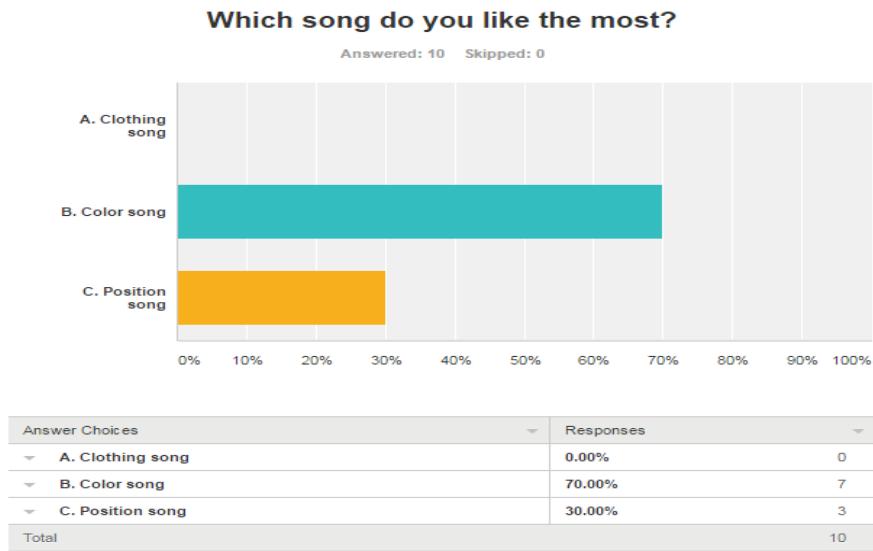


Figure 9: Survey results on the most liked song

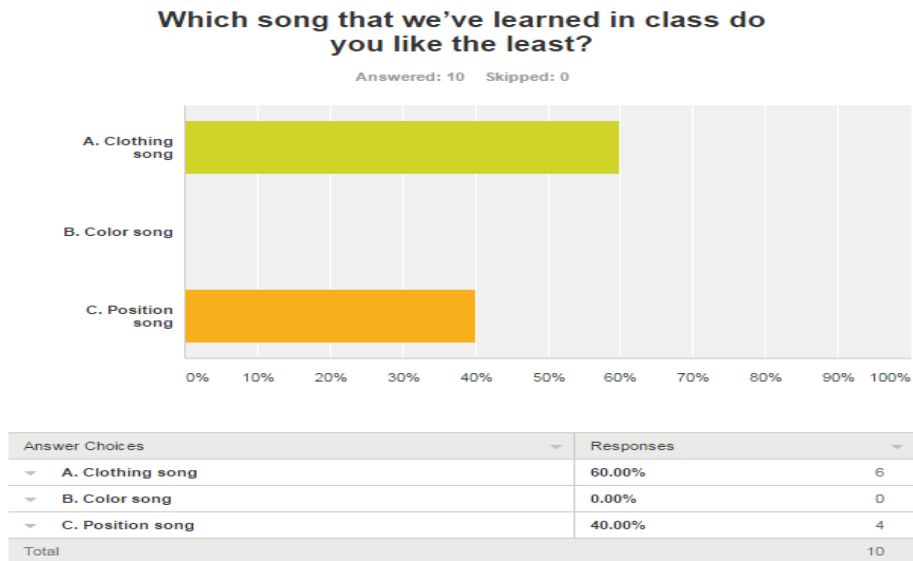


Figure 10: Survey results on the most disliked song

Table 12: The reasons why students like the song

	Reason	Times
Like most	Catchy	5
	Easy to remember	3
	Enjoyable	1
	Good beat	2
	Knew some colour words	1
	Cool/ fun	2

Table 13: The reasons why students dislike the song

	Reason	Times
Like least	Hard to remember	3
	Difficult to understand/get confused	5
	Hard to sing	1
	Too quick	1

It can be seen that the reasons whether the students liked or disliked songs were largely influenced by the difficulty of the songs. Concerning the lyrics, the students frequently used phrases such as “difficult to understand” and “hard to remember”, which were mentioned eight out of ten times. Concerning the melody, the students considered the songs were “hard to sing” or “too quick” which lowered their liking for the songs. When it came to the comments for their favourite songs, even though the reasons varied as to why they liked a song, one of the main reason was “easy to remember”, which also points to the preference for simple songs.

In general, the difficulty decreased their enthusiasm towards learning the songs.

Through reflection on the teaching and the students' comments, the researcher considered that the difficulty of the songs used in this Chinese class could be simply reduced to two factors; the lyrics and the melody. As for the lyrics, the complexity of the target vocabularies themselves vary. For example, all the colour words in the colour song share one common word, "Sè". Therefore, students actually were only supposed to memorize one syllable for each word, such as "Lán" for "Lán sè", "Hóng" for "Hóng sè". However, the clothing words in the Clothing Song share less similarity. Some are composed of two syllables, but others have three syllables, such as "Xié zi" for shoes, "Niú zǎi kù" for jeans. However, the difficulty of target vocabulary does not change unless the target words are changed. The researcher-teacher utilized other methods such as English-Chinese sound similarities, to help the students to acquire the words. This strategy is explained in Chapter Five. The more controllable part of the lyrics is the amount of extra words which add an extra learning burden on the students. For instance, compared with the rhyme "Yi Er San, San Er Yi" which is composed of the number words only, "Yunyun and Lulu" involves too many extra words which enlarged the complexity of the song over the rhyme. Apart from paying more attention to the extra words when selecting songs, the researcher argues that some adaptations on the songs are necessary and practical. For instance, the researcher cut the second part of the Colour Song to get rid of the extra words of this song. In the initial stage of song selection, the teacher should consider controlling the amount of extra words to minimize the difficulty.

In addition to the lyrics, the complexity of the melody also influences the difficulty. The students thought the Clothing song was "too quick" and "hard to sing". Actually, it can be seen from the students' reaction that they liked the melody of the Clothing Song. However, when it came to singing the song, the complex melody probably hindered the students from picking up the song quickly and this situation frustrated the students. When the researcher excluded the melody and transformed this song into a rap, it turned out that the difficulty decreased, and the students learned faster. It is quite a dilemma to find the right balance between the simplicity and the attraction

of the songs.

According to the results of the survey, the “Who can rap faster?” competition ranked second in engaging students the most. Comparing their commentaries on the original song and the refined rap game, students used “fun” often to describe this game. It can be seen that the refined Clothing song in the form of a rap competition engaged students in that lesson.

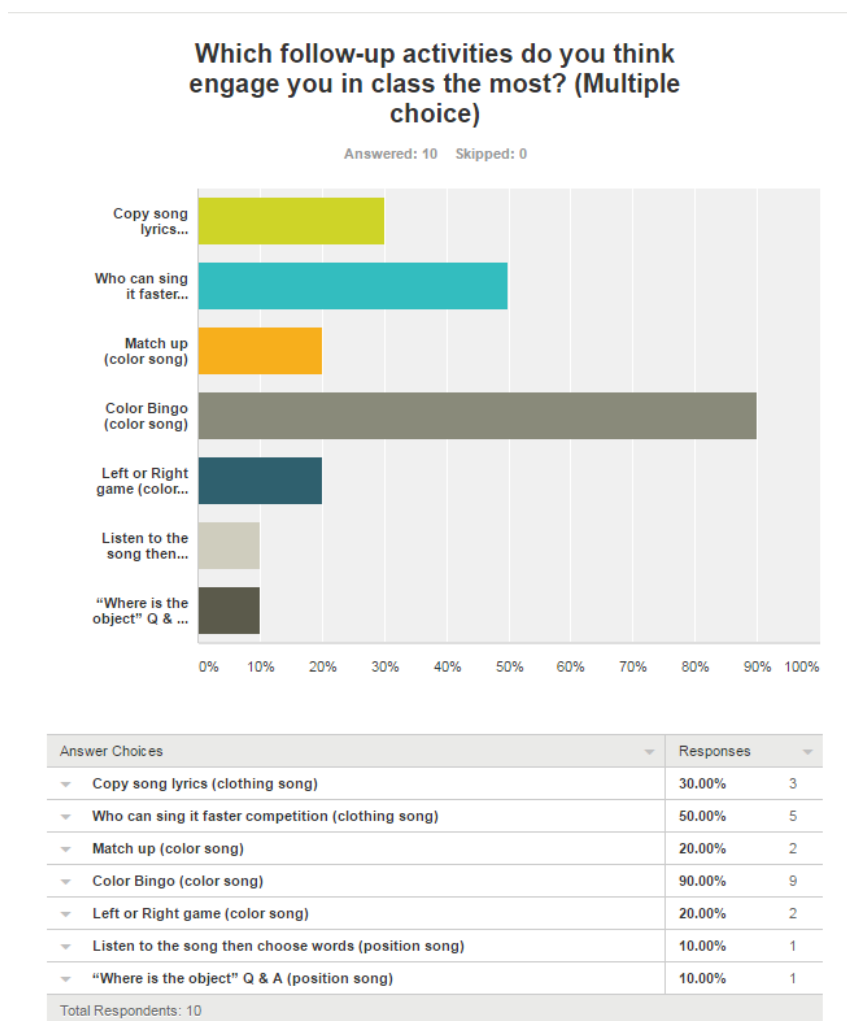


Figure 11: Survey results about the most engaging follow-up activities

Furthermore, the researcher’s supervisor explained the need for simplicity from the perspective of the students’ emotional needs. If challenges are far beyond students’ abilities, they tend to panic and reject risk-taking. Thus, when students complain “I

don't want to do it" or "I can't do it", it is probably a sign that the learning material is difficult for them and they are afraid to fail. It is possible for the students to obtain a sense of success through learning relatively simple songs, which helps them to build up their confidence in language learning and sustain their learning.

As mentioned at the beginning of Section 4.4, one main purpose of using music in the researcher's Chinese classroom was to motivate and engage students in language learning, which should enable the students to gain a sense of competence and success. The songs focused on the target vocabulary, and with an easy-to-follow melody stimulated the production of positive attitudes from the students so that they could enjoy their learning.

4.4.2 Repetition

One common feature of the songs utilized is that the target vocabularies in the lyrics are highly repetitive. Especially for the songs composed with target words only, such as the Position Song, seven position words are repeated over 14 times during two minutes. The simplicity of the songs to some extent is shown by the repetition, since the repetition of the key words makes up the whole lyrics. On the other hand, more repetition means that certain words take a larger proportion of the lyrics, which also contributes to the simplicity of the song.

Rote repetition induces boredom, but songs provide a means of increasing the amount of repetition without losing the learner's interest (Richards, 1969). Some interesting forms of repetition in the songs did spark students' interest in learning and contributed to their memorization. For instance, each number word in the Yoyo Number Rap was repeated as many times as the number itself, such as "Yi, er e r, san san san (One, two two, three three three)", which is simple and catchy. And the melody also made the repetition sound more enjoyable. For instance, there is one line

“Zhong zhong zhong zhong zhong (middle middle middle middle middle)” in the position song. If the word “zhong” is simply read five times, it sounds monotonous and boring. However, when it was accompanied with the melody, the repetition of this word sounds bouncy and catchy.

Repetition is the key to achieve language acquisition (Murphey, 1992). Students tend to lose interest when repeating after the teacher several times. Singing can be an alternative to encourage the students to repeat words in a pleasant way. In addition, songs can be a good vehicle for aiding them in practising after school.

4.4.3 Rhythm

Rhythm is an intrinsic part of our internal and external lives. It is with us in the regularity of our mother’s heartbeats and our own heartbeats and breathing. Rhythm is a source of comfort. In songs, chanting, and poetry, it may also alter the rhythms of our breathing, suggesting both the release of emotion and alternation of consciousness (Cook, 2000).

In addition, rhythm is one of the central features of music and listeners often develop a strong conscious or unconscious familiarity with the rhythmic characteristics of various music styles. Rhythm is a prominent and constitutive feature of music and language; and both of these vehicles of rhythm often occur in songs.

For language learners, one function of rhythm might be to provide a path into language. Frederick Turner (as cited in Cook, 2000), in reviewing evidence that verse rhythms stimulate the brain to release pleasure endorphins, comments that this phenomenon suggests that our liking for verse has advantages in increasing our abilities in social co-ordination and increasing memory power. As rhythmic language apparently stimulates a greater co-ordination of the left and right hemispheres of the

brain, it integrates cognitive capacities which are unevenly distributed between the two, enabling richer cerebral activity (Bidelman et al., 2013).

This group of Australian students is fond of songs with strong rhythm. For example, the Yoyo Number Rap and the Position Song attracted the students from the beginning of the song. Adding the “drum beats” into the Colour Song, which strengthened the rhythm, also won approval from the students. The researcher considers that this is because these songs with strong rhythms were similar to the song styles the students normally listened to, which were more energetic. The familiarity also facilitated better comprehension and quick acquisition.

4.4.4 Rhyming

Rhyming is also one of the factors of the songs that appealed to the students. “A rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds (or the same sound) in two or more words, most often in the final syllables of lines in poems and songs (*Oxford Dictionaries, 2013*)”. Rhyme could be sung without melody which is more similar to form of speaking. Thus, the use of rhyme facilitates the students skipping the procedure getting familiar with the melody before singing.

4.4.5 Action

Through observation of this group of Australian Year 7 students’ normal school lives and their performance in the Chinese class, the researcher considered that they were energetic and their learning style was movement-oriented, compared to students in China of a similar age. In other words, the students are “kinaesthetic”. Kinaesthetic students like to have many hands-on movements, enjoy working in this way and they can obtain a great deal from kinaesthetic stimulations (Reid, 1995). They favour using the body, hands, and tactile senses. One question that the researcher has been

frequently asked is “Can you dap, Sir?” (Dap is a friendly gesture of greeting, agreement, or solidarity between two people, originating from Africa). Fondness for body movements in songs is a significant feature of these students. They wiggle their body once the music starts. Therefore, the researcher attempted to integrate more body movements into the songs consciously. As for the students, swaying and adding their own various gestures to the music entertained the students themselves.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a learning approach similar to the development of learners’ first language and it requires the learners to make a physical action response to a certain command (Asher, 1969). The Position Song employed this approach and integrated body movements into this song. The students were required to clap according to the position words that they heard and sang. In this process, the students received the input through listening to the video or singing the lyrics, and then they comprehended the instructions and transferred them into actions. This cognitive process could help promote the memorization of the target vocabulary.

