

Development of activity-based language learning of
Chinese for a primary school in western Sydney:
A participatory Action Research study

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Contents	
Tables	vi
Figures.....	vii
Abbreviations.....	viii
Abstract.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	11
1.1. Background	11
1.2. Information about the researcher	12
1.3. Similarities and differences between teaching and learning in Australia and China	14
1.4. Problems about Chinese language learning in the Australian context	15
1.5. The significance of the study	17
1.5.1. The significance of pedagogy in learning Chinese as a foreign language.....	17
1.5.2. The significance for ROSETE Chinese teachers.....	18
1.5.3. The Significance for students who learn Chinese in the Australian context	18
1.6. Research question	19
1.7 Overview of the thesis	19
Chapter 2: Literature review	21
2.1. Introduction.....	21
2.1.1. The definition of activity-based learning.....	21
2.2. Drama in the second language classroom.....	23
2.2.1. Drama in the English as second language classroom.....	24
2.2.2. Use of drama in teaching Chinese as a foreign language.....	24
2.3. Song activity in the language class	25
2.4. Visual arts in the language class	27
2.5 Students' engagement	28
2.6. Summary.....	28
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	30
3.1. Teacher action research.....	30
3.1.1. The definition of 'Participatory action research'.....	30
3.1.2. The mode of action research.....	31
3.1.3. Reasons for using action research	32

3.2. Qualitative research	32
3.3. Research principles	33
3.3.1. Consideration of ethics	33
3.3.2. Triangulation.....	35
3.3.3. Limitations of the study.....	35
3.4. Research design	36
3.4.1. Site.....	36
3.4.2. Participants	37
3.4.3. Research implementation	38
3.4.4. Chinese syllabus for Stage 2.....	39
3.5. Data collection	41
3.5.1. Observation by the classroom teacher.....	41
3.5.2. Reflective journal	41
3.5.3. Interviews	42
3.5.4. Focus groups.....	42
3.6. Data analysis	43
Chapter 4: Findings from implementing activity-based learning	45
4.1. Drama games	45
4.1.1. Cycle One – ‘Simon says’, ‘Chinese Whisper’ and mime	45
4.1.2. Cycle Two–Traffic Lights and Hot Potato.....	48
4.2. Chinese songs.....	49
4.2.1. Cycle One–Two body parts songs	49
4.2.2. Cycle Two–Colour songs.....	50
4.3. Visual arts.....	51
4.3.1. Cycle One–Assembling a paper panda.....	51
4.3.2. Cycle Two–Making a Peking Opera mask	52
4.4. Factors influencing the implementation of an activity-based approach	53
4.4.1. Appropriate choice of teaching content.....	53
4.4.2. Language of teacher instruction	54
4.4.3. Time management	56
4.4.4. Classroom management.....	57
4.4.5 Classroom atmosphere.....	58
4.5. Summary	59
Chapter 5: Findings aligned with syllabus	60

5.1. Outcomes listed in the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage 2	60
5.2. Interacting	62
5.3. Accessing and responding	64
5.4. Composing (Speaking).....	69
5.5. System of language – Pronunciation and intonation.....	72
5.6. Role of language and culture	74
5.7. Analysis of feedback from the classroom teacher and focus groups	78
5.7.1 Analysis of interviews, observation sheet and focus groups	78
5.7.2 Analysis of students’ drawings	86
5.8. Analysis of student checklists	90
5.9. Summary	96
Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion	97
6.1. Overall reflection on teaching.....	97
6.3. Key findings.....	101
6.4. Implications and recommendations	105
6.4.1. Implication for Chinese teachers in the Australian context.....	105
6.4.2. Implication for other beginning language teachers	106
6.4.3. Recommendations for future teaching practice	106
6.5. Conclusion	108
References.....	109
Appendices.....	116
Appendix 1: Human research ethics approval	116
Appendix 2 : SERAP approval letter	117
Appendix 3 : Activities for Chinese language learning	118
Appendix 4 : Classroom observation	120
Appendix 5 : Interview questions	121
Appendix 6 : Focus group questions.....	122
Appendix 7: Students’ artwork samples: assembled paper panda	123
Appendix 8: Students’ artwork samples - opera facial masks	128
Appendix 9: One sample of lesson plan	129
Appendix 10: Student checklist Cycle 1.....	131
Appendix 11: Student checklist and questions Cycle 2	132

Appendix 12: Confirmation of Candidature 134

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Statement of authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this university or other institution. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in this text and a list of references given.



Gege Yuan (袁格格)

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Tables

Table 4.1: Summary of lessons in the research cycles	54
Table 5.1: Learning objectives and outcomes for Stage 2 of the Chinese syllabus	61
Table 5.2: Lyrics of the song Head, Shoulders, Knees and Feet	65
Table 5.3: Lyrics of the Chinese colour song	68
Table 5.4 Identified coding of the first interview	79
Table 5.5 Summary of classroom teacher's observation sheet.....	80
Table 5.6 Identified Coding of the second interview	83
Table 5.7 Summary of classroom teacher's observation sheet.....	84
Table 5.8: Result of listening test about body parts words (student numbers =23)	91
Table 5.9: Result of listening test about colour words (student numbers =24).....	93

Figures

Figure 4.1: Slide of mime pictures	57
Figure 5.1: Macro skills	69
Figure 5.2: Presenting the paper panda	70
Figure 5.4: Colours of Peking Opera masks	77
Figure 5.5: Student 1 drawing	87
Figure 5.6: Student 2 drawing	88
Figure 5.7: Student 3 drawing	88
Figure 5.8: Student 4 drawing	89
Figure 5.9: Student 5 drawing	89
Figure 5.10: Student 6 drawing	90
Figure 5.11: Result of Speaking self-test: Words for body parts.....	92
Figure 5.12: Result of speaking self-test: Words for colours	94

Abbreviations

ABL	Activity-based learning
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CNKI	China National Knowledge Infrastructure
ESL	English as a second language
NSW	New South Wales
ROSETE	Research-Oriented School-Engaged Teacher Education
TCFL	Teach Chinese as a foreign language
TEFL	Teach English as a foreign language
SERAP	State Education Research Application Process

Abstract

This study explores the use of activity-based learning in the Chinese as a Foreign Language classroom, for young learners in the western Sydney region. The research takes account of current opportunities and the challenges arising from language policy in the Australian context. Activity-based learning is the focus of this research, with hands-on experiments and various classroom activities used rather than having students passively listening to the teacher. In this study, to engage students and to improve their Chinese learning, a wide range of activities, using music, drama games and visual arts, were implemented in the classroom.

This thesis aims to answer the following three research questions: How can activity-based learning be used to teach Chinese language to learners who do not have a Chinese language background, in a western Sydney primary school? What factors influence the implementation of an activity-based approach of this kind? What evidence of learning, in relation to outcomes listed in the NSW Chinese K-10 syllabus for Stage 2 students, can be ascertained following the implementation of an activity-based approach to learning Chinese language?

This study applied a qualitative methodology using action research with a teacher-as-researcher. The action research involved planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning in a spiral cycle. The teacher-researcher, also a beginning teacher, fostered her own professional learning through reflection, on a weekly basis, on her own teaching practice and used the action research mode to improve the teaching activities. Two cycles of data were collected from a variety of sources, including: feedback from the classroom teacher obtained through observation and interviews; the teacher-researcher's weekly reflective journal; student focus groups; and checklists completed by students at the end of each cycle.

This research shows that the use of an activity-based learning approach for young learners in western Sydney has a significant impact on their Chinese language learning. Such approaches can engage students emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively through a variety of classroom activities. By using various activities such as simple drama games, Chinese songs and visual arts activities, students have achieved the outcomes outlined in the Chinese syllabus, in a

relaxing and productive learning environment. Different classroom activities, incorporating various art forms, make Chinese easier to learn and remember, which helps to keep students emotionally engaged and to maintain their interest in learning Chinese. Hence, it is an effective way to motivate students to continue studying Chinese at the next stage. In the meantime, the teacher-researcher's professional learning has been enhanced in the process of conducting this research with the help of the teacher-as-researcher mode of action research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

With the development of globalisation, culture has become an important factor in the discussion of identity in a competitive, interconnected world. Language is one of the key carriers of culture and learning languages provides the opportunity for people to engage directly with the cultural and linguistic diversity of more people in more parts of the world. In 2004, China established non-profit public institutions named ‘Confucius Institutes’ to promote the development of Chinese language and culture in foreign countries. This impetus was strongly supported by the Chinese government. Confucius Institutes are playing significant roles in international cooperation and exchange and benefiting Chinese language learners worldwide. Similarly, a 2012 Australian White Paper named ‘Australia in the Asian Century’ points out that Australia needs “to broaden and deepen our understanding of Asian cultures and languages, to become more Asia literate”. This is “needed to build stronger connections and partnerships across the region” (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Australia), 2012, p. 2).

These initiatives indicate that both the Chinese and Australian Governments attach importance to Chinese language policy, and both relate language learning to the furthering of national interests beyond national borders. Under these circumstances, in 2007, the western Sydney Region of the NSW Department of Education entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau (in China) and Western Sydney University (in Australia). These three parties agreed that annual cohorts of university graduates from Ningbo would provide voluntary support to western Sydney schools in the planning and delivery of teaching and learning programs in Chinese (Mandarin) language and culture, while researching this process in pursuit of a research master’s degree in Education. The ROSETE program (short for Research Oriented School Engaged Teacher Education) is the product of this three-party agreement. For over ten years, the NSW Department of Education, Ningbo Municipal Education Bureau, Western Sydney University and a selection of local western Sydney primary

and high schools, have worked closely together to help western Sydney students learn Chinese. This cooperation provides opportunities for Australian teachers to have first-hand experiences of Chinese language and culture. The volunteer teachers also benefit a lot through learning about teaching in a Chinese language classroom and researching the process, in pursuit of a research degree.

1.2. Information about the researcher

It is worth noting that in this process, the researcher, who is a Chinese volunteer teacher who has arrived in Australia in 2018, is also learning. Through her participation in the classroom and the action research processes she is learning about Australia, Australian students and how to most effectively teach Stage 2 Chinese language. The researcher, who is a member of ROSETE Group 11, finished a master's degree in Translation from Ningbo University in China in 2018. She has three different identities in Australia. She is a volunteer from Ningbo, a Chinese teacher in a western Sydney primary school and a student-researcher studying at Western Sydney University. (In this thesis, she is identified as a teacher-researcher.) She is passionate about this volunteer program because she is enthusiastic about children and teaching. She has a dream to become a qualified bilingual teacher in the future. The teacher-researcher has studied English and French as a second and third language, although her knowledge of French is not comprehensive. It is her opinion that the process of learning foreign languages is quite difficult for Chinese students. It seems that it is also a challenge for Australian students to learn Chinese, which comes from a totally different language family. (English belongs to the Indo-European language family while Chinese is from the Han-Tibetan language family.)

Before the ROSETE program, the teacher-researcher had completed a two-year part-time working experience with primary school students in an English language learning institution. According to her limited teaching experience, most of the young learners had difficulties in the process of foreign language learning. It is very important for a language teacher to arouse and maintain students' interests to develop their attention and make the foreign language easier to learn. During her Australian school visits, she noticed that Stage 2 students (Year 3) learn

English better when various games are incorporated into learning activities to encourage and engage students. The teacher-researcher wondered if the method of using various games could be applied to teaching Chinese language. Although the teacher-researcher herself knew little about activity-based theory and had no experience in arts education, she felt that she may have already used an activity-based approach unknowingly, in her previous teaching experience in China. She recalled her use of activities she has now seen described as drama games, role play, situational dialogue and improvisation. All of these are drama activities that work with the elements of drama (Zhang, 2017). Apart from drama games, songs and visual arts activities are also conducive attempts to Australian students learning Chinese, according to the teacher-researcher's observation.

In the first Term in a western Sydney primary school, the teaching content was about Chinese greetings and numbers. To raise students' interests and build up their confidence, the teacher-researcher used songs in teaching Chinese. For example, after learning the expressions of "hello, how are you"; "I am good, thank you", the teacher-researcher taught them Chinese songs named 'Hello song' and 'Hello panda'. Surprisingly, students could not wait to sing and dance with the panda in the video. The song is easy as there are only three or four expressions embedded and they learnt it quickly and happily. At the end of Term 1, students remembered all the songs (five in total) they had learnt. Both students and the teacher-researcher felt a sense of pride and achievement. Song activity is a good way to help students connect those expressions and understand the conversation in a fun way. Moreover, a lantern-making activity was carried out during the Chinese Lunar New Year and students engaged very well. According to the experiences in Term 1, a variety of activities, which were conducted by the teacher-researcher, might be conducive to learning Chinese for students who have no Chinese background.

This contributed to her belief that activity-based learning, in a relaxed environment, is an effective method to facilitate teaching and learning for beginning language learners. Take drama games for example. Drama activity-based learning provides a substantial number of

benefits including the integration of verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication and the fostering of self-awareness, self-esteem and confidence (Maley & Duff, 1978, 2011). Therefore, this research explores how activity-based learning may help to encourage and engage Australian students to happily learn Chinese.

1.3. Similarities and differences between teaching and learning in Australia and China

China and Australia both give high priority to language education, when students are at an early age. In the Australian schools the teacher-researcher visited, students started to learn languages other than English, from Year One. Learning languages exercises students' intellectual curiosity, increases metalinguistic awareness, strengthens cognitive, analytical and reflective capabilities, and enhances creative and critical thinking (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2017). However, from the teacher-researcher's initial classroom observation, teachers in Chinese and Australian classrooms adopt different style to language teaching and learning. It appears that teacher-centred education is more popular in China while Australian teachers tend to prefer student-centred education. According to Leng (2005), Chinese education put more emphasis on values of authorities and knowledge of teacher in the large size class and a dense population in Chinese context. Instead of listening to the teacher exclusively, students and teachers interact more equally in Australia. Although the teacher-centred learning and student-centred learning are not opposite poles, student-centred learning is preferable in Australian classrooms among many subjects, which can meet individual students' needs and engage students to explore or use the knowledge they learn. Teacher who adopts this teaching style is a facilitator rather than just a demonstrator. Group work is encouraged in Australia, and students learn to collaborate and communicate with one another. Because most activities in this study involve group work and pair work, it seemed feasible to use this style of teaching in the Chinese language classroom. Australian education emphasises the process of learning, while Chinese education focusses more on learning results. For Chinese students, English is a compulsory subject and teachers expect students to get high marks in any form of examination. This typical phenomenon could also be seen in general research in the field of teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. The

examination-oriented teaching in China result in much more focus on the drilling of grammar and linguistic while less on the communicative strategies and intercultural skills (Orton, 2008). There is limited research investigation of any newer styles of language teaching practice which may employ contemporary (Orton, 2011, p.159). Chinese teachers usually follow the layout of textbooks. Textbook pedagogy has become the mainstream in Chinese education system, at the expense of communicative skills (Chi, 1989) By contrast, in the Australian schools visited, the teacher-researcher saw no evidence of a textbook for Chinese language learners. It seems that in the Australian language classroom, teachers can develop lessons to best meet the needs of their students (within the constraints of the NSW Syllabus). The teacher-researcher has also learned that diversity is a typical characteristic in Australian society. Intercultural ability cultivated by language learning at an early age is recognized in Australia. In China, intercultural capability may be neglected in the process of language learning, especially at the early stage. In summary, these observable impressions of the differences in teaching and learning language between Australian and Chinese contexts inspired the teacher-researcher to conduct this research and influenced the teaching approaches she used.

1.4. Problems about Chinese language learning in the Australian context

There are some problems and hence, challenges with learning Chinese language in the Australian context. The most significant ones are, from the perspective of the teacher-researcher, the low priority attached to Chinese language learning and the lack of a systematic approach across all year levels. The latter makes it difficult for many students to continue learning Chinese from primary into secondary school. In the Australian context, the low priority given to Chinese language is shown by the fact that it is not a requirement to offer Chinese language lessons at all and those schools that do offer a Chinese class, do so for limited hours (Orton, 2008)—usually only 20 or 30 minutes each week. Take the school in which the research was conducted for example; there is only one 30-minute Chinese class per week for Year 3 with five hours in total per term. Orton (2016) argues that these lessons could really be referred to as cultural experiences, rather than language programs. Besides, considering that

most Australian teachers of Chinese are native speakers with a Chinese education background (Orton, 2008, p.21), Moloney (2013) suggests that Chinese teacher should be provided further professional development, especially professional knowledge of intercultural pedagogy, to achieve more successful student learning in Australian school environment. Under this circumstance, the Chinese teaching and learning can be more challenging.

Australian beginning learners of Chinese appear to be less motivated and less interested in learning the language in comparison to other curriculum areas. ‘Beginning learners’ refers to primary and secondary school students in any grade from kindergarten to Year 12 and who have English as their daily language of instruction and communication (Singh & Han, 2014). The reason why they appear to be less motivated and interested may be partly because “Chinese language education lacks a specific educational rationale that speaks directly to beginning learners, their teachers and parents”, according to the point view of Singh & Han (2015). To be specific, the content might not be closely related to the learners’ everyday lives (Zhu, 2010; Orton & Cui, 2016), and because the teaching methods used are not innovative enough to attract and sustain the learners’ interest and engagement. The bilingual education should be relevant to people’s everyday lives so that students have chance to know first-hand news in such a globalized world. Intercultural understanding come through people knowing what language means so that misunderstanding between people from different countries and culture might be lessened. Where people understanding each other more easily, political differences are less likely to matter. To engage students in the language learning, an activity-based approach may counter the lack of enthusiasm and potentially enhance student’s engagement, interest and motivation—important aspects of second language learning. Students’ engagement and motivation are key influences on successful second and foreign language learning (Dörnyei, 1998).