The applications of body movements are very flexible. For instance, the students tapped their desks to create “drum beats” during the interlude, which held the students’ attention and made the song more vigorous. In addition, the students were also asked to combine the clapping in Yoyo Number Rap, with the number of claps equal to the numbers itself, and it led to the employment of listening, singing and action skills which facilitated full engagement of the students.

4.4.6 Visual effect

Strong visual impact can also entertain the students and hold their attention. For example, the Position Song employed some funny pictures to demonstrate the positions and the students were amused during their watching and singing. The Yoyo Number Rap video provided strong visual images, and the students thought the video

looked very “cool”. Normally if the music videos are fancy, they will draw more attention. The video of the Number rap is “very cool” and the video of the Position song is funny. Sometimes when it comes to a specific topic, the visual effects of the song and any accompanying videos or images can play crucial roles. For instance, when we talk about colours, it requires students to use their eyes to recognize colours.

Using images can promote language learning from a cognitive perspective.

Sometimes the characteristic of the target words suggests that learning visually would be a significant part of the learning, such as the Colour Song, whose images of different colours helped the students connect the meaning and pronunciation. In addition, images can carry more information than texts. However, as for the number rhyme “Yunyun and Lulu”, even though one picture of planting a tree was provided, the culture or the context was mainly created by the lyrics and its form which imitated the form of Traditional Tang Poetry. Thus it resulted in the first three lines setting the context and only the last line contains the target words. However, the “context building” through the use of many words hindered quick comprehension and acquisition by the students. It might be more suitable for the students when they are up to a higher level, but it overwhelmed these beginning learners. In the “Gongxi Gongxi” song, all the images of the dragon dance, costumes and so on set up the “Chinese New Year” context and presented the culture and atmosphere efficiently.

4.4.7 Culture

One significant advantage of combining culture with the songs was that it brought in richer, exotic flavours. Culture can be employed to set up a more vivid context for the song and make the song more meaningful. These Year 7 students were at this stage keen and happy to have new experiences and Chinese culture conveyed by the songs made such an impact. In the “Gongxi Gongxi” song for example, the novelty

celebration activities and costumes of the Chinese New Year appealed to the students and left a deep impression. However, sometimes culture can become a barrier if it is not presented in an appropriate way. The number rhyme “Yunyun and Lulu”, used lots of words to present the culture, which increased the students’ learning difficulty and was beyond their ability. Therefore, the researcher considered that it would be better to use the video and images to convey the culture so as to keep the complexity low and engage the students at the same time. In other words, the factor of culture would be better combined with visual impact.

4.4.8 Instrument

Through the experiences of using instruments in the researcher’s class, he noted that instruments interested his students and engaged them in learning.

Additionally, the instruments enriched the ways the researcher could demonstrate the songs, other than relying on the music videos. There are many music videos for language learning ready to use on the internet. Some are well-designed and have great quality visual and audio effects. These abundant and handy teaching resources save time for the teacher. However, the quality of the music videos on the internet varies. Some contain inappropriate content for young learners or the visual or audio content is not satisfying; or it is not suitable for the students’ learning level; or it does not match totally with the teaching content. Then the use of instruments offers an alternative in teaching songs. One significant advantage of using an instrument such as the ukulele is that it allows more flexibility in teaching. The speed of the song is more controllable compared to the video, and the researcher can pause and replay at certain points or break down a line when it is necessary. It is easier to adapt the song by playing instruments, as one can change the strumming pattern to alter the style of the song. In addition, some portable instruments such as the ukulele give the teacher more freedom to walk around the classroom while singing and speaking. However,

teachers should choose songs which they are competent to play.

4.5 Discussion

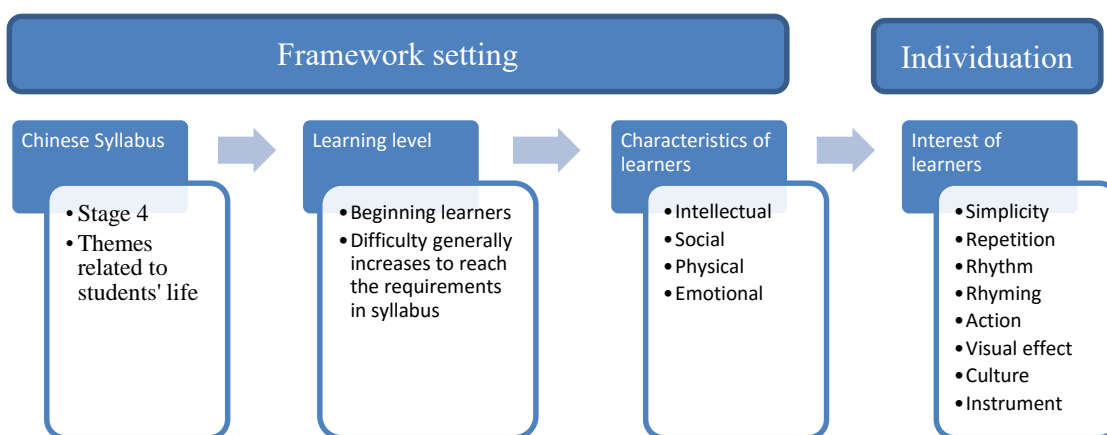


Figure 12: Procedures and criteria for selecting songs for the students

In this chapter, the researcher demonstrates the process of how he selected and utilized songs and what features of songs might interest students. First of all, the researcher referred to the Chinese Syllabus which informed him that the topics of the language should be closely related to the students' lives and the learning goal was to achieve stage 4. However, considering the students were naive learners, the teacher needed to begin with the very basics and gradually increase the difficulty to reach a higher stage. In addition, it was important to take the characteristics of the students, who were young adolescents, into consideration during the selection of songs. It inspired the researcher to select and employ songs to meet students' needs in four aspects, namely intellectual, social, physical and emotional. These four steps, selecting songs according to the Chinese Syllabus, students' learning level, their characteristic and interest, basically set up a framework for the song selection and utilization and offered implications for the following explorations regarding the

factors of songs that might interest students.

With the experimental use of various songs during these two terms, the researcher noted that these songs might have various valuable features that attracted the students, but two common characteristics of the successful songs are most noteworthy.

Simplicity

Through the employment of the number rhyme “Yunyun and Lulu”, the researcher realized that extra words should be kept to a small number to make the song easier to learn and the students could simply focus on the target vocabulary. Apart from limiting the new words, another solution is using songs which the students might know from the English version, so that the students could acquire the Chinese words based on their prior knowledge.

Then through the Clothing Song, the researcher noted that the melody of the songs may also cause difficulty in picking up the songs, but catchy melodies have the advantage of increasing the engagement of students. Thus, it is a challenge to seek a balance in the complexity of the melodies, which should be attractive yet simple. The researcher solved this problem in another way when teaching the Clothing Song. He abandoned the melody and combined the song with a rapping task, which helped to maintain the students’ interest and gave them a chance to show that they were learning. Through this adaptation, the researcher realized the benefits of associating songs with tasks, and that he had linked these two aspects unconsciously in previous lessons.

In addition, the survey result also illustrates that the students are more interested in simple songs. It is mentioned in the analysis of the young adolescents’ characteristics above that they like challenges which might seem to conflict with the results of the survey. However, the researcher believes that, as they were beginning learners and a number of the target words already resulted in some difficulty in learning, simplicity

means keeping the songs simple and at an appropriate level for the students.

Repetition

Repetition and simplicity are mutually facilitating. Only a small number of words need repetition to expand the lyrics, and repetition of certain words makes these words take on more importance. Moreover, the songs offered a series of catchy repetitive patterns to gain the students' interest. For instance, the repetitive pattern for numbers could be "Yi, Er Er, San San San (One, Two Two, Three Three Three)" or "Yi Er San, San Er Yi (One Two Three, Three Two One)". Even though one single word was frequently repeated at one time; "Zhong zhong zhong zhong zhong (middle middle middle middle middle)" accompanied by the melody, it interested the students.

Rhythm and Rhyming

Rhythm is created by a series of repetition of sounds. Strong rhythms interested this group of students. The researcher considered that since most of the pop music they listened to in daily life had strong rhythms, the similarly styled songs, such as "Yoyo Number Rap" would draw their attention easily.

Moreover, the students were also fond of the songs that featured strong rhyming. For example, the rhyme "Yi Er San, San Er Yi" is really catchy and unforgettable. It is probably because they had learned a few nursery rhymes in primary school or from their parents, that this similar style of song could more easily arouse positive reactions.

Visual impacts and Action

The students may have preferences for different learning styles, such as visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. Songs are a great platform to present these styles individually or together. First of all, all the students needed to listen to the songs to get familiar with them. Then the music video provided the visual effect, the video of

the “Gongxi Gongxi” illustrating exotic culture; the video of the Colour Song looked like traditional Chinese ink-wash painting. The strong visual stimulations contributed to the engagement in the song learning. Through observation, the researcher found that these students were energetic and movement-oriented and it turned out that they were very interested in the combination of actions and songs.

The songs can potentially involve most of the learning styles and that can help to meet the different preferences of the students, as well as provide stimulation by utilizing them in combination.

Culture

Teenage students are prone to be attracted by that which is new, and culture can be a valuable source in providing a sense of freshness. However, given that they were beginning learners, the researcher thought that culture would be better presented in pictures or other suitable ways to avoid increasing the difficulty of the song learning.

Instruments

The use of instruments also brought a sense of freshness into the language classroom and it appealed to the students. Furthermore, it released the researcher from the restraints of using music videos. The researcher was allowed more freedom to individualize the song teaching, without simply following the video. He could perhaps emphasize a particular sentence. In addition, the researcher could leave the computer and have more interactions with the students.

In this research, simplicity and repetition are the two common features, while the other characteristics could be employed individually or in combination to promote effectiveness.

Moreover, the students gave positive feedback about the use of songs in the online survey. At session 5 of the survey, the students were asked to rank their attitudes

from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree to three questions:

- 1) Do you think these songs help you to memorize new words?
- 2) Do you think these songs make you more engaged in class?
- 3) Do you want more songs in future Chinese class?

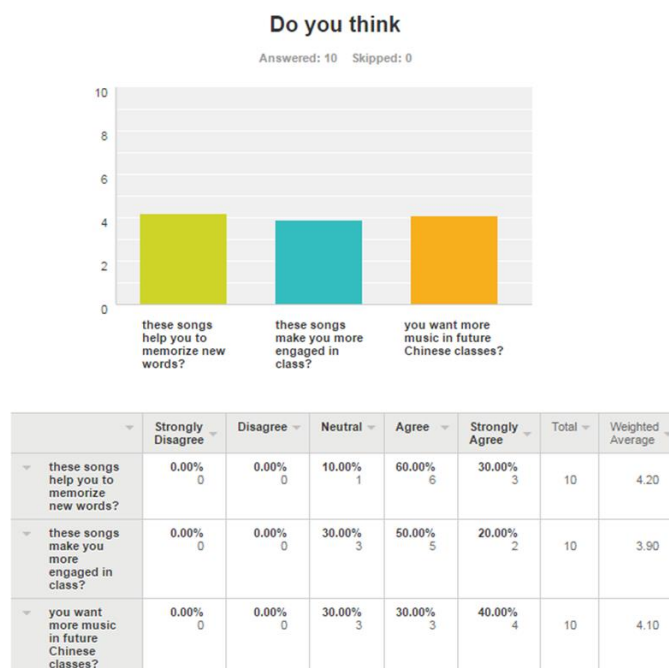


Figure 13: Results of the online survey about students' attitude towards the use of songs in Chinese classes

The weight from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree was 1 to 5. If the average weight was closer to 5, this means that the students showed a stronger positive attitude toward the use of songs. As demonstrated in Figure 13 above, all the results are around 4, meaning that the students held a positive view that the use of songs can enhance the memory of novel vocabulary and engagement in the Chinese class, and that songs are welcomed in future Chinese language learning. The results of the vocabulary test in the first session of the survey also support the argument that songs enhance their memory. The students remembered most of the vocabulary and especially for the colour words, the accuracy was over 90%.

Chapter 5 Songs and Task-based Language Teaching

5.1 Introduction

Songs are valuable tools in language learning, but they still have some drawbacks that need attention. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are two main limitations to the use of songs in a language classroom. Firstly, teachers need a good repertoire of songs to maintain variety. Even though students might be keen on a song, interest in a song could gradually fade if it is used too often. Secondly, singing songs is not simply equal to communicating in language and the words in songs need to be transferred into an application of the vocabulary.

In order to counterbalance the limitations, Millington (2011) developed songs into tasks by adding gap-fill writing activities or situational role-play after singing. Similarly, in this study, the teacher-researcher combined songs with a range of tasks to expand the diversity of classroom activities to maintain the students' interest and to progress learning by the application of knowledge. Millington considers "the goal of the task is singing" and the application activities are a supplement in the Follow-up stage. However, in this study, the researcher believes singing is a preparation for the application stage and that for the purpose of language learning, more importance should be attached to the activities and tasks.

Therefore, in this study, the teacher-researcher employed Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as his teaching approach to make song teaching operational. This approach counterbalances two main deficits of using songs to teach a language.

5.2 Summary of the Teachers' voices

In Tables 12 and 13 (p.91), the students' feelings about song selection were displayed.

The supervising teachers' comments were incorporated in various places in the document.