The lack of students continuing language study from primary school to secondary school is another problem. In Australia, a significant number of students ‘drop out’ of language classes before the end of Year 12 at secondary schools (Orton, 2008; Sturak & Naughten, 2010;

Hughson, Hajek & Slaughter, 2017). According to data about language learning in NSW schools (Department of Education, 2017), 80,222 students in primary schools were learning a language other than English. This included 20,321 students learning Chinese (Mandarin, the most studied language in primary schools). However, there were 67,838 students in NSW secondary schools learning a language other than English, with 5,176 learning Chinese (Mandarin), making it the fourth most studied language in NSW secondary schools after Japanese, French and Italian. It is alarming that so many students do not continue learning Chinese in the secondary years in New South Wales. In these circumstances, it appears that the teaching of Chinese language needs to be adjusted to tackle these problems. Moreover, compared with other parts of Sydney:

western Sydney is a region characterised by a population with lower incomes and standards of living, higher unemployment, high numbers of recent of new immigrant arrivals, greater ethnic diversity and other similar markers of disadvantage (Wright et al., 2018).

The challenge for the teacher-researcher is to engage students both cognitively and affectively in their learning.

1.5. The significance of the study

1.5.1. The significance of pedagogy in learning Chinese as a foreign language

With the development of globalisation and the growth of Confucius Institutes, teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL) has become increasingly popular. Research into TCFL started in the 1980s in China and is still in its early stages. With limited guidance from current research, pedagogy within TCFL has not been systematically developed. Teaching methods in this area have mostly been adopted from the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), which may not be appropriate considering the significant differences between Chinese and English (Han, 2017). According to Çelik (2018, p. 1966), activity-based learning “describes a range of pedagogical approaches to teaching”, which emphasise the fact that “learning should be based on doing some hands-on, minds-on or hearts-on experiments and activities”. The activity-based learning may be a useful way to teach Chinese (Mandarin) to young Australian

learners, who do not have a Chinese language background. This study will apply the activity-based pedagogy in the Chinese language classroom, in a primary school in the western Sydney region. The outcomes of this research should make some contributions to the area of TCFL.

1.5.2. The significance for ROSETE Chinese teachers

The Chinese teachers from the ROSETE program generally have limited teaching experience. As recent arrivals in Australia they face a huge challenge to teach Chinese in a very different context to the Chinese systems to which they are accustomed. This study focuses on the application of activity-based teaching pedagogy for ROSETE students teaching Chinese to native English speakers in Australian primary schools. The teacher-researcher aims to provide insights into a systematic approach to the use of activity-based methods in the Chinese language classroom to benefit herself and subsequent Chinese teachers. When the ROSETE teachers return to China, this kind of teaching experience may also benefit them in their teaching careers.

1.5.3. The Significance for students who learn Chinese in the Australian context

According to the Chinese syllabus K–10 for the Australian curriculum (2017), the study of Chinese can “broaden students’ horizons in relation to personal, social, cultural and employment opportunities in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world”. Chinese, as the language spoken by the largest number of people in the world, plays an important role in world communication and commerce. Learning Chinese will help Australian students obtain more linguistic and cultural knowledge about China and provide more opportunities in their future career choice. This study will apply an activity-based approach to assist Australian students who do not have a Chinese background to learn Chinese. The concept of activity-based learning is based on that assumptions that “children are active learners rather than passive recipients of information. If the young learner is provided with the opportunity to explore their environment and provided an optimum learning environment then the learning becomes joyful and long-lasting (Çelik, 2018)”.

1.6. Research question

The principal research question of this study is:

- How can activity-based learning be used to teach Chinese language to learners who do not have a Chinese language background, in a western Sydney primary school ?

Subsidiary questions:

1. What factors influence the implementation of an activity-based approach of this kind?
2. What evidence of learning, in relation to outcomes listed in the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage 2 students, can be ascertained following the implementation of an activity- based approach to learning Chinese language?

The research will focus on the development and the implementation of teaching strategies using activity-based pedagogy for beginning Chinese (Mandarin) teachers. The purpose of the study is to explore this approach used in the Chinese language classroom, especially in speaking and listening, in a primary school in the western Sydney region and to help students who do not have a Chinese language background learn Chinese in an enjoyable way.

1.7 Overview of the thesis

Chapter 1 highlighted the aim of the project, which was to use activity-based learning to encourage students in Australia to learn Chinese in an enjoyable way. The Background section introduced how an Australian university and Chinese and Australian departments of education work together to achieve the object of promoting Chinese language and culture in Australia. The teacher-researcher focused her study on activity-based learning, including drama games, music, and visual arts and various activities from these three art forms were planned to be implemented throughout the whole research. In addition, potential issues relating to Chinese language learning were identified. Furthermore, the significance of this research was briefly explained. Finally, the research questions were outlined to provide a clear idea of what specific aspects of activity-based learning the research would focus on.

Chapter 2 focused on the literature review. The review provided a definition of activity-based

learning and how this approach was used in language classes. As this research focused on drama games, music, and visual arts activities, the literature review covered the application of these three art forms in the second or foreign language classroom. Reviewing the literature, showed that activity-based learning is a powerful approach to teaching foreign languages.

Chapter 3 described the methodology of this research, defined participatory action research and provided the theoretical context of action research. This chapter also outlined the research principles and revealed the research design, as well as plans for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 described how activity-based learning was used by the teacher-researcher to make Chinese easier to learn in an enjoyable context for the young learners. This chapter also analysed the factors that influence the implementation of activity-based learning in the Chinese language classroom. These factors were: the appropriate choice of teaching content, the language of teacher instruction, time management, classroom management, as well as classroom atmosphere.

Chapter 5 demonstrated the evidence of learning from using an activity-based approach to teaching Chinese language, in relation to outcomes listed in the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage 2 students. The data analysis used information from the teacher-researcher's weekly reflective journal, the classroom teacher observation sheet and interview and student focus group and checklist.

The purpose of Chapter 6 was to summarise the key findings from the three research questions, along with limitations of the research. Implications for future teaching practice are included. Finally, recommendations from this research are presented.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

There is an ancient proverb from one of China's greatest thinkers, Xunzi (third century BCE), a Confucian philosopher. It is, "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." ["不闻不若闻之，闻之不若见之；见之不若知之，知之不若行之；学至于行而止矣。"] Activities allow students to learn by doing. Activity-based learning is one of the useful ways to learn a language, especially for young learners. There are many ways to help students engage and activity-based methods are built around processes of active participation, designed to turn passive observers into active participants. The following chapter will review activity-based pedagogy, particularly through forms of drama, music and visual arts activities as applied in a language class.

2.1.1. *The definition of activity-based learning*

According to Çelik (2018, p. 1965), activity-based education refers to "learning where students physically and mentally explore a subject by...performance of a real work task". More specifically, activity-based learning, as the name suggests, is a process whereby learners are actively engaged in the learning process and it is based on doing 'hands-on' experiments and activities (Hansraj, 2017). The concept of activity-based learning (ABL) is embedded in the common assumption that students vigorously contribute to learning activities as active learners rather than being inactive spectators or passive listeners to knowledge (Zahoor-ul-Huq et al., 2015). Activity-based learning is based on the constructivist theory of learning experiences that holds that 'humans cannot be given information, which they immediately understand and use; instead, humans must construct their own knowledge based in their previous experiences and usually in collaboration with others (Powell & Kalina 2009, p. 242).

In fact, teachers serve the function of facilitators who engage students in a learning process rather than just presenting information. Previous researchers indicate that the activity-based approach facilitates students' learning and has a range of associated advantages. According to

Zahoor-ul-Huq et al. (2015), the activity-based approach provides opportunities for students to develop listening skills, and it is seen as more effective for teaching English as a foreign language as compared to traditional language teaching methods. Harfield et al., (2007) concludes that there are many benefits that activity-based methods create for both primary school students and teachers, including that it enhances participatory learning, improves communication skills with learning and creates an enjoyable learning environment. In recent years, Çelik (2018) has summarised the contributions that activity-based learning might make: “making the learning permanent, creating a positive attitude and attracting interest for the class”. Therefore, as Hansraj (2017) states, “activity-based learning provides educational settings where students work together and learn by doing, learn by playing, learn by enjoying, learn by cooperation, learn by activity and learn without stress”.

There are few studies focused on Chinese language in foreign language learning with an activity-based approach and so this research can contribute to filling the gap. This research will be carried out by the implementation of activity-based learning, especially through integrated arts activities (including drama games, songs, and visual arts activity) in a Chinese as foreign language class to find out if it engages students in an enjoyable environment. Activity-based learning is student-centred and is favoured in arts learning.

The arts are a way of changing perceptions and stereotypes of people who are different from them, as children are exposed to different societies and cultures through their arts, learn their dances, appreciate their artworks, read and act out their plays and listen to, sing and play their music (Russell-Bowie, 2015, p. 22).

For instance, music is a good way to enhance learning a language. Songs are easy to memorise, engaging, and provide practice of a language (Alvarez, 2019). “Music engages us emotionally and intellectually, stimulating both the left and right sides of the brain” (Russell-Bowie, 2015, p. 46). Moreover, drama-related activities allow students to put themselves in the others’ world and explore others’ ways of thinking, acting, feeling, expressing and being while visual arts are an important vehicle for exploring self-expression, learning and observation through the

primary years (Russell-Bowie, 2015).

A significant point to emphasise is that to employ activity-based learning in the language classroom, language teachers do not need to be creative arts specialists. Some effectiveness of the activities might have come from the familiarity of these, and children's rich metacognitive knowledge as a resource for languages learning. According to Chamot (2005), "strategies are most often conscious and goal-driven, especially in the beginning stages of tackling an unfamiliar language task (p. 112)." A learning task may be facilitated when a learning strategy becomes familiar through repeated use. Spolin (1986) argues that drama games are energy sources that help students develop skills in concentration, problem-solving, and group interaction. They are generally short activities that have a variety of objectives: they can be ice-breakers or warm-up activities; they can be used to introduce a new topic, to reinforce, to review, to relax, or to encourage students to interact, or to make them feel more confident (Vila-Abadal, 2009).

This project aims to implement different forms of activities suited to teaching Chinese to students who do not have a Chinese background, in a western Sydney primary school.

2.2. Drama in the second language classroom

In the 1970s and 1980s, Maley, Duff, and di Pietro emerged as pioneers in the use of drama in second language learning (Maley & Alan, 1978; Maley & Duff, 2005). They produce a handbook of drama-based activities for teachers to include in more formal, traditionally structured language lessons, including games, articulation exercises and short role plays. This provide teachers with guidelines and insights to conduct drama-based activities in language classrooms.

Kao and O'Neill view language as what O'Neill & Lambert (1982, p. 4) called "the 'cornerstone' of drama". Kao and O'Neill point to the socially constructed nature of both language and drama:

Drama does things with words. It introduces language as an essential and authentic method of communication. Drama sustains interactions between students within the target language, creating

a world of social roles and relations in which the learner is an active participant... The language that arises is fluent, purposeful and generative because it is embedded in context (Kao and O'Neill, 1998, p. 4)

2.2.1. Drama in the English as second language classroom

Reed and Seong (2013) explore pragmatic suggestions for an English class in Korea with a focus on listening and speaking skills through using drama as a language teaching activity. The study identifies a series of approaches and techniques which have been applied worldwide in English as a foreign or second language classrooms. There are also many other articles that show a great deal of achievement using drama in the English as a Second Language (ESL) class. The method of using drama-related activities can enhance students' self-confidence and decrease their anxiety (Nezami, Barekat & Tahriri, 2018). These findings give the teacher-researcher insights and confidence in conducting drama-related activities in a Chinese as second language classroom.

2.2.2. Use of drama in teaching Chinese as a foreign language

After searching in the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), the biggest Chinese academic information database, there are around 20 journal articles related to using drama approaches in Chinese as foreign language classes. The limited research shows there is potential to investigate the use of drama in learning Chinese as a foreign language. Within the research of a drama approach in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, most studies (Zhou, 2015; Guo, 2017; Wang, 2009) show that the application of drama-related activities in Chinese classes produces good outcomes.

Wang (2009) concludes that the application of a drama activity approach to Chinese language learning at university level is conducive to combining the particular social context and learning tasks together. Also, the implementation of role-play and role-reversal improves the relationship between students and teachers, as well as the abilities of collaborative learning and intercultural communication. Li (2013) conducts role plays in Chinese as a foreign language class among exchange students and considers that it is a beneficial way to mobilise students'

interest and capture their attention. However, few studies have been carried out with primary school students who have no Chinese knowledge background. This study aims to explore activity-based learning that suits young learners' needs. Zhao (2008) suggests that the Chinese teacher should broaden their horizons, to seek new approaches to teaching Chinese. Activity-based learning focuses on collaborative learning and creative thinking as well as greater involvement in learning. This kind of combination will be a positive attempt to explore innovative teaching approaches in the area of TCFL/TCSL (teaching Chinese as a foreign or second language).

The teacher-researcher hopes that this study will help to fill the gap in teaching methods for Teaching Chinese as a foreign Language in primary schools and explore more useful arts-related activities in TCFL/TCSL. This research aims to apply activity-based learning in primary schools to figure out if this approach is able to engage students in listening and speaking in Chinese class in a pleasurable way.

2.3. Song activity in the language class

Music education is of great importance to children's overall development. Most children enjoy singing and dancing with music. They can develop an aesthetic sense; enhance their self-esteem; engage in authentic, real-life learning experiences and use music as a way of expressing themselves and communicating (Russell-Bowie, 2015). Music education shares a close relationship with language learning.

These are three important reasons why song activities are applied in Chinese language classes. Firstly, children and teenagers love music. According to the teacher-researcher's observations, students, whether in primary school or high school, showed great interest in Chinese songs. Ludke (2013) summarises three reasons why children benefit from songs: easy to 'catch onto', practical, and entertaining. There is abundant literature about the use of songs in the native language and foreign language classroom. According to Ludovico and Zambelli (2016), their study focuses on pre-education of foreign language to test the efficacy of the adoption of music as a means to convey contents and cognitive abilities in a computer-assisted CLIL (known as

Content and Language Integrated Learning) environment. Their study demonstrates that the use of music-based pedagogy as a “playful and engaging way to convey information” on the one hand and the computer technologies support on the other hand are fundamental to engage young learners in CLIL activities in a relaxed and enjoyable context. Considering children’s interests and the characteristic of music-based pedagogy mentioned, music-based activity is selected as one of three types of activities in this activity-based learning as songs are useful tools for young learners’ cognitive development in the language learning.

Secondly, comparing to other languages, Chinese is more rhythmic, and it is a musical language with different tones. Each Chinese word is allocated a particular tone to distinguish its meaning (There are four tones in total). The musical features of Chinese language make the use of songs especially useful in learning of this language. Through constantly being exposed to nursery rhymes, language learners engage with the linguistic signals from such unforgettable and appealing songs, improving their different language skills, such as listening and communicating at a basic level (Pourkalthor and Tavakoli, 2017).

Thirdly, there are many other benefits of using songs in language teaching and learning, such as enhance four language skills, improve attention and students’ concentration, create a pleasant classroom atmosphere and other benefits. According to Becerra and Muñoz (2013), teaching English through music can help children develop their linguistic and musical intelligence because they have worked with language, pitch and rhythm. Children have improved visual and kinaesthetic intelligence in the classroom by studying vocabulary through dynamic pictures and mimic the lyrics of songs. Millington (2011) reflects that songs are flexible and enjoyable. They can help children improve their listening skills and pronunciation and songs are useful for learning vocabulary and sentence structures or patterns. Hill-Clarke and Robinson (2003) suggest that music helps to improve students' comprehension and recall of text material. There are different opinions that are generally positively about music in language study but a group of researchers (Tamminen, Rastle, Darby, Lucas & Williamson, 2017) think only song lyrics from familiar tunes can link other people think how song-based

activities in general can be productive and useful. Ludke (2016) investigates how song-based activities, along with drama-related activities, can affect the French learning of native English adolescents by undertaking a six-week practical teaching and observation in the classroom. The findings of this research showed that the overall marks of the students were significantly improved based on their curriculum language test, with the support of a song-based pedagogy accompanied by an intervention of visual arts. Therefore, the teacher-researcher is going to use some Chinese song activities to help the primary students learn Chinese in an enjoyable way.

2.4. Visual arts in the language class

From ancient time, people have created artworks to tell stories and depict events, rituals, celebrations, and achievements. The visual arts are a vital tool for exploring self-expression, and the learning and observation skills that children need to develop through their primary school years (Russell-Bowie, 2015). Shier (1990) asserts that visual arts activities can generate a better balance between the emotional and cognitive domains in the classroom.

Previous studies show that visual information, including videos of facial movements, can support listening comprehension, with intermediate learners further benefiting from viewing gestures (Sueyoshi & Hardison, 2005). The importance of meaningful visual aids to reinforce auditory or written material is highlighted by Ginther (2002) and Kost, Foss & Lenzini (1999). Another researcher (Al-Seghayer, 2001) suggests that dynamic presentation methods such as moving images enable students to concentrate longer on the material and help improve students' English vocabulary and reading comprehension. Visual teaching aids ensure that learners use tangible teaching materials to attach meaning and visual representations to the concepts (Curtin, 2006). Hands-on materials and visuals that can be manipulated by students involve a range of senses and help make learning more meaningful, particularly for various students who appear to be tactile, kinesthetic learners (Bruno, 1982; Curtin, 2006). An assembling activity can be regarded as another form of "puzzle activity", in which the names for the parts and the whole can be learned. Considering the benefits mentioned stated above, the teacher-researcher is

going to conduct a variety of visual arts activities to help scaffold Chinese language learning among the Australian primary school students.

2.5 Students' engagement

Students' engagement is of great importance in Chinese language learning for young learners. Although there have been several definitions of student engagement, there is no consensus among scholars. In this study, student engagement refers to “how involved or interested students appear to be in their learning and how connected they are to their classes, their institutions, and each other” (Axelson and Flick, 2010, p. 38).