Table 14: Voice of the supervising teacher

Voice of the supervising teacher	Contributed to
<p>The researcher's supervising teacher clarified a couple of the reasons why not many students choose and continue to learn Chinese in Year 9. One is Chinese language left them an impression featured difficult and boring. In addition, their peers think Chinese is not "cool" and they like to stay with their friends.</p>	<p>Awareness of using songs</p>
<p>The supervising teacher didn't agree with using pop songs in Year 7 Chinese class. She believes the difficulty of most pop songs is beyond the capability of beginners, so pop songs may not be a good introduction to teaching materials at the initial stage.</p>	<p>Students' ability and level; Criterion of selecting songs</p>
<p>Students often grumbled that Chinese was too difficult and they couldn't make it. The supervising teacher shared her teaching experience and gave suggestion to the researcher. As for year 7 students, teachers need to help them build their confidence in Chinese learning step by step. They are very special, especially in the first six months, because they are still partly "primary school kids". The first six months, they are paramount period for these kids to get used to high school life and grow more mature. Thus, these is a need to take their emotional need into consideration as well.</p>	<p>Characteristics of students and emotional need; Simplicity</p>
<p>When teaching the rhyme Yunyun and Lulu, the researcher's supervising teacher pointed out that the</p>	<p>Students' ability and level</p>

<p>researcher, being a native Chinese speaker, tended to sing or read lyrics in a fast pace unconsciously, which caused difficulty for students in learning.</p>	
<p>After the fail of the rhyme Yunyun and Lulu did not work well, the supervising teacher suggested that adding body movements to the rhyme (Move to left and kick right leg out to left; move right and kick left leg to the right) might achieve better effectiveness.</p>	<p>Body movement (song selection)</p>
<p>The supervising teacher suggested the researcher to design some warm-up activities (like Listening and Match game) before songs learning.</p> <p>In addition, she emphasised it would be more productive to assign students some small activities to complete or goals to achieve, rather than just simply listening to the songs. It helped to keep them busy and engaged and it prevents the students go wild when they enjoy songs.</p>	<p>Enlightening on the possibility of combination of songs and other teaching methods;</p> <p>The development of TBLT</p>
<p>After teaching the Colour Song, the researcher's supervising teacher suggested the researcher to use a simple way like telling a small joke about the two words “Baise” (Bye, Sir) and “Heise” (Hey, Sir) to strengthen their memorization.</p>	<p>Enlightening on the possibility of combination of songs and other teaching methods;</p> <p>The development of TBLT</p>
<p>Students like this competition (Who Can Rap Faster), but this activity was not well-organized, which took too much time than I expected and the class was sort of chaotic. The supervising teacher believed that it would be better if the researcher had design and clarified rules clearly before starting the activity.</p>	<p>Activity design and implement</p>
<p>When the researcher consulted the supervising teacher's</p>	<p>the criterion of choosing songs</p>

<p>opinion on the Clothing, she thought it actually was a good choice, simple rhythmmed and bumpy and what the most important was repetition. The students would definitely like it.</p>	
<p>The researcher decided to swap the songs “Momo zhizhi paipai” with Position song which was more suitable for students’ ability level. The supervising teacher was quite approve of this idea and believe this decision demonstrating deeper understanding of the students.</p>	<p>The ability and level of students; The song selection</p>
<p>The supervising teacher agreed with the structure of the pre-task activities in teaching the Colour song. Listen to the song to match up, then transfer the answer to complete the word list. Kate thinks the arrangement is right. Break down the tasks.</p>	<p>Scaffolding The design of activities; The development of TBLT</p>
<p>After singing several times of the Colour song, the supervising teacher suggested to add some “drum beats”. She used her hands play drum beats in one section of this song and the students were really into the combination of the song with drum beats.</p>	<p>Body movement; Instrument (Song selection)</p>
<p>After observing the Colour song lesson, the supervising teacher gave her opinions on why the Colour song got students’ favour and learned the words quickly. Firstly, the rhythm and lyrics are very simple but quite catchy. Secondly, this video is visual based, the colours come out with corresponding pronunciation. Thirdly, the song is easy and simple but not childish.</p>	<p>Simplicity; Follow-up activity (The development of TBLT)</p>
<p>The supervising teacher suggested the researcher to design a couple of simple activities to quickly exam students’ memorization of the colour words, or re-used</p>	<p>Follow-up activities (The development of TBLT)</p>

<p>the Colour Match game in pre-task. The researcher finally used a game “Left or Right”.</p>	
<p>After the Position Song lesson, the supervising teacher thought the reaction from students were positive. However, she also noticed several students who were shy didn’t participate in clapping with other students. She pointed out</p> <p>That some people just didn’t like music or perform in the public. Teachers should use a variety of teaching strategies, you could use music as one of your main teaching approach, but it need other strategies to support then you can get better effectiveness.</p>	<p>Know your students; the combination of songs and TBLT</p>
<p>The supervising teacher gave feedback that she often heard some students sang the song (Two Tigers) in schools after I taught them.</p>	<p>The feedback of the effectiveness</p>

(From the Reflection Journal for Term one and Term two)

Many suggestions from the supervising teacher helped the researcher develop the song selection and the utilization of TBLT. At the beginning, the talks with the researcher’s supervising teacher enlightened him to use songs to engage students and enhance the language learning. Along with the teaching practice, the immediate feedback and ongoing interviews informed the researcher some significant factors such as simplicity, repetition and actions of songs might get favour of the students, which helped to develop the criterion of selecting songs in this study. In addition, the supervising teacher kept emphasizing the significance of knowing his students and designing his teaching resources including songs and tasks appropriate for the ability level of the students, which largely influenced the researcher and enabled him not simply focus on the whether students like the song or not. Furthermore, the idea combining TBLT with song teaching was brought up from his supervising teacher’s advice, and she contributed a lot on improve the design of TBLT in this study,

including adding warm-up activities and follow-up activities as well as how to carry out tasks and activities in a language classroom.

5.3 Four-phase TBLT model

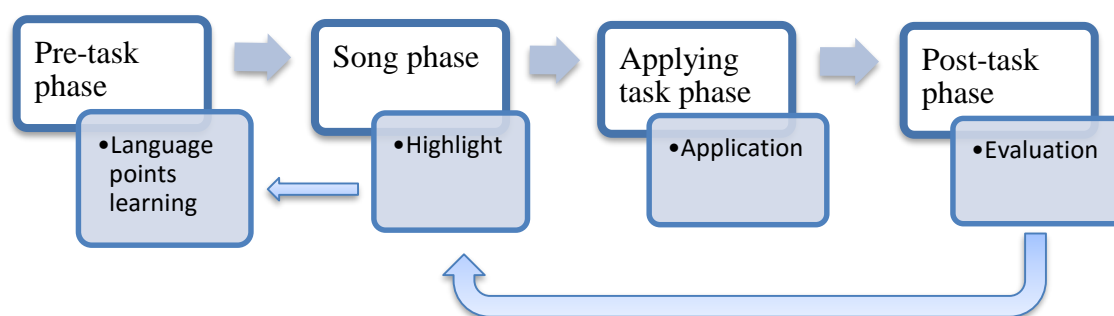


Figure 14: Four-phase TBLT model adapted from Nunan’s Three-phase TBLT model (2006)

Nunan (2006) divides the procedural sequences within a task into three phases: pre-task phase, a task-proper phase and a post-phase. The pre-task phase fulfils the function of rehearsing essential language, generating interest, and introducing the task. The learners complete the task in the task-proper phase. In the post-task phase, the students receive corrections or feedback from the teacher. The last phase also acts as a transition into the pre-task of the next task cycle (Nunan, 2006).

To integrate songs into task-based learning, the researcher adapted Nunan’s three-phase TBLT model into a four-phase TBLT model. The procedural sequences of this adapted model are composed of four phases: pre-task phase, song phase, applying task phase and a post-task phase.

The pre-task phase involves a series of activities to set up the learning atmosphere, review prior knowledge and learn the target vocabulary. The target vocabulary

learning is the vital part of this phase, which prepares the students to sing the song in the song phase.

In the song phase, the students sang the songs and completed a range of song-related activities, such as a singing competition or lyrics rewriting. Singing and completing activities associated with the songs not only maintained the students' interest but also prepared them for the task phase by consolidating their memory and achieving fluency.

In the applying task phase, the students were encouraged to apply the vocabulary and sentence structures in tasks with a concrete context. Tasks such as Self-introduction and Shopping Role Play have more real-world connection and the students were familiar with these situations. Contrary to the song phase, the applying task phase was more conscious-raised and the students acquired the target language through utilizing it to achieve certain outcomes.

In the post-task phase, the tangible linguistic products such as presentations created by the students, were reviewed by the teacher or/and their peers and constructive feedback would be offered. The post-task phase enabled the teacher-researcher to be aware of the weaknesses existing in the learning process, such as inaccurate pronunciation, or some words that were being forgotten or incorrect comprehension. Then a few constructive activities were employed accordingly to fix up these issues.

5.3.1 Pre-tasks

Nunan (2006) has come up with a six-step pre-task which prepares students to carry out the pedagogical task. Due to the limitation of classroom time and the principle of simplicity, the teacher-researcher simplified the procedures to fit in his own classroom setting.

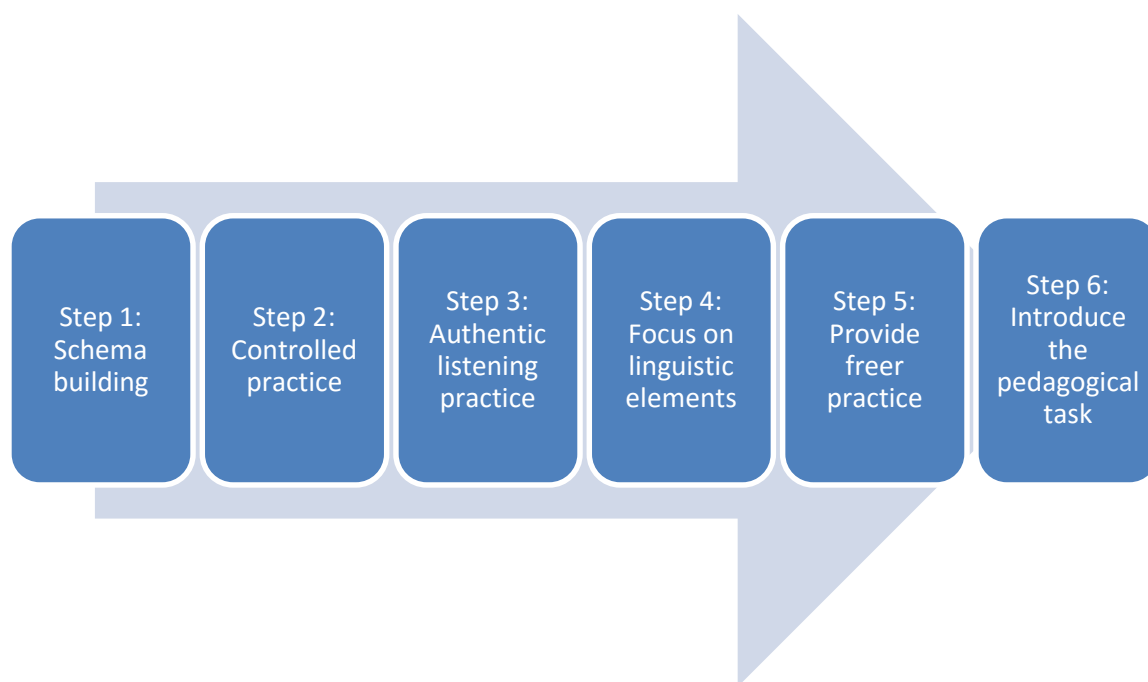


Figure 15: Nunan’s (2004) six-step pre-task phase (p.31-33)

The researcher extracted two main procedures for the pre-task phase.

Firstly, it is important to build up an active learning atmosphere. To make the teaching go smoothly, it is necessary to settle down the students mentally and emotionally at the beginning of the lesson. Some settle-down activities were used frequently in the teacher-researcher’s class. At the beginning of the lesson, they did a set Chinese class greeting such as every class in China would do. The teacher said “Tóng xué men hǎo (Hello students)” and bowed to the students and all the students bowed to the teacher in return and said “Lǎoshī hǎo (Hello teacher)”. The researcher believes that the formal greetings were likely to give the students a sense of seriousness and remind them to settle down for studying. Then, the teacher briefly introduced the main activities needed to be covered in this lesson. The students were required to note these activities down in their notebook. This helped them form a clear structure of this lesson and keep them busy in reading and writing so that they got into a learning situation quickly.

Furthermore, a quick review, such as a short quiz about the prior knowledge or just briefly going through the vocabulary of the last lesson, might contribute to the production of the learning atmosphere. It was likely to be more engaging when some simple games were introduced in the pre-task phase. For example, “Bingo” is a simple and interesting game for reviewing vocabulary. The students filled out nine boxes on the worksheet with previously taught words then listened carefully to the teacher’s instructions and lined up the words that the teacher mentioned. If it formed a straight line, the students could put up their hands and say “Bingo”. The employment of some simple preparation activities could quickly draw the attention of the students to the class and it contributed to brushing up the learners’ prior knowledge.

Write the 8 colors above in Pinyin in 8 boxes randomly. Then the teacher will say three colors, if the three colors form a line in your table, put your hand up high.

Bingo

heise	lan se	lu se
bai se	yan se	cheng se
hong se	zi se	huang se

Figure 16: Bingo of colour words

Secondly, it is important to learn the target vocabulary and get familiar with the melody before the song phase. Similarly, Richards (1969) points out that it is important to ensure that the target words have been already taught before singing songs. Without this preparation work, the learners are likely to fail in singing the song and feel frustrated because of their incompetence. The target vocabulary could be activated through a wide range of strategies. When reviewing the researcher’s reflection journal, he noted that at the beginning, he tended to use simple and teacher-centred teaching methods to teach novel words, such as clarifying and

pronouncing the words and asking the students to read after him. It was partly influenced by the researcher's own learning experience in China, and he, as a naive teacher, focused more on the language but neglected the importance of the methods of delivering it. In the development of his teaching practice, by imitating his supervising teacher and reflecting on his own teaching, the researcher gradually enriched his teaching approaches and made word learning more enjoyable for students. Examples of three types of activities the researcher frequently used are demonstrated as follows.

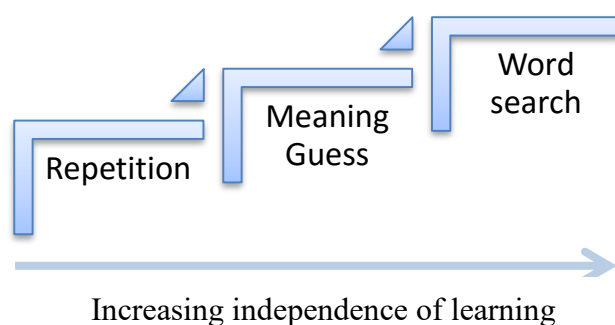


Figure 17: The activities from teacher-centred to student-centred/ the increase of learning independence

Repetition

At the initial stage of the researcher's teaching, repetition was the method used most frequently to introduce the new words. The teacher-researcher explained every word one by one and the students just listened and read after him. This method is straightforward and efficient if the novel vocabulary is only a small amount and very simple, such as numbers. However, it would be somewhat tedious after repeating it two or three times, and the researcher found that students lost interest easily when they were receiving new knowledge passively.

Meaning Guess

In order to make the expansion of vocabulary more appealing, the researcher

employed an activity called “Meaning Guess”, which was similar to the game “Pictionary”. The teacher provided some implications, including pictures, gestures or words, and the students guessed the meaning of the words according to the clues. For instance, the researcher used this activity to teach the vocabulary of the song “^{liǎng zhī} 两只 ^{lǎo hǔ} 老虎 (Two Tigers)”. The class situation was demonstrated as follows:

The students figured out the words “lǎo hǔ (tiger)”, “ěr duo (ear)” and “wěi ba (tail)” with ease. However, when it came to the abstract words like “Méi yǒu (do not have)” and “Qí guài (strange)”, the students got confused for a while. I kept repeating the word “Méi yǒu” in Chinese and made the gesture, digging into my pocket and pulling back empty. Students came up with a range of strange and funny answers but they were having fun in guessing. They kept trying and some students put up their hand high calling ‘Sir, sir’, trying to get more opportunities to guess. (Reflection Journal from Term Two)

Compared to the number songs, the vocabulary of the song Two Tiger was more complex and did not have a theme. The students were prone to follow passively and got confused by simply repeating. However, Meaning Guess was more student-centred. In this activity, the students needed to utilize their logical thinking to figure out the meanings of the words more independently and actively. Since the students dealt with the problem by themselves, they tended to gain a sense of achievement and more motivation to keep learning.



lǎo hǔ

liǎng zhī lǎo hǔ



ěr duo

yī zhī méi yǒu ěr duo



wěi ba

yī zhī méi yǒu wěi ba



méi yǒu

Phrase: méi yǒu ěr duo



qí guài

Phrase:zhēn qí guài

Figure 18: The power point of the activity “Meaning Guess”

Furthermore, songs can be used as listening material at the pre-task phase to offer clues, and combined with the activity Meaning Guess. The adapted activity was carried out in learning colour words. The students needed to listen to the Colour Song and match up the colours with their corresponding Chinese Pinyin names. The lesson idea was presented as below:

(Hand out colour worksheets.) Class, I'll play a colour song video. Please watch and listen to the video carefully. You can see the colours on the board and hear the Chinese name of these colours. Then please use lines to match the colours with their corresponding Pinyin names. (Walk around to check whether they need to play it one more time.)OK let's check the answer together. (Lesson plan from Term Two)

In the first part of the music video, the colours were presented with corresponding pronunciation of Pinyin names. Thus, students were required to watch the colour shown on the board and match the sound with Pinyin and they had to employ their eyes, ears and hands, which helped them concentrate on the work. Meanwhile, the students also comprehended the words by themselves actively during the process. After ensuring everyone got the matches right, the students needed to transfer those Pinyin names of colours to the word list below the worksheet, which offered English meaning and the Chinese characters. In other words, students were required to go through all the colour words again and match up the Pinyin with its English and Chinese characters. In this activity, the students employed their visual, auditory and logical thinking to solve the challenge and they reviewed the vocabulary repeatedly, which strengthened their memorization.

Listen to a colour song and match the colours below with their corresponding Pinyin names.

huáng sè hóng sè lán sè lù sè

hēi sè bái sè zǐ sè chéng sè

Word List

Pinyin	Character	English
	红色	Red
	绿色	Green
	黄色	Yellow
	蓝色	Blue
	白色	White
	黑色	Black
	橙色	Orange
	紫色	Purple
yán sè	颜色	Colour

Figure 19: Colour song used as listening material

Likewise, the Position song was used as listening material as well. The lesson idea was demonstrated as follows:

Today we're going to learn seven position words, above, under, left, middle, right, before and behind. At the bottom of the sheet, there is a word bank, providing pinyin for these 7 position words, but these Pinyin are in random order. Let's listen to a position words song, get some clues from the song and write corresponding Pinyin for each position word. (Lesson Plan from Term Two)

1. Listen to a position word song and choose corresponding Pinyin for the 7 position words from word bank.

Above
上
shàng ✓

Before/ In front
前
qián ✓

Behind/ In back
后
hòu ✓

Left
左
zuǒ ✓

Middle
中
zhōng ✓

Right
右
yòu ✓

Under/below
下
xià ✓

Word bank

shàng zhōng zuǒ
qián yòu hòu
xià

2. Use position words (Pinyin) to describe the position of following objects according to your own location?

1. Where are the fans? shàng ✓
2. Where is the whiteboard? ~~zhōng~~ qián ✓
3. Where is the floor? xià ✓
4. Where is the corridor which is closest to you? zuǒ ✓
5. Where is the piano in the room? yòu ✓

Figure 20: Position song used as listening material

Compared to the original “Meaning Guess”, the benefit of using the adapted version was that it facilitated the students getting familiar with the music. Moreover, another implication from these two examples was that songs were wonderful listening materials not only for singing. Larsen-Freeman (2011) points out that it is important for the learners to be engaged more on the receptive skills of listening in the pre-task phase. Songs are an attractive carrier for exhibiting the target vocabulary spoken by advanced speakers. In addition, it helped the students get familiar with the lyrics and melody ahead of the song phase.

Word Hunt (Dictionary Consultation)

In the process of teaching, the teacher gradually attached increasing importance to student-centred learning. In other words, the teacher-researcher paid more attention to develop the students’ independence and autonomy. The activity Word Search was

an attempt to achieve deeper student-centred learning. The teacher-researcher offered a worklist with three columns, including Chinese character, Pinyin and English meaning respectively. One of the forms of the new vocabulary was provided in the wordlist and the students needed to consult a Chinese-English dictionary or Google Translate to find out the two missing forms and complete the wordlist. In the process of consultation, the students used their logical thinking and imagination to derive new information based on the clues provided. The researcher considered that they gained a sense of success through working out the word list and that was the reason why they engaged in the activity. Furthermore, even though the teacher played a smaller role in student-centred learning, it was important to offer the students with lower abilities some support to help and encourage them to catch up.

Dictionary Word Hunt

Get into 9 x groups of 3. You will be assigned 1 of the words below.

Person 1: Type the Pinyin words into Google translate and find the English meaning.

Write the English in the table. Teach the rest of the class how to pronounce the Pinyin word.

Person 2 & 3: Look for the characters under the Chinese side of the Google translate table.

Copy the characters into the table below and teach the class how to write them.

Characters	Pinyin	English
	Kù zi	
	Qún zi	
	Xié zǐ	
	tī xùshān	
	niúzáikù	
	máoyī	
	Jiákè	
	màozi	
	bāo	

Figure 21: Worksheet of Word Hunt (Dictionary Consultation)

In this study, the pre-task phase mainly aimed to build up the learning atmosphere and activate the novel vocabulary. As can be seen from these three examples, the

teacher-researcher also improved his teaching from traditional repetition to more complex and student-centred vocabulary teaching activities. At the end of the preparation stage, the students were ready to sing the song in the song phase.

5.3.2 Song phase

During the song phase, songs were used for a few purposes. Songs help to stimulate students' interest and attention and engage the students in learning (Millington, 2011). Singing involves a great deal of practice of the students' speaking, which helps them to achieve fluency and consolidate their memory of the new knowledge. In the song phase, several strategies were employed to use songs, such as simply singing, singing with body movements, singing competitions, and lyrics re-writing.

Plain Singing

It was useful to have the students sing the song just following the music video or the teacher several times at the beginning. Firstly, it scaffolded the task to allow the students to sing the song more fluently. With the increasing familiarity of the song, the teacher-researcher varied the pace of the song and the students sang along, which created variety and challenged the students to sing fluently. At the initial stage of teaching, the researcher's supervising teacher pointed out that the researcher, being a native Chinese speaker, tended to sing or read lyrics in a fast pace unconsciously, which caused difficulty for students in learning. Being aware of this issue, the researcher slowed down his speaking pace and broke down long lines intentionally.

Movement

Actions accompanying foreign language vocabulary learning create embodied representations of those words and enhance memory (Macedonia & Knösche, 2011; Macedonia, 2014). The teacher-researcher combined body movements with singing. Taking the Position song as an example, the students were asked to enact the seven position words by clapping their hands in corresponding positions when they were

singing, such as clapping hands over the head representing “Shang-above”, and clapping hands in the left side of the body referring to “Zuo-left”. Moreover, when singing the Yoyo Number Rap, the students were enacting the numbers one to ten by clapping hands. In addition, the students seemed to enjoy doing a boogie with the beat of the music. The teacher-researcher also encouraged the students to add some body movements, such as tapping the desk when singing the Colour Song.

Antiphonal singing

In addition, antiphonal singing was also popular among the students. It is suitable for the songs where lyrics are conversational, such as the “What is your name” song. The lyrics are composed of a series of questions and answers, including greeting each other, asking and stating names, and farewells. Hence, the teacher-researcher divided the whole class into two groups to sing antiphonally. The lyrics of the song “What is your name” are presented as follows.

Nǐ jiào shén me míng zì z Nǐ jiào shén me míng zì z
Boys: 你叫什么名字? 你叫什么名字?

What is your name? What is your name?

wǒ jiào wǒ jiào
Girls: 我叫 Lisa, 我叫 Lisa

My name is Lisa. My name is Lisa

nǐ hǎo ma nǐ hǎo ma
Boys: 你好吗? 你好吗?

How are you? How are you?

wǒ hěn hǎo wǒ hěn hǎo
Girls: 我很好. 我很好.

I am good. I am good

zài jiàn zài jiàn
Boys: 再见, 再见

Goodbye, goodbye

(Reverse)”

Lyrics of “What is your name?” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h67sl0gPfbE>)

Singing Performance

After the students learned the number rhyme “Yi Er San, San Er Yi”, they were grouped in pairs and practised singing this rhyme for about ten minutes. Then they were asked to perform this rhyme to the teacher-researcher in pairs. The teacher-researcher evaluated their performance and gave them feedback immediately. Excellent performers were rewarded for their fluency and accuracy of their pronunciation. The advantage of this student-teacher singing performance was that it allowed the teacher-researcher to have a thorough investigation of their performance so that the researcher could point out their pronunciation mistakes and offer suggestions accordingly. However, the attitudes of the students towards this task varied. The students who showed better learning ability were more confident and willing to perform in front of the teacher and they practised with more concentration. On the other hand, singing to the teacher put more pressure on the students who were average or lower and some showed an unwillingness by questioning “Sir, do we have to do it?”, “Sir, I can’t do it” or practising impatiently. Furthermore, it consumed a great deal of time for the teacher-researcher to evaluate their performance in pairs.

The student-to-teacher singing performance might have made the students stressed even though the teacher-researcher declared this was only an informal test. Therefore, the researcher adapted this student-to-teacher singing performance into a student-to-student form. Firstly, the class was divided into several big groups composed of five or six students. The researcher considered that performing in a big group was likely to reduce the students’ anxiety. Secondly, the students had around ten minutes to practise with their group members. Thirdly, when a group was performing at the front, other groups played the role as judges. They were responsible to listen carefully, note down their pronunciation mistakes and give a rank on their performance overall. Playing the role as judges involved all the other students in the performance and motivated them to acquire the correct pronunciation to be a qualified “judge”. Besides this, it reduced the workload of the teacher and he played a smaller role in this student-student singing performance. He acted as a

supervisor, providing instructions when they were practising, and summarizing comments of the “judges”. Additionally, it was important to clarify some rules at the beginning. The teacher-researcher noted that some students liked to call out the pronunciation mistakes the performing group made in the process of singing, which was disturbing and disrespectful. Thus, the researcher required the “judges” to note down their comments and keep them until the comment session.

Compared to the teacher-student singing performance, the students were more relaxed to perform in front of their peers. Playing two roles as a performer and judge motivated the students to practise and listen with full concentration, which stimulated the learning outcomes.

Lyrics re-writing

yī èr sān sì wǔliù qī
一 二 三 四 五 六 七,

One two three four five six seven

wǒ de péngyǒu zài nǎ lǐ
我 的 朋 友 在 哪 里?

Where are my friends?

zài zhè lǐ zài zhè lǐ
在 这 里, 在 这 里,

It is here, it is here

wǒ de péngyǒu zài zhè lǐ
我 的 朋 友 在 这 里!

My friend is here!