Widely used categories of engagement consist of three forms: behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement (Mitchell and Carbone, 2011). All these three forms are equally important and are present when students are actively engaged in educational activities (Fredricks et al., 2004) “Behavioural engagement takes place when students are physically involved in effective learning practices and activities. Emotional engagement is thought to occur when students have a positive attitude and enjoy what they are doing; while cognitive engagement is thought to take place when students invest into learning in a focused, self-regulating and strategic way (Fredricks et al., 2004).”

Active learning is strongly correlated to student engagement; as Prince (2004) states, it takes place when students experience meaningful classroom activities while thinking about what they are doing, thus “the core elements of active learning are student activity and learning engagement” (p. 223). Therefore, in this study, the teacher-researcher used the approach of activity-based learning to engage young learners in learning Chinese as a foreign language.

2.6. Summary

Activity-based learning has long been regarded as a powerful approach in foreign language education, and the substantial body of research literature published suggests that it can have a

significant impact on language learning. Activity-based learning, in the context of the foreign language classroom, should not be evaluated by the success of a performance but by all the student interactions and behaviours as well as their involvement with the subject matter, that are generated through activities such as drama games, role-play exercises, improvisation, mime, and related songs and visual arts. Previous studies give insights that an activity-based approach has an impact on enhancement of communication and fluency, engagement, interest, motivation and other aspects of second language learning. More research is needed into the application of activities-based teaching and learning of Chinese as a second language, in the context of Australian primary schools. The purpose of this research is to apply and develop teaching strategies using different activities for beginning Chinese teachers. It is also to explore whether the activity-based learning could suit local educational needs, as well as to test the effectiveness of this approach in a Chinese class in a western Sydney primary school.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Teacher action research

3.1.1. *The definition of 'Participatory action research'*

Action research is commonly used in the education field. It is valued because it is involved in improvements and using research to solve practical problems rather than testing a hypothesis or developing a theory. Action research is participatory, as Kemmis and McTaggart (1992) state, it is research through which people work towards the improvement of their own practices. Participatory action research has “a commitment to bring together a broad social analysis, the self-reflective collective self-study of practice, and transformational action to improve things (Kemmis, 2013, p. 12)”. Participatory action research connects three important ideas: research, action, and participation (Lawson et al., 2015).

There are two defining features of participatory action research:

- (a) It is an iterative process. Each cycle is based on the former one.
- (b) It is a recursive process. Each cycle's knowledge contributions provide timely opportunities to reflect on where participants started, taking stock of all that they have learned and the knowledge and understanding they have produced along the way (Lawson et al., 2015, p. 13).

Due to the iterative, recursive structure, and purposeful interactions among the participants and researchers, each participatory action research cycle generates new knowledge. In this study, the new knowledge resulted in improvements in practice for the teacher-researcher—herself a practitioner. According to Kemmis (2013), “practitioners are the greatest resource of all for changing education practice, and that, therefore, teachers' research is the most potent force for changing educational practice” (p. 25).

As Kemmis (2009) puts it, action research is “a practice-changing practice”. In this study, the teacher-researcher applied an activity-based approach to raise students' interest and engage

them in the Mandarin class. The research was conducted in a Stage 2 (Year 3) class in a public primary school in the western Sydney region. The teacher-researcher recorded changes in students while they were learning Mandarin through an activity-based approach. These observable changes might lead to improvements, which were made in the process of teaching in the second cycle. The teacher-researcher adopted additional methods of documentation, including the use of a weekly reflective journal, focus groups and interviews to evaluate the outcomes for students in the process of Mandarin learning.

3.1.2. The mode of action research

Kemmis (1981) describes action research as proceeding in a spiral of steps, saying there are four fundamental aspects of the process, along with the dynamic complementarity which links them in a spiral of learning. The steps include:

1. developing a plan of action to improve what is already happening
2. acting to implement the plan
3. observing the effects of action in the context in which it occurs
4. reflecting on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent action and so on, through a succession of cycles (p. 7).

Although this model can be adjusted, through variations, in accordance with the teacher-researcher's subject matter and discipline area, the process of action research is generally equivalent to the original model developed by Kemmis (1981).

The process of action research is a dynamic spiral, starting with a plan to figure out the existing problems. The next step is to implement a plan, monitor the effects of the plan, and then collect data by observing and reflecting on the implementation. The next step is to revise the plan based on the first cycle and observe and evaluate the new information arising under the new circumstance. To sum up, the steps are: plan, act, observe, reflect and re-plan. The advantage of action research is that each action strategy conserves the strengths of previous steps and reaches out towards improvement and understanding. This study followed this model. The

teacher-researcher planned activities, enacted the activities, observed students' participation and engagement, reflected on the students' response and learning outcomes and then replanned the process to make a new cycle.

3.1.3. Reasons for using action research

In action research, the researcher uses a systematic and intentional process to solve a sociological problem and make improvements. In this particular instance, the site of the action is a primary school and so the issues are educational as well as sociological. Action research is highly appropriate for addressing practical educational problems. It is especially suitable for inexperienced teachers, as it is a way for such teachers to improve their teaching. It offers ways to deal with problems of low motivation, lack of interest and commitment, and general negative attitudes towards learning Chinese among Australian students.

Action research is also suitable for teachers as a practical process because it is more concerned with improvements within the context of the study (Lawson et. al., 2015). The aim of action research is to improve understanding through research centred on self-reflective practice. It is participant-based research—the researcher, also the practitioner, is trying to make improvement to the circumstances in which he or she is involved. Since the goal is to solve problems and make improvements, action researchers rely less on scientific inquiry and inductive reasoning and more on reflection and the practicality and feasibility of addressing a problem.

3.2. Qualitative research

Qualitative method is applied in this research. “Qualitative procedures rely on text and image data” (Creswell, 2018, p. 179). As such, “qualitative research is interpretive research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive inquiry process with participants” (Creswell, 2018, p. 183). The characteristics of qualitative research are that the research takes place in a natural setting, employs multiple sources of data collection, uses inductive methods of data analysis, is based on participants' meaning, includes research reflexivity and is holistic

(Creswell, 2018).

This study was consistent with these characteristics of qualitative research. The teacher-researcher conducted her research at a primary school in the western Sydney Region, where students were beginning their study of Chinese. The teacher-researcher interacted face-to-face with the students and classroom teachers and observed their participation and behaviour within their school learning context. The teacher-researcher, as the key research instrument, was the one who collected the information and interpreted it. The teacher-researcher used several open-ended forms of data collection: classroom observation, focus groups, interviews and a weekly reflective journal. Reflectivity referred to the teacher-researcher reflecting on her role (as a teacher and researcher) in the study. This acknowledged that her personal background, culture, and experience hold the potential to shape her interpretations. The collected data focused on activity-based learning and students' engagement in learning Mandarin.

Wragg (2012) argued that there are some weaknesses in qualitative research. He said that "explanations are first of all intensely subjective". The researcher had considered this problem and conduct a careful design to minimise the influence that subjectivity may have on explanations. This is intentionally a small-scale study of one class in a primary school. Wragg stated about the subjectivity of explanation but there are several writers among them (Stake, 2005; Rowlingson,2002) talked about the qualitative research that can be much richer understanding of processes, motivations, beliefs, and attitudes than quantitative research because it emphasises small focus where quantitative research has quite large focus. Qualitative research is intentionally on the small number of participants and it can be therefore much richer in detail that the teacher-researcher wants to bring out.

3.3. Research principles

3.3.1. Consideration of ethics

Ethical consideration means to make sure that no harm is done to people through their participation in the research and that participants are treated respectfully. Wragg (2012)

explains why ethics issues are important and should be dealt with in a research project.

All researchers wrestle with issues of ethics because they are so connected to the authenticity and validity of the research project. The researcher has a sense of responsibility to protect the participants in the research—it is a basic and necessary part of a researcher's role in collecting authentic and valid data. In order to encourage people to 'open up', the researcher must promote and maintain a culture of trust, transparency and confidentiality over the course of a research project (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010, p. 88).

The teacher-researcher anticipated ethical issues and actively addressed them in the different phases of the research process. Researchers need to protect their participants and develop trust with them (Creswell, 2018, p. 88) and since most of the participants are children, the teacher-researcher was particularly careful to protect them, as well as to develop a good relationship with them to obtain authentic data.

Ethics issues were considered through the whole process of the research. Attention was paid directly towards ethical issues prior to conducting the study. For example, the teacher-researcher had gained permission from participants. When the study began, the teacher-researcher disclosed the purpose of study and be sensitive to the children since they were a vulnerable population. The teacher-researcher had received the approval letter from Human Research Ethics Committee (see appendix 1) and SERAP (State Education Research Application Process, see appendix 2) prior to carrying out this research. The teacher-researcher had obtained children's parents' formal permission prior to commencing this project. Parents had signed the consent form prior to implementation of the first cycle. When collecting data, the teacher-researcher had made certain that all participants receive the same treatment and avoid using a teacher's power to coerce them to do what they do not want. When analysing the data, the teacher-researcher respected the privacy of participants and ensure their anonymity.