(The lyrics of “Where are my friends”)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8VVB2Y2YWI>)

By slightly altering some of the lyrics, the students adapted the original song into their own version and it turned out that the students took great pleasure in singing their own song. Taking the song “Where are my Friends” as an example, the

teacher-researcher provided five famous city names for students to replace “这里^{zhè lǐ} (here)” so that the students could describe where their friend was. Following is an excerpt from the researcher’s lesson plan on the task ‘Lyrics Re-writing’ for the song “Where are My Friends”:

Class now it’s your time to be a song writer. There are five famous cities to choose. Beijing, the capital city of China. Shanghai, the biggest business city in China...Please think about where you want your friends to be and choose two cities to fill in the gaps. For example, my version is ‘... zai Beijing, zai Xini, wo de peng you zai zhe li. (sing)’. My friends are in Beijing and Sydney. Now you have 5 minutes to write your own lyrics and practice with your partner. I’ll walk around and listen. Then I’ll invite some students to the front to perform their version. (Lesson plan from Term Two)

Where is your friend?

Word Bank

- Beijing
- Shanghai
- Xini (Sydney)
- Bali (Paris)
- Guilin

yī èr sān sì wǔ liù qī

wǒ de péng yǒu zài nǎ lǐ ?

Zài _____ , zài _____

wǒ de péng yǒu zài zhè lǐ

Figure 22: Lyrics re-writing of the song “Where are my friends”

Since the students were beginning learners with very limited vocabulary, the researcher considered that it was more practical to recreate the lyrics partly with some linguistic items provided which were meaningful to the students.

Similarly, the students adapted the song “你叫什么名字 What is Your Name” by replacing the name “Lisa” in the song with their own Chinese name the researcher gave them at the beginning of the first term. Since this song was a dialogue-like song, the researcher considered that it would be better to require the students to do antiphonal singing with their classmates to collect their names. If the singing was completed and clear, then they could leave their signature on each other’s worksheet. The top five students who collected the biggest number of the names within ten minutes won lollies as rewards.

In those two examples of lyrics re-writing, the students quickly adapted the songs and made this song more meaningful to themselves. They gained a sense of achievement.

In addition, this difficulty level was suitable for them at the initial stage.

Through singing, the students did a great deal of practice on the target linguistic items with enjoyment, and it helped them to develop fluency of speaking and solid memorization of the language. This contributed to the application of knowledge in the core task phase.

5.3.3 The Core Task Phase

Table 15: Four main tasks of the two teaching terms

Task	Song (s) involved	Language
Self-Introduction	Greeting Song, Family Member Song, Number songs, What is your name, Where are my friends	Greetings, Numbers (age, birthday, number of family members) Family members
Classmate Survey	Greeting Song, Family Member Song, Number songs, What is your name, Where are my friends	Greetings, Numbers (age, birthday, number of family members) Family members
Make Friends (Role Play)	Greeting Song, Family Member Song, Number songs, What is your name, Where are my friends	Greetings, Numbers (age, birthday, number of family members) Family members
Shopping (Role Play)	Greeting Song, Number songs, Clothing song, Colour Song	Greetings, Numbers (price, discount, amount of the products), Clothing items, Colours

The students learned the target language in the pre-task phase and sang the songs to practise those linguistic items in the song phase. The core task phase encouraged the students to utilize the vocabulary or sentence structures they had acquired from the songs in real-world contexts through a series of tasks.

Task-based teaching is a more student-centred methodology (Ellis, 2003). In this phase, the students performed the tasks and the teacher's role was limited to an observer or counsellor. The teacher basically monitored the class during this period, naming the students, timing them, and giving help if necessary.

In the first term, the goal of learning was to enable the students to talk about themselves and their family in Chinese. Therefore, the researcher designed a series of tasks, including Self-introduction, Survey and Role Play respectively for the students to employ the vocabulary and sentence structures learned from songs in a more concrete context. These three tasks involved the vocabulary of the "Greeting Song"

(greeting at the beginning and farewell at the end), number songs (age, birthday, number of family members), “What is Your Name” (names of himself/herself and family members), “Family Member” (family members), “Where are my friends” (where they live).

Self-Introduction

To deal with this task, first the students were given an example framework of self-introduction and they needed to mobilize their prior knowledge to figure out the meaning of each sentence and fill in their own information in the gaps. In this example, the basic topics and sentence structures were covered so that students could easily adapt it to their own styles later by selecting, adding some items or changing some sentences. Second, this worksheet can be used as a reference which aided students to make up their own script. At last, oral self-introductions were presented independently by students at the end of the lesson.

The self-introduction activity displays all the features of a “task”: (1) It takes the form of a workplan which asked students to make up their self-introduction (2) The focus is primarily on meaning---students needed to describe themselves. (3) The participants are allowed to choose the linguistic resources, the framework provided as a guide and reference given the situation that it was the first time that the students connected all the knowledge they have learned in this term. (4) This activity corresponds to the common scenario meeting new classmates and friends and giving basic information of themselves. (5) The final performance entails oral language use. (6) Personal scripts vary involving the process of selecting, classifying and ordering. (7) The students had to present an independent performance.

Please complete your self-introduction and write the English meaning underneath each sentence.

Ni men hao.

(Myself)

Wo jiao _____. Wo _____ sui.

Wo de sheng ri shi _____ nian _____ yue _____ ri.

Wo shi _____ ren.

(Family)

Wo jia you _____ kou ren,

_____, _____, _____, _____, _____ he wo.

Wo zhu zai _____.

(Like)

Wo xi huan _____ he _____. (colour)

Wo xi huan _____ he _____. (food)

Wo xi huan _____ he _____. (activity)

Xie Xie.

Figure 23: The framework of self-introduction

Classmate Survey

In the Self-Introduction Task, the students firstly needed to comprehend the linguistic material and slightly edit the material to produce a monologue. That is to say, students were able to make a brief introduction of themselves and their family. The task “Classmate Survey” was an extended task based on the self-introduction. To complete this task, the students firstly needed to figure out the questions provided in Pinyin, and then interview three classmates to acquire corresponding information to fill in the sheet.

The difficulty level of this task was increased compared to the self-introduction. The

students were asked to transform the monologue into a conversation between two people. They needed to comprehend the information they received from reading and listening, and make responses appropriately. In accordance with the listening and responding outcome 4.UL.1¹ in the Chinese K-10 Syllabus, students demonstrated understanding of the main ideas with supporting detail in written texts (the survey questions in the worksheet) and responded appropriately. For the outcome of speaking 4.UL.3², a student established and maintained communication in familiar situations. All the questions were related to their lives. The Classmate Survey simulated a real-life scene in which two peers made friends and communicated to know more about each other.

The Classmate Survey activity satisfies the defining features of a task. (1) It provides a workplan. (2) The primary focus is on meaning. (3) The participants have to make their own selection of what words to respond to questions. (4) It is related to natural language use. (5) It involves reading, listening and speaking. (6) Students had to figure out the questions and react with select appropriate information. (7) There are non-linguistic outcomes, such as interviewing three classmates and completing the form.

¹ Listening and Responding 4.UL.1 demonstrates understanding of the main ideas and supporting detail in spoken texts and responds appropriately.

² Speaking 4.UL.3 establishes and maintains communication in familiar situations

Survey

Interview three of your classmates who sit next to you. Ask them the following questions in Chinese and record their answers in Pinyin.

Questions	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3
Ni jiao shen me ming zi?			
Ni hao ma?			
Ni mang ma?			
Ni duo da?			
Ni shi na guo ren?			
Ni jia you ji kou ren?			
Ni you gege ma?			
Ni you jiejie ma?			
Ni you di di ma?			
Ni you mei mei ma?			
Ni zhu zai nar?			
Ni xi huan shen me yan se?			
Ni xi huan chi shen me?			
Ni xi huan zuo shen me?			

Figure 24: The worksheet of the Classmate Survey

Make Friends Role Play

The task “Make Friends Role Play” was more challenging than the Classmate Survey. In the Self-Introduction Task, an example framework was provided, and in the Classmate Survey, only questions in Pinyin were offered. However, in the third task, the students were asked to create their own scenarios and act them out, which required full comprehension of the linguistic material they used before and some creativity to re-organize them. It is in accordance with the writing outcome 4.UL.4³ that the students needed to plan, draft and edit the script, using a series of linguistic structures to express their ideas.

³ Writing 4.UL.4 applies a range of linguistic structures to express own ideas in writing. Students learn to plan, draft and edit when constructing own text (p.40).

This task meets Ellis' criterion the following ways: (1) It constitutes a workplan. (2) The focus is on meaning. (3) The students are allowed to choose the linguistic resources needed to make up their own script of this role play. (4) The conversation has a practical meaning. (5) This activity entails listening and speaking skills. (6) It involves the cognitive process, such as selecting, ordering and evaluating information in order to generate their own script. (7) The non-linguistic outcome is the created conversation, the role play.

During the time of script writing, students discussed it with their partners with excitement and they actively sought help from the teacher for some new words they wanted to use in their script. One excerpt of a student performance is shown below:

Jamie and Brandon were invited to the front to act out their script. Not like other students saying "Ni hao (Hello)" and shaking hands according to the teachers' performance, they greeted and had a fist bump. Jamie asked "Ni duo da? (How old are you?)" And Brandon said "Wo Shi er (I'm 12)". Jamie could not help reminding his partner "You need to add Sui (years old) at the end". However, Brandon kept forgetting what to say and Jamie tried so hard to remind Brandon his lines by whispering and enactment. At last, Jamie gave his partner a hopeless look and gave up. The class burst out laughing for their funny interaction. (The reflection journal from Term one)

The process of creating scripts began with brainstorming. It was natural that students came up with some questions which they worked out by discussing in the groups and seeking support from the teacher. The students were very focused on preparing the role-play. From the case of Jake and Brandon, they were making a connection between the language and their daily life. These teenagers liked to greet each other using fist bumps in their daily life and it was wonderful to combine the Chinese language with their own style. Additionally, Jamie reminded Brandon about

vocabulary and made the grammar correct in the performance, which not only helped Brandon to acquire these words but also consolidated Jamie's comprehension of the linguistic items. The students also observed their performance with concentration.

Jake: Ni hao. Wo jiao Emma.
Ni jiao shen me ming zi?
Emma: Ni hao. Wo jiao Emma.
Ni duo da?
Jake: Wo shi san sui. Ni ne?
Amy: Wo shi er sui.
Jake: Zai jian.
Emma: Zai jian.

(David happened to see Amy on the way to work)

David: Ni hao ma, Amy?
Amy: Wo hen hao. Ni ne?
David: Ma ma hu hu.

(David gave Amy a lift.)

Amy: Xie xie ni, David.
David: Bu ke qi. Zai jian.
Amy: Ming tian jian.

Figure 25: Two samples of the students' role play scripts

Shopping Role Play

In the second term, the goal was to enable the students to ask the price of an item and bargain in Chinese. Similarly, the researcher utilized a Shopping Role Play for students to apply the vocabulary and sentence structures they had learned from the songs in a more concrete context. The songs involved included, the Greeting Song (greetings), number songs (price, discount, amount of products), Clothing Song

(products), and the Colour Song (describing the products). The explanation of how this Shopping Role Play satisfy the criterion of a task is similar to that for Make Friends Role Play (p.133). An excerpt from a student performance is presented below:

Katherine and Holly played the roles of shopkeeper and a customer respectively. Katherine stood behind the shopping stall and pretended tidying the clothes displayed. Holly held a fake Ten Chinese dollar bill note walking around the stall. They greeted smoothly. Holly picked a skirt (It was actually only a picture) and asked “Zhe tiao qun zi duo shao qian? (How much is this skirt?)”. Kathrine replied “Shi kuai qian (Ten Chinese dollars)”. According to the script, Holly was supposed to bargain with the “shopkeeper” to get a lower price. However, she looked too embarrassed to speak out the sentence “Ke yi pian yi dian ma? (Can you give me a cheaper price?)” At last, she just handed the bill note to Katherine and ran away back to her seat. The whole class could not help bursting into laughter. After Katherine and Holly, lots of students volunteered to do the role play. (The Reflection Journal from Term Two)

As can be seen from this excerpt, the students applied their minds to carry out the role-play. The details such as tidying the products and walking around the shop simulated a life-like shopping scene. It was more natural for them to apply the target language in such a vivid context. In addition, the Chinese bargain culture was a culture shock for them. Most of them claimed that they had never bargained and they were curious but embarrassed to haggle with shopkeepers. Thus, role play allowed the students to experience the culture of bargaining in the classroom. Moreover, plenty of the students volunteered to perform enthusiastically and they had fun talking in Mandarin.

To sum up, these tasks were advantageous to create life-like contexts for making friends and shopping. Three tasks were developed from a prior one and the difficulty gradually increased, which allowed the students to achieve higher proficiency.

5.3.4 Post-task

In the core task phase, the students created some linguistic products, such as a presentation, survey records and a role-play. The teacher and the students reviewed the students' work and came up with some constructive feedback. To counter the weakness or problems reflected in the tasks, a range of follow-up activities were provided.

In this phase, the teacher-researcher evaluated and reported on the students' performance in the task. For instance, in David and Amy's "Make Friends Role-play", even though they did not speak very fluently and the dialogue was short, their background story that David gave Amy a ride was very creative and distinct from other students' stories. Through the Shopping Role-play task, the researcher noted that students mastered numbers very well but they generally had problems on pronouncing "Qi Kuai (seven Chinese dollars)". "Q" and "ai" both exist in English phonemic notation and Chinese Pinyin but were pronounced differently, the students tending to pronounce them in the English way, which led to accents. The learners' mother tongue has an influence on their second language learning (Richards, 1969; Igbokwe & Ugwu, 2011; Vera and Luna, 2013). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the linguistic features such as the prosodic or supra-segmental patterns transferred from their mother language are likely to create foreign accents (Igbokwe & Ugwu, 2011).

Furthermore, the teacher-researcher provided follow-up activities to fix up the problems or consolidate some knowledge. The teacher-researcher noticed that students frequently mixed up black (Hei se) and white (Bai se). The researcher's

supervising teacher suggested the researcher use a simple way like telling a small joke about these two words to strengthen their memorization. The colour joke is demonstrated below.

Class, do you know that I am in different colours at the beginning and at the end the class? At the beginning of the lesson, I'm black, because you say "Hey sir (Hei se)" to me. But after the class, I'm white because you say "Bye sir (Bai se)" to me. (Lesson Plan from Term Two)

Students were surprised by the similarities between the two colour words and the greetings they used every day. This short interesting joke was very effective to help them remember these two words and they rarely made mistakes on the two words afterwards.

In the Shopping Role Play, the students showed some weakness at remembering the clothing items. Thus, the researcher designed a Singing Challenge to highlight those Clothing words. The clothing words were wiped out from the lyrics but pictures of these items were provided next to each line. The challengers needed to complete singing with the help of the pictures.

Songs were still very useful for adapting into follow-up activities to highlight some language points and facilitated the students doing more practice to reinforce their memories.

<p>Singing challenge</p> <p><u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>chuān</u></p> <p>_____ , _____</p>		<p><u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>chuān</u></p> <p>_____ , _____</p>	
<p><u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>chuān</u></p> <p>_____ , _____</p>		<p><u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>chuān</u></p> <p>_____ , _____</p>	
<p><u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>dài</u></p> <p>_____ , _____</p>		<p><u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>bǎo</u> bèi <u>chuān</u></p> <p>_____ , _____</p>	

Figure 26: Clothing Song singing challenge as follow-up activity

To stress some key vocabulary or language points, the researcher designed a board game called “Escape”. The rule of the game is demonstrated as follows:

Escape

You were swallowed by a snake and ready to escape.

Throw a dice and move forwards.

Say the words required or do the instruction.

If you cannot say the word or do the instruction, you need to go
back to the previous position.

Start from the end of the tail “RUN”. The first one who runs out of
the snake’s mouth wins.

Below is an excerpt from the researcher’s reflection journal about the “Escape” game.

The students were in groups and they had about five minutes to review their Chinese note book before starting the game. Most of the

students were ruffling their notebooks with concentration. I asked Jayden “Come on, Jayden you only have five minutes to consult your notebook.” However, Jayden told me with confidence “Sir, it’s all in my brain already”. What was funny was that Jayden forgot how to say “Behind” in Chinese and sneaked a look consulting his notebook. At last, some winners were very happy and even challenged me to have a round with them. (The Reflection Journal from Term Two)

The researcher considered that this game was advantageous for involving plenty of key words from different songs and helped the students to retrieve the knowledge in a fun way. Another remarkable merit was that the game was easy to re-edit by filling in new requirements in the plain snake picture. Thus, the teacher-researcher designed a series of “Escape” games for different ability levels and topics.

Escape

You were swallowed by a snake and are ready to escape.
 Two students make a pair. Throw the dice and move forwards.
 Ask the questions, which your partner must answer in Chinese. Otherwise, you must do what the instruction says.
 If you cannot say the words or do the instruction, you need to go back to the previous position.
 Start from the end of the tail at "RUN". The first player to run out of the snake's mouth wins.

The snake-shaped board game grid contains the following instructions and questions from tail to head:

- Say "Yin le"
- Sorry
- Sing a Song
- Good morning
- Move back 3 steps
- Thank you
- My name is...
- Say "Hello" in respectful way
- Sing a song in Mandarin
- Younger sister
- Good evening
- How old are you?
- Move one step forward
- Dance or go back?
- I am great.
- What is your name?
- I am 13 years old.
- Two steps backwards
- I/me
- Sing one number song
- Congratulations
- It doesn't matter.
- Happy New Year
- Older brother
- RUN

Escape

You were swallowed by a snake and are ready to escape.
Two students make a pair. Throw the dice and move forwards.
Ask the questions, which your partner must answer in Chinese. Otherwise, you must do what the instruction says.
If you cannot say the words or do the instruction, you need to go back to the previous position.
Start from the end of the tail at "RUN". The first player to run out of the snake's mouth wins.

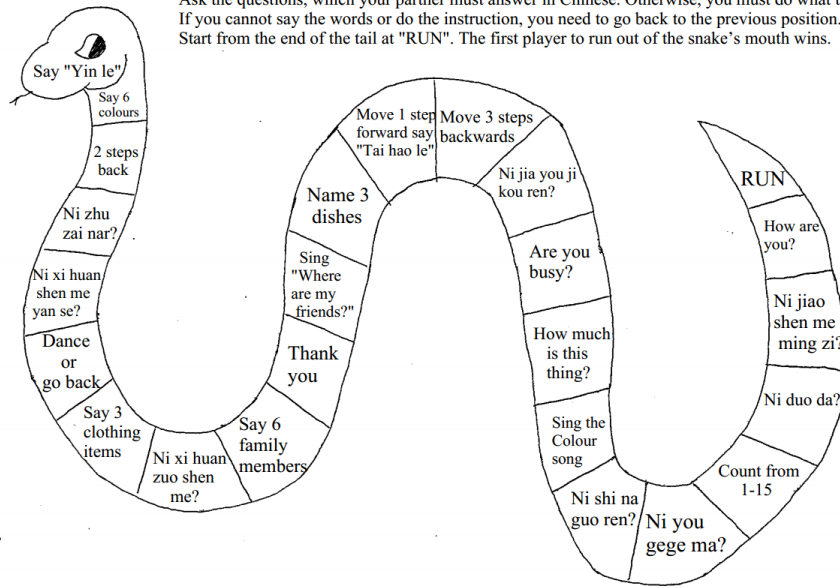


Figure 27: Two sets of “Escape” games

5.4 Discussion

Task-based learning is advantageous to the students because it is more student-centred, allows for more meaningful communication, and often provides for practical extra-linguistic skill building (Ellis, 2004). In this study, all the tasks (e.g., Self-introduction, Shopping Role-play) were designed to relate to the students' daily lives and they were meaningful to the students. Thus, students were more likely to be engaged, which might further motivate them in their language learning.

The researcher believes the employment of the tasks effectively counterbalanced the two limitations inherent in using songs in a language classroom; namely, the limitation to maintaining diversity, and the absence of instructions for applying knowledge. The tasks were useful for enriching the diversity of the language learning and retaining students' attention. Furthermore, the most significant contribution was that tasks helped to transfer the vocabulary and sentence structures which the

students learned from the songs into applications. Students explored language use in a more life-like context through the tasks.

In the process of completing the tasks, the students also were developing their independence and autonomy in learning. The sequence of the tasks the researcher designed was a gradual process. It allowed for fewer instructions from the teacher but also offered the students more flexibility and creativity to complete them by themselves. Meanwhile, the difficulty of these tasks was increasing step by step, which enabled the students to further their achievements.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This thesis explored the application of a Task-based language teaching approach using songs in Mandarin teaching. This research is an action research within the context of the ROSETE program. Data was collected from the teacher-researcher's actual classroom teaching, including his lesson plans, reflection journals which recorded the performance of students in Chinese class, and the classroom teacher's immediate feedback through quick interviews after each lesson and the students' opinions through an online survey. By analysing the data and reviewing the research process, the conclusions and discussions of the key findings concerning the research questions, as well as the limitations and implications of this study, are presented in this chapter.

6.1 Key findings

This research initially was going to explore the teaching of songs in the Chinese language classroom in an Australian high school to enhance the learnability of the Chinese language. As teaching practice developed, the researcher gradually realized that in order to maintain students' interest, reinforce their memory and encourage them to apply the language in communication, he also needed to utilize a wide range of activities and tasks that took a large portion of his class time as well. Thus this research became a study of the use of songs integrated in a Task-based learning approach to make Chinese learnable. The main findings, then, include learning to meet practical needs; catering to students' pleasure; designing resources according to actual circumstances; using songs to link to tasks and utilise language. These findings are discussed in the following sections and their connection with the research questions is clarified.

Based on the data analysis, and engaging with the teacher-researcher's prior

knowledge and the previous academic literature, key findings were crystallised focusing on the three contributory research questions in this study:

- 1) What kinds of songs are effective curriculum resources for teaching Chinese for Year 7 students in a NSW high school?
- 2) How can songs be integrated in Task-based learning to improve students' Chinese language learning?
- 3) What learning outcomes can be achieved through integrating songs in a Task-based language learning approach?

xué yǐ shíyòng

6.1.1 学以致用 : Learning to meet practical needs

In accordance with the suggestion from Baumann and Coleman (2005), real-life language resources increase the opportunities to use the language. In this study, the researcher utilized two methods to connect the language learning with the real world. Apart from creating authentic tasks at the late stage, the decisions regarding learning themes and materials at the very beginning stage also took the real-life connection into account. Thus, the themes of L2 learning should be closely related to the learners' daily life so that the learners have adequate materials to talk and use these materials readily. In this study, the researcher chose “My family and I” and “Shopping” as the themes for the two terms respectively. The first theme is based on the real-life scenario of making friends, as this is considered one of the most likely events that students would encounter using a second language. In the first teaching term, students learned how to greet in a normal and respectful way, introduce themselves concerning their name, age, birthday, family, pets, and hobbies. This would be advantageous for them when making new friends or business partners in the future who might speak Mandarin. At the “Shopping” session, they learned how to make inquiries, state a price, bargain, and describe products using some simple adjectives. They can put their learning into practice when shopping in Chinese shops in Chinatown or travelling in Mandarin speaking countries.

The connection with students' lives not only facilitates the application of the language but also helps students to take advantage of their prior knowledge gathered from their life experience in Chinese learning. According to Cheung (1998), there are two types of prior knowledge: subject knowledge and encountered knowledge. Subject knowledge is the previous knowledge the subjects learnt in school, while encountered knowledge refers to the previous knowledge that students gained through their interactions with the world. As Cheung (2001) further suggested, if new knowledges are introduced by drawing upon students' subject knowledge and encountered knowledge, the students will find it easier to make sense of their learning, and they will be more willing to learn. However, in this study, the fact was that none of the Year 7 student participants had experience learning Chinese in primary schools before. In other words, the subject knowledge was absent. Therefore, it was necessary to select learning topics and materials associated with the students' daily lives, which employed their encountered knowledge. Both of the topics were transferred from their prior knowledge of making friends and shopping in their native language.

The song selection was based on and served the two themes "My family and I" and "Shopping". The students grasped target vocabulary or sentence structures from those songs, such as how to ask and state their name in "What is your name song", describing their age, prices or amounts in three number songs, as well as different clothing items in the Clothing Song. The knowledge learned from the songs could be transferred easily into daily conversations.

In a nutshell, this finding partly answers the first research question about what kinds of songs are effective curriculum resources for Chinese learning for Year 7 students in a NSW high school. The final goal of learning Mandarin is to employ the language in communications in real life, so the curriculum resources including songs were designed in the light of their daily life situations and need to facilitate the usage. Thus, the students could build new knowledge on their prior knowledge they had

acquired from their interaction with the world, and easily employ the linguistic items learned from the classroom in their communication.

^{tóu qí suǒ hào} 6.1.2 投其所好: Catering to students' pleasure

This Chinese idiom means catering to another's pleasure to attract them. A qualified teacher in Australia should have the ability to “select and/or create and use a range of resources to engage students in their learning (AITSL, 2014)”. Language learning can be repetitive, especially in a traditional language classroom, because students are more likely to receive new knowledge passively and repeat certain linguistic items mechanically for memorizing. This passive state can often lead students to lose interest and lack motivation to learn continuously. Ara (2009) points out that boring learning experiences tend to cause low efficiency learning. However, most people like songs which can play a role as a vehicle to present the target linguistic items in a more attractive and enjoyable way than plain repetition. Students tend to regard singing as an entertainment rather than study, and practise all the target vocabulary and sentence structures unconsciously through singing. In the process of singing, students were learning the language implicitly. Krashen and Terrel (1983, p.55) argued that “language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning”. In addition, singing helps students to learn in a more relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere, which lowers the affective filter and maximizes the information inputs.

Another purpose for employing songs in the Chinese classes was to engage students in Mandarin learning. By observations, experiments and reflections, the researcher discovered some features of those successful songs which interested the students and enhanced their engagement. These features included simplicity of the song, repetition, body movement, rhythm, rhyming, visual effect, culture and the use of an instrument. Taking body movement as example, when teaching the Position song, most of students were fond of this song and danced with the music actively. One student who

used to be indifferent to Mandarin learning even gave the researcher special thanks for bringing this song to this class. Moreover, a wide range of singing and musical activities such as plain singing, antiphonal singing, singing competitions, and singing with body movements, helped to retain students' interest. These activities enriched the diverse approaches to practise and review target linguistic items, which prolonged students' attention span and increased their interest in learning.

In summary, this finding addresses the first research question about what kinds of songs are effective curriculum resources for this group of Australian Year 7 students. Songs and musical activities appeal to the students which helps to engage them in Mandarin learning. In this study, eight characteristics of songs were identified which interested the students, including simplicity, rhyme, and repetition, amongst others. Moreover, various singing and musical activities sustained their interest by offering richer forms of language practice. The pleasure produced by songs and musical activities was clearly beneficial to fostering language learning.

liàng tǐ cái yī

6.1.3 量体裁衣: Design resources according to actual circumstance

liàng tǐ cái yī

量体裁衣 literally means customizing the clothes according to the customer's figure. In other words, the teaching resources should be tailored according to students' characteristics and needs. As required in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (2014), a qualified teacher needs to "design teaching resources to meet the specific learning needs of students" (p.5).

In this study, the researcher selected and designed teaching resources according to his students' needs and features. In the light of their learning level, the learning content selected was basic and suitable for beginners and drew on their knowledge gained from daily life. Furthermore, the interest of the learners needed to be satisfied to some extent. Hence, the researcher kept trying to figure out his students' tastes in

songs and tasks and employed them to engage his students in Mandarin learning. These two points are mentioned in the last two sections.