Confidentiality and anonymity are of importance in ethical considerations. Participants in the research have the right to see what data the researchers have collected or gathered from the site as parts of their 'story' (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010, p. 96). To anonymise the school, the name

of the research site was given the pseudonym of Rose Public Primary school. The names of the classes were changed to Class H. The students who participated in the research were given pseudonyms as well.

3.3.2. Triangulation

Triangulation is generally considered as a strategy to validate research findings. Denzin (1989) regards triangulation as a strategy on the way to deeper, broader, comprehensive understanding of what is studied and thus as a step to more knowledge. Flick (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) give a more comprehensive definition, as follows:

Triangulation refers to combining different types of data [for the problem]. For example, triangulation should produce knowledge on different levels, which means it goes beyond the knowledge made possible by one approach and thus contributes to promoting quality in research. (p. 452)

In this study, the teacher-researcher applied data triangulation. Data triangulation combines different data sources that are obtained at different times and places, and from different persons (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 446). According to the research design of this study, the data from the reflective journal and classroom observation were gathered during the whole process of cycle implementation and data from the interviews and focus groups were collected at the end of each cycle. The teacher-researcher collected data from the students in one class and the classroom teacher, as well as provided her own input, via her reflective journal. Data from these three perspectives—students, classroom teacher and teacher-researcher— were applied to lay a solid foundation for this research.

3.3.3. Limitations of the study

The value of qualitative research lies in the particular description and themes developed in the context of a specific site. Particularity rather than generalisability (Caracelli & Greene, 1997) is the hallmark of good qualitative research.

This study applied and developed an activity-based learning approach in Chinese class in a

western Sydney primary school context. Action research is often regarded as less generalised since it is “localized and conducted with an existing group of people, who may or may not represent a random selection from a larger population” (Pine, 2008, p. 89). In this study, the teacher-researcher from the ROSETE program focused on one Mandarin class in a primary school and made improvements through the process of action research. It might not be appropriate to apply the conclusion to many contexts because of insufficient samples, different situations, particular groups—all of which are limitations to generalisability. Nevertheless, the teacher-researcher did her utmost to document well qualitative procedures to benefit other researchers working on similar projects, including subsequent ROSETE volunteer teachers.

3.4. Research design

3.4.1. Site

The researcher is a teacher-researcher of the ROSETE program (Research Oriented School Engaged Teacher Education). She taught Mandarin in the western Sydney region and in the meantime conducted the research in a western primary school. Compared with other parts of Sydney:

Western Sydney is a region characterised by a population with lower incomes and standards of living, higher unemployment, high numbers of recent of new immigrant arrivals, greater ethnic diversity and other similar markers of disadvantage (Wright et al., 2018).

Rose Public Primary School is the pseudonym name given to Cambridge Gardens Public School. According to the school annual report (Cambridge Gardens Public School, 2018), the school community includes Aboriginal students (11%) and students from non-English speaking backgrounds (16%). It currently caters for 475 students from Early Stage to Stage 3. As for students in Year 3, there are 69 students in total but only three students with a Chinese background. This school offers Chinese lessons through the Ningbo Volunteer program (ROSETE) operating in partnership with the Chinese government and the Western Sydney Region for many years. This Chinese program is an interactive experience in which students learn the Chinese language and culture. To some extent, this program provides an entry for

achieving school's goals. This school put the multicultural education and global understanding in the school plan (2018-2020). On the one hand, it indicates that "Multicultural education and activities are embedded in our school activities with school process and procedures recognizing and catering for the needs of our community" On the other hand, the school also aims for helping students build networks that connected with a wide world. Thus, students could be global citizens with understanding of the need for service and sustainability.

The data collected in the Mandarin classroom in Rose Public Primary School. One class in Year 3 was involved in this research: Class H. The Mandarin class was taken once a week and class lasted for half an hour. The teacher-researcher taught at Rose Public Primary School for four consecutive terms and implementation of the research cycles fell in the third term. The classroom teacher supported her teaching in the classroom.

3.4.2. Participants

The participants encompass two groups of students in Stage 2, Year 3 and one classroom teacher, as well as the teacher-researcher herself. The students are in Year 3 in Rose Public Primary School, in a class of around 20 students. They have a very basic knowledge about Mandarin. They are all from Australia, with a non-Chinese language background, guaranteeing that the level of Mandarin is basic, across the cohort. The reasons for choosing Year 3 students as the participants are because, on the one hand, they can express themselves better than those in kindergarten and Years 1 and 2, and on the other hand, they are easy to engage in simple activities at this age. The research was conducted in Term 3 because by then the teacher-researcher was more familiar with the students after two terms of collaborative work and more suitable activities could be created according to the teacher-researcher's experience.

The teacher-researcher worked cooperatively with the classroom teacher, who acted as an observer sometimes supporting her teaching. This meant that the classroom teacher from Class H was an important participant.

Besides this, the teacher-researcher herself was also an indispensable participant in this action

research. She was the means whereby lessons were designed taught and reflected upon, and the research was implemented.

3.4.3. Research implementation

This research study was divided into two cycles, which was implemented in Term 3. In this school, there were nine formal Chinese classes in Term 3, with four lessons allocated to the first research cycle, five to the second. Mandarin lessons were taught once per week, with each lesson lasting 30 minutes. During each cycle, different activities were conducted, and time allowed to introduce new words and expressions, and to reinforce and review previous instruction.

The allocation of lessons to cycles was made for the following reasons. For Stage 2 Australian students, Chinese learning might not be easy for them, as they were still at a young age. Therefore, the teacher-researcher took full advantage of time to introduce new words and expressions and reinforce or review what they learn. Also, the teacher-researcher wanted to find out how an activity-based approach improve the engagement of the student learning and different forms of activities in one term may be sufficient to test this. Besides, the teacher-researcher designed one term for this research because the gap of a school holiday would weaken students' retention of memorised material, which might affect the research results to some extent.

The teacher-researcher conducted the activity-based approach and make improvements in accordance with learning arrived at in previous learning cycles. During the first cycle, the teacher-researcher planned activities based on the Chinese syllabus to support students learn Mandarin. During the second cycle, the research modified the first cycle based on the research data gathered. Consistent with the action research model, each cycle was divided into four steps: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The researcher planned every activity carefully before each lesson and then introduced the activity to the class and observe how it worked. Also, the classroom teacher was invited to observe her teaching and students' engagement then complete an observation checklist. After each lesson, the teacher-researcher had written her

reflective journal to review and analyse students' responses. After the first cycle, the teacher-researcher interviewed the classroom teacher and held a focus group for students. After considering aspects of the first cycle which could be changed, improvements and progress were made in the planning and implementation of the next cycle.

The activities used in this study include simple drama games such as *Simon Says*, *Chinese Whisper*, *Hot Potato*, mime and other activities such as Chinese songs and visual arts activity. Those simple activities might be easy for Stage 2 students to understand and the teacher tried to give clear instructions to organise them. This study was practical because the primary students, especially Stage 2 students, were enthusiastic about learning by doing; they like to act or imitate and sing together. The activities are mainly used to introduce and review or reinforce what students learnt in their Mandarin class.

Some activities were used to reinforce the content they learnt. When reviewing what words have been retained there were several appropriate ways. For example, using charades is a good way to review words. One student acted out the meaning of a word and the others guess what the word is. From this process, the teacher could evaluate how much students retain of what they learned in the previous class. The activity samples could be found in the appendix 3 (see appendix 3) and the teacher-researcher reconsidered those activities to fit the practical teaching topic or content and availability. Also, the teacher-researcher monitored students' responses and sought for ways to ensure that students make personal meaning of their experiences and so develop a full understanding.

3.4.4. Chinese syllabus for Stage 2

According to the Chinese syllabus K–10, developing an interest in and enjoyment of language learning is one of values and attitudes to be fostered (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2017, p. 14). Chinese, from a totally different language family to English, is quite difficult for English speaking students to learn at a young age and they may lose interest if they do not enjoy learning it. The unreliability of phonological cues in Chinese (a tonal language) along with the fact that word building relies heavily on lexical compounding (written sense) in

Chinese makes awareness particularly important for early reading development (McBride, 2016). Activity-based learning provides an active and ‘fun’ way to conduct classroom activities rather than having students passively receiving the language knowledge. Activity-based learning also allows students to build on children’s previous knowledge in Kindergarten, Year One and Year Two. For instance, according to previous studies (Piazzoli, 2011; Matthias, 2007; O’Gara, 2008; Vila-Abadal, 2009), drama activity-based learning can develop communicative and cooperative skills, help students gain confidence and overcome anxiety.

The content of the Chinese syllabus is organised through the two interrelated strands of communicating and understanding, and related objectives and outcomes. For Stage 2 students, in the communicating strand, the outcome is that a student is able to interact with others to share information and participate in classroom activities in Chinese. Additionally, they are expected to respond to texts in a variety of ways. In the understanding strand (p. 55), the outcome is to recognise pronunciation and intonation patterns of Chinese and recognise how terms and expressions reflect aspects of culture. An activity-based approach provides a good opportunity for students to participate and interact with each other. Activities were combined with a series of supports to scaffold learning such as verbal and non-verbal activities, visual and sound supports as well as cultural knowledge activities.