Finally, yet importantly, the emotional needs of the learners should be taken into account in the design of teaching materials and activities. Sequential teaching content can help students build up confidence and sustain their learning. For example, in a vocabulary reading competition in the pre-task phase, the vocabulary was arranged from easy to difficult in case some students might feel it was difficult and give up at the beginning. It turned out that when students found out they could manage it, they continued to participate actively and confidently. The choices of song followed the same rule. The difficulty of songs was increasing gradually to a higher level in Term Two compared to Term One. Besides this, the students were graduated from learning single words to a line, so that they would become familiar with the melody before singing.

In addition, teamwork motivated students to perform better. The whole class was divided into four groups in the vocabulary competition. Each group had one chance in a round to read the words on the word list until they could not pronounce a word or pronounced it incorrectly. Students concentrated and helped each other to pronounce it correctly and everyone in the group tried to perform well individually. They did this because they felt that it was necessary to fight for the honour of the team. Similarly, singing performances among groups also produced team spirit to motivate students to perform better.

Moreover, the teacher's encouragements and rewards gave them a sense of fulfilment and success. Students did feel frustrated when they failed to pronounce some words correctly. Encouragements from teachers are significant to motivate them to continue.

Furthermore, when customizing the contents, flexibility is vital to take into

consideration. In other words, the teaching content should be adapted according to the students' performance in actual circumstances. Since learning and teaching involves many variable factors, it is sometimes necessary to deviate from the original lesson plan. It is necessary to make adjustments to fit in changes and gain a better outcome. In the lesson for colour words, students got mixed up with “Bai se (white)” and “Hei se (black)”. Therefore, the researcher reflected on this issue and decided to use a joke as a mnemonic device to help them memorize the difference. This joke was not included in the original plan. It was made for differentiating the two words and reinforcing their memory after evaluating their performance. Moreover, from his teaching, the researcher was gradually getting to know his students better. He was gaining the insight that some previous teaching plans might have been too easy or too hard or just not suitable for the students. For example, after teaching the Clothing song and the Colour song, the researcher realized that the difficulty of the song originally chosen was beyond the students' abilities, so he replaced it with a new Position song which was more appropriate for the students. The researcher's wise adjustments made the learning resources suit the students better.

In summary, teaching resources that include songs should be customized by integrating students' learning levels, interests, and emotional needs. The customization also needs some flexibility to fit into different situations to gain a better outcome. This answers Research Question Two; what kinds of songs are effective for teaching the Chinese curriculum to Year 7 students in a NSW high school?

gè sī qí zhí **6.1.4 各司其职: Each performs its own functions**

Many educators have employed songs in their language teaching (Millington, 2011; Abbott, 2002; Lems, 2005; Paquette & Rieg, 2008) and have introduced a wide range of musical activities, such as re-writing song lyrics, clapping syllables, doing body

movements, and musical role-play to achieve learning outcomes. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Millington (2011) argued for developing songs into tasks to emphasise the application of the language. Similarly, along with the teaching practice developed, the researcher attached increasing importance to tasks, since tasks helped to counteract two of the main limitations of using songs in language classrooms. Namely, they are limited in applying the language in life-like contexts, and limited in retaining the interest of students (Millington, 2011). In this study, the researcher integrated songs into a Task-based language teaching approach to counterbalance these limitations and achieve better learning outcomes. He adjusted Nunan's (2006) three-phase TBLT model to suit his Mandarin teaching, and the subsequent altered model consisted of four phases, including a Pre-task phase, Song phase, Core task phase and Post-task phase.

The pre-task phase involved a series of activities to lead students into the learning situation, introduce the key words and gain familiarity with the songs. In the Song phase, the students experienced singing songs in a diverse range of ways, including plain singing (following the video or teacher), combining with body movements, and antiphonal singing. Moreover, some musical activities such as student-to-teacher and student-to-student (students played the role as judges) singing performances, singing competitions (Who can rap faster?), and lyrics re-writing, were also introduced into the Song phase. The Song phase mainly implemented three functions. Firstly, the singing and musical activities, which were forms of entertainment, tended to retain students' interest and engaged them in learning. Secondly, with the promotion of music to memorize text (Young, 1992; Šišková, 2009; Purnell-Webb & Speelman, 2008; Ludke, Ferreira & Overy, 2014; Lee & Lin, 2015) and frequent repetition (Murphey, 1992; Fields, 2005; Millington, 2011; Li & Brand, 2009), the students gained solid memory of the key words and sentence structures. Thirdly, constant singing helped the students to achieve fluency in speaking. This fluency was noted in reflection journals about the students' performance in class, in the results of the survey in the second term and their Yearly exam.

After practice of the target language through singing and musical activities, the students needed to transmit the language into use in the Core task phase. As Nunan (2006) suggested, tasks should grow out of, and build upon, the ones that have gone before. The design of the three tasks, “Self-reflection”, “Classmate Survey” and “Make Friends Role-Play”, concerning the theme “My family and I”, followed this principle. In addition, the difficulty was increasing task by task, but meanwhile the students were given more and more independence and autonomy in the process of dealing with the tasks. At last, most of students were able to design a dialogue regarding exchanging their personal information with friends. The tasks in the classroom provided authentic contexts and the students transferred the knowledge into use.

In the Post-task phase, the students’ performance in tasks was evaluated and feedback from the teacher was offered immediately. Furthermore, follow-up activities to fix problems or weaknesses reflected in their performance were carried out in the form of games and singing.

In this TBLT model, songs mainly played the role of engaging the students and promoting their memory and fluency of the language. As for the tasks, they primarily helped students put the language learned from songs into use. They performed their own functions and were mutually complementary to enhance effectiveness.

The responds from participants of the online survey mostly are positive. Over 70 percent of students (40 percent of them strongly agree) held the view that they wanted more music in future Chinese classes and the games and tasks did help their Chinese learning. In addition, the aid in engagement in class from those songs are confirmed by students. Nearly all the participants (90 percent) in the survey agreed the effectiveness of songs enhancing the memorization of new vocabulary.

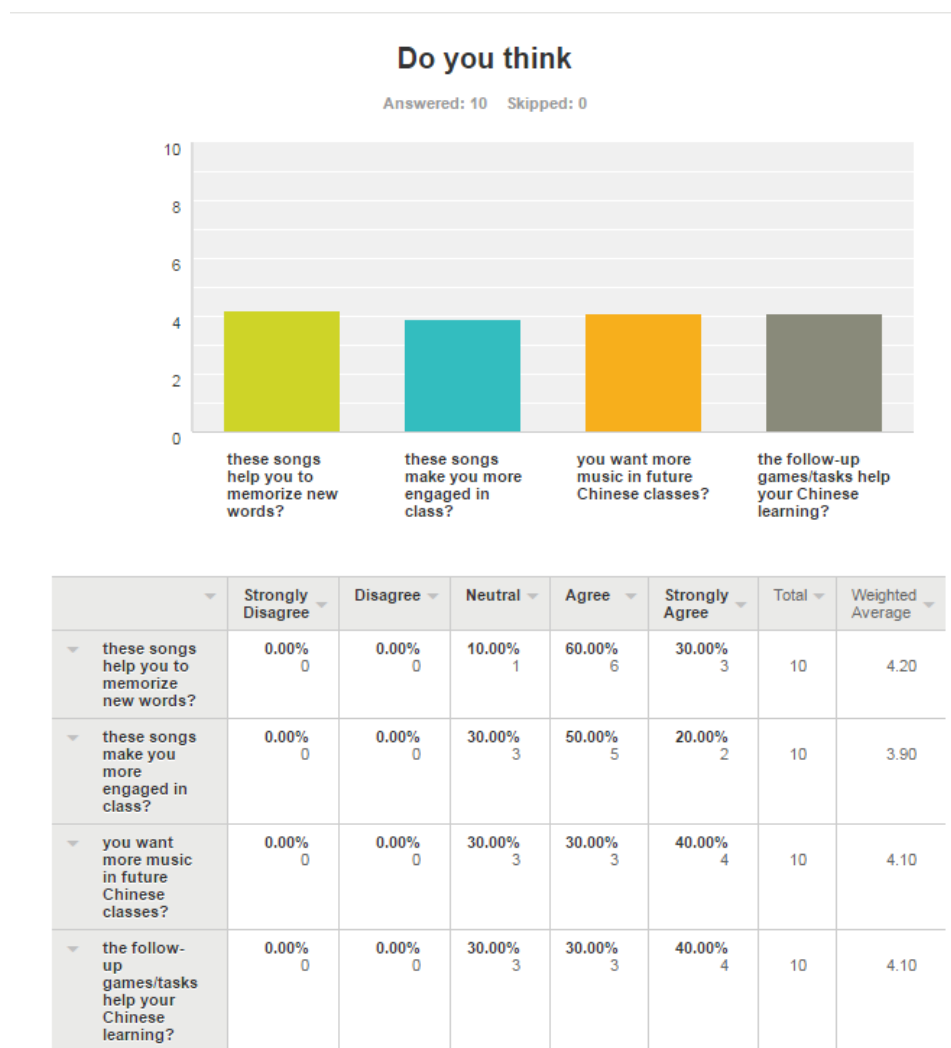


Figure 28 Students' evaluation on songs and activities

In a nutshell, songs were integrated in the TBLT approach as an individual phase, as an aid to retain students' interest, and to foster their memory and fluency. They also prepared the students to carry out the tasks in the following phase, and these tasks in turn furthered the application of the language learning. This answers Research Question Two, about how songs can be integrated in Task-based learning to improve students' Chinese.

yī shí duō niǎo
6.1.5 一石多鸟 : Achieve a number of goals with one method

This Chinese idiom literally means to kill a number of birds with one stone, in other

words, using one method to achieve several goals. Although songs and tasks played different functions in the adjusted TBLT model, they were complementary and synergistic in achieving four common learning outcomes: continuous interest in learning, solid memories of the target language, fluency in speaking and the ability to apply the language.

Firstly, in this study, one important purpose of using songs was to arouse students' interest in learning Mandarin and make the process of learning more enjoyable. Tasks enrich the diversity of classroom activities, and as another engaging form of language learning, continue to retain students' attention and interest in learning.

Secondly, the repetitive form and melody of the songs enhanced the memory of the target language and the students were memorizing the target language unconsciously through singing with less anxiety and pressure. Tasks also promoted students' memorization but in a more conscious-raised form. In tasks, students have clear awareness of the need to achieve certain outcomes, such as writing a role-play script or gathering their partner's family information. Thus, they were motivated to remember the linguistic items by heart to pursue better results.

Thirdly, since songs are different forms of speech, and the entertaining form of singing reduced students' anxiety and the pressure of making mistakes (Li & Brand, 2009; Rosová, 2007), singing practice helped the students to achieve better fluency in speaking. It prepared the students to speak the language more confidently in the Task phase. Singing the language in tasks required the students to have a clear comprehension of the linguistic items involved and required more practice of them, which enhanced their fluency as well.

Fourthly, tasks have the advantage to bridge the gap between the language classroom and real life (Ellis, 2013; Nunan, 2006). Songs prepared the students to gain proficiency in the target linguistic items for the task phase, and the tasks furthered

the language learning in the Song phase, requiring applications to real life situations.

In this revised TBLT model, songs and tasks complemented and mutually promoted each other to enhance the learning effectiveness and achieve the four learning outcomes. This answers Research Question Three about which learning outcomes can be achieved through integrating songs into a Task-based language teaching approach.

6.2 Implications

This study contributes to the development of a Task-based approach using music in Mandarin teaching and relevant resources. This research has two implications in regard to song selection and teacher preparation.

6.2.1 Criteria for selecting songs

After observation of some lessons by his supervising teacher and discussion with her, an experienced teacher in NSW, the vital aspect of teaching was clearly to achieve the outcomes regulated in the syllabus. The syllabus is set up as the blueprint for teaching. Consequently, the particular themes or vocabulary and sentences students needed to acquire were chosen based on the syllabus. Then came a search for a range of songs which contained the target vocabulary. Songs were subsidiary and played the role of supporting the learning on those topics.

As mentioned above, students' characteristics should be taken into consideration in song selection. Even though the songs were on a topic, the difficulty level varied. Since they were beginning learners, without prior knowledge of Mandarin, simple songs were more practical. Hence, some popular songs were excluded because of their complexity. Popular songs such as "Manual of Youth (TF Boys)" and "The Little Apple (Chopstick Brothers)" involve too many extra words and were not

appropriate for teaching under these circumstances. However, simple children's songs should be used carefully. The participants were teenagers aged 12 or 13. Childish songs were likely to arouse their aversion to being treated as kids. Thus, songs are ideally more age-neutral.

Apart from students' ability limitations, and due to limited teaching time as well, songs are supposed to be as simple as possible, related to the target words directly and closely. The difficulty of songs is mainly due to two elements; one is the lyrics and the other is the melody. To make songs simple for teaching purposes, songs need to be composed only with the target words. The melody should be easy to follow. This decreases the burden of learning the song and focuses instead on practicing key vocabulary through singing.

Having narrowed the range of songs, the factors of the songs which gain students' interest should be considered. The factors include simplicity, action, visual effect, rhythm, repetition, rhyme, instruments and culture. All the successful songs used in the researcher's teaching have some common factors, but the most important are simplicity and repetition. Students might have different preferences. Some like wiggling when singing but some prefer sitting still. However, upholding and observing these two key factors when selecting songs for similar learners is the first step.

In summary, whether using songs or other tools, as a teacher in NSW, the first step is to research the syllabus which regulates a certain scope for teaching content, then all the lessons should build upon that. Secondly, students' learning capabilities and characteristics have an influence on the selection of the songs. The songs should be attractive to the students and maintain their attention on learning. The students should be aware that they should not attach too much attention to the songs rather than language learning. The function of the songs is to engage students in the Mandarin class and provide pleasant unconscious practice of the linguistic points.

Songs are supportive tools for language learning. This principle of selecting songs in this study might also be applicable for choosing other tools for Mandarin learning.

6.2.2 The significance of preparation for the beginner teacher

The Chinese idiom “^{lì bīngmòmǎ}厉兵秣马” means groom the horses and drill the troops before the war, which emphasises the significance of good preparation. As a beginner teacher in a strange country, teaching can be quite challenging and one encounters a series of difficulties which are mentioned in Section 1.3.2. Good preparation helped the researcher deal with the difficulties and improve his teaching practise. The researcher mainly did preparation work on three aspects. Firstly, he completed the term plan before the new term. It helped the researcher form a blueprint of the whole term and made the teaching content more organized and logical. As stated in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, a qualified teacher should be able to “organise content into an effective learning and teaching sequence” (ATSIL, 2014). A lesson plan every week was completed according to the term plan. Secondly, every lesson plan was written word for word, or verbatim, by him, and modified by his supervising teacher in the high school. The researcher was required to use English (L2) to teach Mandarin (L1). When the researcher could not express his instructions clearly at the beginning, students were unable to follow immediately. Therefore, the researcher kept writing lesson plans word for word before the lessons. Then his supervising teacher would modify the frame of the lesson plan and point out language mistakes. In this way, the researcher used more accurate and appropriate classroom instruction language to make himself understood. Better classroom instructions made teaching and learning more efficient. In addition, it helped the teacher-researcher to gain more confidence when he was delivering lessons because he was sure that he gave clear instructions. By reciting the lesson plans, the researcher had a clear idea of the framework of the whole lesson. It helped the researcher, who is a beginning teacher, avoid going blank during teaching because of

nervousness. Thirdly, all the teaching materials such as music videos and worksheets were set up before the lesson. And the researcher would get to the classroom 15 minutes earlier to set up the classroom. He turned on the lights and projector and set up the laptop and made sure all the desks and chairs were in order. A set-up classroom tends to make the lesson go smoother.

6.3 Recommendation

This study attempted to fill the gaps of previous studies that are mentioned in the literature review, namely that there are only a few studies focusing on teaching Mandarin with songs, they are short on attention to the learner group, young adolescents, and without detailed criteria of what makes songs effective. However, this research also has its own limitations.

The first recommendation is that a larger number of participants should be involved to enhance the generalisability of this research. Only one class, which consisted of 27 Year 7 students, participated in this research at Pianpi High School. The characteristics and personalities of Australian students vary largely among individuals, classes and schools. Therefore, the findings concluded from this research might not be applicable to students with different ages or backgrounds. Different school circumstances may also lead to different results as well. This relatively small sample size might be a concern for its trustworthiness and generalisability. Thus, a larger number of participants would make the results of the study more convincing, and could be applied to a wider range of educational situations.

The second recommendation is that more song types should be tried out in any future study. During these two terms, around eleven songs were introduced into the class. Apart from the number topic, other small topics only used one or two songs. Comparing a wider variety of song types would make the conclusions more convincing.

The third recommendation is that the research should be conducted for a longer time period to better examine the effectiveness of the music-based Mandarin teaching approach, which would make the findings more comprehensive. The research was conducted over three terms. The first term was mainly focused on observation. The following two terms consisted of about 20 lessons in total and students only had one Chinese lesson per week. Thus, the researcher only had a very limited amount of time using music in his teaching. With a longer time period, the researcher would know and understand his students deeply, which would contribute to the analysis of the criteria for selecting songs. These three recommendations, if pursued, would most likely lead to improving the learning outcomes for young Australian learners of Mandarin.

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Appendix 1 Approval of University Ethics Committee

Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751 Australia
Research Engagement, Development and Innovation (REDI)



RECI Reference: H11505

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

20 April 2016

Associate Professor Anne Power
School of Education

Dear Anne,

I wish to formally advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your research proposal H11505 "An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project", until 27 February 2017 with the provision of a progress report annually if over 12 months and a final report on completion.

Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
2. A final report will be due at the expiration of the approval period.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to being implemented. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form: http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/491130/HREC_Amendment_Request_Form.pdf
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Ethics Committee via the Human Ethics Officer as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority.
6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request.

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to the email address humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au.

This protocol covers the following researchers:

Anne Power, Jinghe Han, Michael Singh, Zhongshi Xie

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Deane'.

Professor Elizabeth Deane
Presiding Member,
Human Researcher Ethics Committee
Western Sydney University

Appendix 2 State Research Approval Process (SEARP) Approval



Mr Zhongshi Xie
40 Algje Crescent
KINGSWOOD NSW 2747

CORP16/18722
DOC16/567621
SERAP 2016086

Dear Mr Xie

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to principals.**

This approval will remain valid until 27-Feb-2017.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Researcher name	WWCC	WWCC expires
Zhongshi Xie	WWC0790540V	21-Aug-2020
Anne Power	WWC0801461E	04-Sep-2020

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- The privacy of participants is to be protected as per the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.
- All conditions attached to the approval must be complied with.

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au
You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Robert Stevens
Manager, Research
24 June 2016

School Policy and Information Management
NSW Department of Education
Level 1, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 9244 5060 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet (Students)



School of Education
Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751
Australia
Telephone: 0468624232
Email: 18485295@student.uws.edu.au

Participant Information Sheet (Student)

Project Title:

An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project.

Who is carrying out the study?

This study will be carried out by Mr. Xie.

What is the study about?

This project aims to explore whether and how music can benefit Mandarin learning for Year 7 students.

What I need to do in the study?

You will learn some Chinese songs selected by Mr. Xie. Some of your worksheets might be used in Mr. Xie's thesis anonymously. In addition, you will also be invited to complete a survey online, the questions are mainly about your feedback on the songs we've learnt this term. The survey takes about 10 minutes.

Will the study benefit me?

This study will enable the Chinese teacher Mr. Xie to have a better understanding of you, including your existing Chinese knowledge, your interests and so on. Based on these, the teacher could help you to make Chinese learning easier and more interesting.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H1150.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research, Engagement, Development and Innovation office on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0905 or email humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

Appendix 4 Participant Information Sheet (Parent and caregiver)



School of Education
Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751
Australia
Telephone: 0468624232
Email: 18485295@student.uws.edu.au

Participant Information Sheet (Parent & Caregiver)

Project Title:

An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project

What is the study about?

Your child is invited to participate in a study conducted by Chinese teacher Mr. Zhongshi Xie. This study aims to explore how can songs enhance Mandarin learning for Year 7 students. Specifically, it will be investigated that how to stimulate Year 7 students' interest in Chinese learning and how to consolidate their memorization of Chinese language as well as generating Mandarin teaching resources according to Year 7 students' learning level and characteristics.

What will your child be asked to do?

Your child will learn some Chinese songs selected by Mr. Xie. Your child's reaction will be recorded in Mr. Xie's reflection journal so as to improve his teaching to gain better outcome. In addition, your child will also be invited to complete a survey online which takes about 10 minutes. The questions are mainly about evaluation of the music we've learned and suggestions on music choices. What's more, some sample of students' work will be collected with permission.

What specific benefits will your child receive for participating?

This study may be of benefit for your child. It will enable the Chinese teacher Mr. Xie to have a better understanding of the students, including their existing Chinese knowledge, their interests and so on. Based on these, the teacher could improve his teaching to gain better outcome.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged to be involved. If you do participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H1150.

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research, Engagement, Development and Innovation office on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0905 or email humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Version [] [Date]

Appendix 5 Participant Consent Form (Parent and caregiver)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Deputy Vice Chancellor and
Vice President, Research and Development



Participant consent form (Parent and Caregiver)

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators. Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Project Title: An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project

I,, give consent for my child to participate in the research project titled An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project.

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child agrees to their participation in the project. We consent that my child could be observed in Chinese class by the Chinese teacher. The Chinese teacher could record the performance of my child's learning, opinions on Chinese teaching and learning (through online survey), and my child's works (such as exercises, crafts) in the classroom.

I understand that my child's involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's identity.

I understand that my child's participation in this project is voluntary. I can withdraw my child from the study at any time, without affecting their academic standing or relationship with the school and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time.

I give consent to let my child to participant in observation, online survey and work samples collected conducted by Mr. Xie.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Return Address: 11.21 School of Education, University of Western Sydney, Locked Bag 1797, Penrith NSW 2751

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229
Fax: +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Version [] [Date]

Appendix 6 Participant Information Sheet (Teacher)



School of Education
Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797
Penrith NSW 2751
Australia
Telephone: 0468624232
Email: 18485295@student.uws.edu.au

Participant Information Sheet (Teacher)

Project Title:

An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project

Project Summary:

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Chinese teacher Mr. Zhongshi Xie and the research will form the basis for the Master degree of Philosophy (Education research) at the Western Sydney University under the supervision of Associate professor Anne Power, Professor Michael Singh and Dr. Jinghe Han.

What is the study about?

This project aims at developing a music-based teaching approach to make Chinese learnable for Year 7 students in NSW public schools. Specifically, it will be investigated that how to stimulate Year 7 students' interest in Chinese learning and how to consolidate their memorization of Chinese language as well as generating Mandarin teaching resources according to Year 7 students' learning level and characteristics.

What will I be asked to do?

During the course of the Chinese lessons, you will be invited to observe Mr. Zhongshi Xie's teaching practice and the students' performance. At the end of each term, you will be interviewed to give your suggestions and feedback on Mr. Xie's teaching practice and the music-based teaching approach. The interview would be recorded in audio. Interview transcripts and written feedback will be used as data in the study with your permission.

How do you intend to publish the results?

No one can identify you from the results of this study. Only the researcher and his supervisors have access to the data collected from you with ethical permission. The data recorded from the interviews will be kept as the computer files which will require a password for access and will be stored for five years, after which will be completely deleted. The result of this study might be disseminated through a master thesis, short and long SEARP reports and publications with joint name of the research and the supervisors.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to consent. You can withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without any consequence. Then, any data which has already been collected from you will be deleted totally.

What if I require further information?

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Version [] [Date]

Appendix 7 Participant Consent Form (Chinese / Music teacher)

Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Deputy Vice Chancellor and
Vice President, Research and Development



Participant consent form (the Chinese/music teacher)

This is a project specific consent form. It restricts the use of the data collected to the named project by the named investigators. Where projects involve young people capable of consenting, a separate consent form should be developed. A parental consent form is still required.

Project Title: An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project

I,, consent to participate in the research project titled An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable: A Teacher Action Research Project.

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the voluntarily participate in Mr. Zhongshi Xie's research.

I consent to be interviewed at the end of each term and I would like to give my suggestions and feedback on Mr. Zhongshi Xie's teaching practice and music-based teaching approach. I consent to the audio recordings of interviews.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationships with the researcher now or in the future.

Signed

Name:

Date:

Return Address: | 1.21 School of Education, University of Western Sydney, Locked Bag 1797, Penrith NSW 2751

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0229 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Version [] [Date]

Appendix 8 Online Survey for students

1/4/2017

Do songs help in Chinese learning? Survey

Do songs help in Chinese learning?

This survey aims to investigate what influence does music have on Chinese learning and inform Mr. Xie's research which entitled "An Exploration of Music-based Teaching Approach to Make Chinese Learnable". We have learned three songs (Clothing song, Color song, Position song) this term. The survey is anonymous and all your private information will be kept secret. Please answer following questions.

1. Please write English meaning for clothing words we've learned. You can refer to the word bank

Word Bank:

Hat, Shoes, Skirt/Dress, Socks, Trousers

Kùzi	<input type="text"/>
Qúnzi	<input type="text"/>
Wǎzi	<input type="text"/>
Xiézi	<input type="text"/>
Màozi	<input type="text"/>

2. Please write English meaning for color words below. You can refer to the word bank.

Word Bank:

Orange, Red, White, Blue, Green, Purple, Black, Yellow.

Hóng sè	<input type="text"/>
Lǜ sè	<input type="text"/>
Huáng sè	<input type="text"/>
Lán sè	<input type="text"/>

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2YXJK6X>

1/1

* 4. Which song do you like the most?

- A. Clothing song
- B. Color song
- C. Position song

Why

* 5. Which song that we've learned in class do you like the least?

- A. Clothing song
- B. Color song
- C. Position song

Why

* 6. Which follow-up activities do you think engage you in class the most? (Multiple choice)

- Copy song lyrics (clothing song)
- Who can sing it faster competition (clothing song)
- Match up (color song)
- Color Bingo (color song)
- Left or Right game (color song)
- Listen to the song then choose words (position song)
- "Where is the object" Q & A (position song)

Why

7. Which follow-up activities do you think help you

- Copy song lyrics (clothing song)
- Who can sing it faster competition (clothing song)
- Match up (color song)
- Color Bingo (color song)
- Left or Right game (color song)
- Listen to the song then choose words (position song)
- "Where is the object" Q & A (position song)

Why

*** 8. Do you think**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
these songs help you to memorize new words?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
these songs make you more engaged in class?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
you want more music in future Chinese classes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
the follow-up games/tasks help your Chinese learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*** 9. What is the challenge about songs we've learned? (e.g. pronunciation, meaning, too many new words, song itself.....)**

Done

Appendix 9 Interview Questions for the teachers

Interviews with the Chinese teacher

1. In what way do you think does music help students remember new knowledge?
2. What would you take into consideration when selecting songs for Year 7 Chinese class?
3. What learning level and characteristics do these year 7 students have?
4. Which song that we've used do you think it is in line with student's characteristics and learning level most? Why?
5. What is your most satisfying music you've ever used in Year 7 class? How did you use this music?
6. What are your suggestions on music selection and the way using music in Chinese class next term?

Interviews with the music teacher

1. What is the problem and the positive in my teaching?
 2. What types of music are popular in Year 7 music class? Why?
 3. Which music that we've learned in Chinese class is in line with Year 7 student's characteristics and learning level most? Why?
 4. In what way do you think does music help students remember new knowledge?
 5. What would you take into consideration when selecting songs for Year 7 students?
 6. What are your suggestions on music selection and the way using music in Chinese class next term?
-