Scaffolding involves using particular conceptual, material and linguistic tools and technologies to support students’ understanding (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). Scaffolding might include using various methods to represent ideas and concepts or explain a new concept through a concept map or in other ways. An activity-based approach can help students scaffold the meaning and understanding of Chinese concepts or words or expressions by acting them out or singing them out. Heyns (2007) defines role-play as a process in which “the students are expected to adopt specific roles in the different sessions and reflect on the application and their performance (p. 87)”. It is important to develop students’ conscious sensitivity towards meanings. Some simple drama games such as role-play can help students become familiar with and absorb new knowledge through practicing actual use of the knowledge.

In the classroom, the teacher evaluated what kinds of activities were appropriate to scaffold and how much scaffolding was appropriate for young learners, as they move step by step, from basic activities to more complex activities.

3.5. Data collection

Data was collected through structured classroom observation, the teacher-researcher's self-reflection (recorded in a learning journal), interviews and focus groups.

3.5.1. Observation by the classroom teacher

Classroom observation were used to document both teaching and learning activities in order to enhance the researcher's understanding of strategies used by participants (Li, 1998). Class observation was the most direct way to get first-hand data. The classroom teacher observed and recorded the students' responses to the teaching using, as much as possible, some observation checklists prepared by the teacher-researcher (see Appendix 4). These were to obtain feedback and were able to adjust teaching, where required, for the following class. Observation notes were made on the observation sheets after each class. Classroom observation was needed to make the data comprehensive. Activity-based learning required more instructions and needs to be organised well by the teacher in charge.

3.5.2. Reflective journal

Central to the concept of action research is the process of self-reflection (McAteer, 2013). The teacher-researcher kept a reflective journal from the beginning through to the end of the research. Self-reflection was conducted after every class to analyse the process and effectiveness of the activity-based learning, in order to make adjustments for the following teaching cycle. A reflective journal was a good way to record the teaching effectiveness and students' responses. It was also a good way for the teacher-researcher to document what happened during the lesson and her thoughts and feelings about this. O'Toole & Beckett (2010) argued that in an action research project the journal should include phases and progress through the cycles. The teacher-researcher kept a reflective journal each week after each lesson.

In addition, key points arising from meetings about the research with mentor and supervisor were included, especially any resulting changes in the focus of the research question. The feedback from the classroom teachers after each session was included in the reflective journal. After each cycle, conclusions were drawn about the teaching process. These became the basis of the changes required for the next stage of teaching and learning.

3.5.3. Interviews

Interviewing the classroom teacher was also a sound way to collect feedback. Interviews aimed to gather information on students' Chinese language learning experiences and responses to activity-based learning. The classroom teacher sat in the class while the teacher-researcher was teaching. Given that she is a qualified teacher, she was able to provide feedback on the teaching and students' learning.

At the end of each cycle of teaching, the teacher-researcher tried to spend around 25 minutes interviewing the classroom teacher about the class activities (see appendix 5). The teacher-researcher recorded the interviews with two electronic recorders to ensure that data is gathered successfully. From the perspective of the teacher-researcher, it appeared that for young students, a focus group rather than interviews was more suitable.

3.5.4. Focus groups

The Australian students, also as research participants, provided the most effective and authentic data, especially in relation to their attitudes, behaviours, thoughts, opinions and feelings during the action research process, through a focus group. As for the number of interviewees, a focus group was conducted to interview 4–6 students for 15 minutes after each of the two cycles (see appendix 6). The advantage was that the participants could not only communicate with the interviewer but also with other students who were involved in the same interview, which made the feedback more comprehensive and gave the interviewer more profound insights. In these interactions, students might support or argue with each other's ideas, also releasing valuable data. The disadvantage was that the participants might be 'off the track' because of unconscious group thinking, or they may reshape their true feelings because of peer pressure (O'Toole &

Beckett, 2010). Although this kind of disadvantage might exist, the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. After each cycle of teaching, students were asked some questions such as how activity-based learning helped or did not help their learning of Chinese, and if they were learning Chinese in an enjoyable way when they participated in activities.

3.6. Data analysis

“Analysing qualitative data is quite different from analysing quantitative data and often rather harder (O’Toole, 2010, p. 168).” As the teacher-researcher conducted an action research, she knew what she had planned in the first instance in order to improve her practice. After that, the data she collected helped to identify whether or to what extent her planning was working in action. She could not plan in advance the criteria by which she interpreted the unplanned.

Qualitative data analysis is a process of sequential data analysis. There are four steps that need to be followed (Creswell, 2018, p. 193).

Step 1. Organise and prepare the data for analysis. The teacher-researcher needs to transcribe interviews from classroom teachers and students, type up field notes, scan reflective journals, and sort and arrange the data into different types depending on the sources of information.

Step 2. Read or look at all the data. This step provides a general sense of information and opportunity to reflect on its overall meaning. For example, what is the impression of the overall depth, credibility and use of the information? The data from primary school students may be different from what the teacher-researchers or the classroom teacher think about in terms of activity-based learning.

Step 3. Start coding all of the data. Coding is the process of organising the data and writing a word representing a category in the margin (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, cited in Creswell, 2018), and labelling those categories with a term.

Step 4. Generate a description and themes. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.

Step 5. Represent the description and themes. The most popular approach is to use a narrative passage to convey the findings of analysis.

Interpretation in qualitative research is also an important process. This involves several procedures including “summarizing the overall findings, comparing the findings to the literature, discussing a personal view of the findings, and stating limitations and ideas about future study” (Creswell, 2018, p. 198). In this study, after data collection through the two cycles, the teacher-researcher presented the overall findings about the implementation of an activity-based approach and compared those findings with the literature. Then the teacher-researcher discussed what improvement she had achieved in this action research and any limitations she had learned to consider. Ideas about future study options were pointed out towards the end of this research thesis.

Chapter 4: Findings from implementing activity-based learning

This chapter is to answer the first research question: How can activity-based learning be used to teach Chinese language to learners who do not have a Chinese language background, in a western Sydney primary school? Making Chinese easier to learn and enjoyable is quite important for Australian students who do not have a Chinese background. In order to do this, the first cycle of activities chosen were based on more familiar activities such as drama games and tunes but using Chinese language. To achieve the outcomes outlined in the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage Two students, the teacher-researcher designed lessons and used three types of learning activities: drama games, Chinese songs and visual arts. There were two cycles involved in the research. Each cycle involved all three types of activity. The Chinese language topic in the first cycle was the names of body parts and in the second cycle, the names of colours. Teaching in the second cycle was modified and improved, based on the teacher-researcher's reflections on the first cycle, in keeping with the participatory action research model.

4.1. Drama games

4.1.1. Cycle One – ‘Simon says’, ‘Chinese Whisper’ and mime

Simon Says

In the first cycle, the teacher-researcher implemented some drama games to help students reinforce learning of new words. After the introduction of new words by slides and repetition by flashcards, the teacher-researcher helped students to learn those words actively through drama games. The first drama game that students engaged in was called ‘Simon Says’. This drama game was implemented because it is suitable for practicing the words related to body parts and gives students a chance to practise their understanding and listening in a relaxed atmosphere. Surprisingly, the teacher-researcher found that most students were familiar with

the rules of this game. They were willing to explain the rules to other students who did not know them. In the game, the teacher-researcher takes the role of 'Simon' and issues instructions such as "(Simon says), touch your knees". After the instruction is given, students need to follow the instructions only when prefaced with the phrase "Simon says". If the given instruction does not include the phrase "Simon says", they should not follow the action. The atmosphere in the class was highly energised when the game began. When the teacher-researcher gave students instructions, students listened to her carefully and responded quickly. In the meantime, students liked observing others and identifying those who made the wrong actions.

They were excited when I said we are going to do a drama game Simon says. They really concentrated on my instruction and gave the response quickly and quietly. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 23/07/2019)

After three rounds, the teacher-researcher was impressed that students remembered the body parts words very well. In fact, such an activity was used as a formative assessment to evaluate students' Chinese listening and their understanding of those words related to body parts. After achieving a good response from students, the teacher-researcher modified the roles of this game so that students could be the leader of the activity. She invited a volunteer student to be the Chinese teacher in the front of the class. To help them feel the role of teacher, she introduced the student to the class by saying, "Welcome to our new Chinese teacher-Susan (pseudonym)". Meanwhile, the phrase "Simon says" was changed into "Susan says". Those students who were invited, felt excited and proud to take the role. The purpose of allowing students to be the leader was to give some students the chance to practise Chinese speaking in a relaxed environment. As Australian students do not have many opportunities to speak Chinese outside of the Chinese classroom, the teacher-researcher attempted to create a learning environment in which students were encouraged to speak as much Chinese as possible. As a result, the classroom interactions were enhanced, and this helped in the successful implementation of the drama game Simon Says. Students were all engaged in practicing the listening to and speaking of body parts words in a motivated and joyful atmosphere.

Chinese Whisper

Chinese Whisper is a classic drama game. The teacher-researcher chose this game because it is appropriate for practicing pronunciation and listening skills for Chinese language. At first, the teacher-researcher made students sit in multiple lines and then she whispered a word to the first student of each line. After that, the first student was supposed to whisper the same word they heard from the teacher to the second student and so on. The message would be repeated until the last student received it. The last one of each line needed to announce the word out to their group and their playmates had to compare it with what they heard and check if it was correct. If the answer was wrong, the second last student should tell the class. The process of whispering a word, can enhance peer interaction and collaboration between students and teacher. This can be found in the teacher-researcher's weekly reflective journal as below:

After they were arranged in lines, students showed great interest in playing this drama game. I made sure that all of them know the rules and told the first student of each line different body parts words. They happily began to pass the word one by one. I noticed that if someone is not clear, they will repeat to or clarify to the partner softly. I am pleased to see this kind of peer interaction. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 30/07/2019)

According to this entry of teacher-researcher's journal, it also shows the importance of relying first on familiar things such as body parts just with names in Chinese language so that students can learn those Chinese words in a relaxed environment.

Mime

Mime is an age-appropriate drama game for young learners. Dundar (2013) refers to John Dougill's definition of mime as "a non-verbal representation of an idea or story through gesture, bodily movement and expression" (1987). It encourages students to develop their body language for communication, which results in a greater awareness of the importance of communication. Moreover, miming is used as an effective activity to enhance students' full participation and inclusivity. Savignon (1983) also mentions that mime:

helps learners become comfortable with the idea of performing in front of peers without concern for language and that although no language is used during a mime it can be a spur to use language.

According to Hillova (2008), miming is viewed as a very useful strategy to include students with different language abilities.

The teacher-researcher explained the rules for a miming activity by showing students a slide that demonstrated what mime is and how it is played. First, the teacher-researcher invited a student to come to the front of the classroom to lead the game. Then the leader used exaggerated facial expression and body language to present a body part word and the rest of the class needed to guess what the leader was trying to express. The leader student nodded or shook their head to tell the class whether their guess was right or wrong. In this process, students used their imagination to dramatise or portray the vocabulary through movements and facial expressions. This simple drama game created a relaxing environment for students to practise their non-verbal communication skills, reinforce their listening skills and enhance their understanding of the words they have learnt. Here is an excerpt from the teacher-researcher's reflective journal:

I created a relaxing class atmosphere for students and then stepped out of the teacher's chair. Now I was just like a spectator. Students are too young to say sentences and conversation so far. Body language is another way to communicate and so I regard this game as a method to increase peer interaction through non-verbal and verbal. It is the process of practicing listening and understanding.
(Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 30/07/2019)

4.1.2. Cycle Two–Traffic Lights and Hot Potato

Traffic Lights

During the second cycle, after learning the new words about colours via slides, the teacher-researcher introduced a drama game named 'Traffic Lights' to reinforce and review the learning (see appendix 7 one sample of lesson plan). It is well known that traffic lights are red, yellow and green. The rules of this drama game were that when the teacher-researcher said "red (红色 hóng sè)" in Chinese, students needed to freeze. When teacher-researcher said "yellow (黄色 huáng sè)" in Chinese, students needed to stand on one leg and when the teacher-researcher said "green (绿色 lǜ sè)" in Chinese, students were supposed to make other movements. The teacher-researcher was so impressed that the students played the game very quietly. When the teacher-researcher began to speak faster, she found that students responded very quickly too.

She knew that students understood what she said and could act quickly in response. After the teacher-researcher made sure that all students were performing well, she invited a student to the front of the class to play the role of leader and give the instructions to others. She said that the leader should speak confidently, loudly and clearly. To her surprise, students all crowded to the teacher and raised up their hands to show their desire to be the leader and take the role of the teacher. If some volunteers were not loud or clear enough, the teacher-researcher would help and encourage them to say the word again. In this drama game, the leader student could practise speaking and others could practise listening and develop their understanding. Moreover, it was a beneficial way for the teacher-researcher to correct individual students' pronunciation of Chinese during the students' interactions.

Hot Potato

Hot Potato was one of the most popular drama games that students loved to play. After teaching all the colour words and a sentence structure "I like...colour" in Chinese, the teacher-researcher introduced this drama game to reinforce the sentence structure. The rules were that when the music was playing, students needed to pass around a potato toy the teacher-researcher prepared; when the music stopped playing, the student who held the potato had to say their favourite colour in Chinese. The conversation between teacher and student took the form: "What colour do you like?" "I like blue." Students were particularly excited to play this game and they could not wait to express their favourite colour in Chinese if they were lucky enough to be holding the potato. Students wanted to keep playing even when time ran out. The teacher-researcher had created a relaxing and enjoyable environment to encourage interaction between teacher and students rather than just using straightforward questioning and answering.

4.2. Chinese songs

4.2.1. Cycle One–Two body parts songs

In the third lesson of the first cycle, the teacher-researcher taught students two songs based on the learning of body parts words. The first one was a face song Students enjoyed watching a video of a fat face and begged her to play it one more time. The teacher-researcher agreed and

left them with a question about which part of the face was it that they had not learnt the word for yet? During the second viewing, students watched much more carefully and could not wait to raise their hands to tell her the answer. The purpose of this face song was to review the Chinese words for face parts and to introduce a new word—brow. After students learnt the new word, the teacher-researcher led them in singing this funny song, twice. They learnt it quickly. The second song was very popular with the students; they were eager to learn it. The teacher-researcher put it in the third lesson of the cycle because she wanted to make sure that students' pronunciation of the words they learnt in the first two lessons was accurate. This song was easy and familiar for students due to the similar rhythm of the English version 'Head Shoulders, Knees and Toes'. Another advantage of this song was that students could follow the actions with the video to point to the body parts, which helped them understand what they were singing instead of just watching and singing.

Student asked me if they can stand up and move their bodies with the song. I said sure. To my surprise, they engaged very well and almost everyone is happy to follow the music, singing and dancing. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 06/08/2019)

This reflective journal entry shows the importance of establishing familiarity with something students already know such as familiar tunes with different Chinese language words.

4.2.2. Cycle Two–Colour songs

In the third lesson of the second cycle, two colour songs were used in the Chinese class. Songs were used to provide a new way of learning for the students in the action research cycle. Students might have been tired of seeing slides and playing drama games which were mainly used in the first two lessons. Songs could bring different feelings and experiences to the learning and avoid boredom. Songs are a useful tool to review and reinforce students' prior learning and do so in a peaceful and enjoyable atmosphere. The first song consisted of eight colour words and used a common melody. The second song was totally different in style and involved much more activity. With the second song, students wearing the specific colour sung needed to stand up, lift up their hands, turn around and sit down. Luckily, that day was a special day called 'Wear what you wish day', and so students had worn clothes in different colours.

They sang with the music and followed the actions shown in an accompanying video; it was a very pleasant learning environment. Students showed great enthusiasm toward music, especially when they could dance to it. The teacher-researcher had selected the songs very carefully and thoughtfully, taking into consideration the students' language level. These two songs combined the colour words they learnt before. Compared with using repetition, song-based learning is a beneficial method to reinforce and review words for these young learners.

4.3. Visual arts

4.3.1. Cycle One–Assembling a paper panda

The teacher-researcher chose to incorporate visual arts in Chinese language learning to create an enjoyable learning environment. In the first cycle, the topic was body parts and the teacher-researcher considered two plans for a suitable activity. Plan A involved inviting students to draw a cartoon character they liked from a shortlist provided and then introduce the body parts of the cartoon character to the class. Different cartoon characters have different appearances, some of them are very exaggerated such as SpongeBob. The teacher-researcher enjoyed watching cartoons very much when she was young. She searched the most popular Australian cartoon characters online and, before preparing a shortlist, discussed with the classroom teacher, if children were likely to be familiar with the cartoon characters she had found.

Plan B involved an activity called 'Assembling a Paper Panda' (see appendix 7 students' artwork sample). The teacher-researcher prepared two pieces of paper; one was used as a panda's body and the other one had some body parts of a panda drawn on it. Students were required to work in pairs to cut out all the body parts, paste them on the body sheet and then give a presentation to the class. During the pair work, students needed to use the Chinese names for body parts in their discussion with their partners. The purpose of the activity was to allow students to demonstrate their ability to use the Chinese words they learnt to complete the activity. Moreover, since the panda is an animal unique to China, this activity also promoted students' understanding of Chinese culture

To make a better decision, she discussed the two plans with her mentor who is an experienced

teacher. The mentor suggested that Plan B was more suitable than Plan A. She explained that Plan B sounded more interesting, which would stimulate students' engagement and participation, while Plan A might need more time and work in class. More importantly, the introduction of pandas can help students to learn about Chinese culture because pandas play a significant role in Chinese society. Hence, she followed her guidance and the lesson went very well. Students showed a great passion for making the paper pandas. What impressed the teacher-researcher most is the classroom teacher's observation:

Grant is often quiet and rarely answer questions. He gave it a go today and shared with others. (Grant and Daniel gave us a presentation with the paper panda they made together.) (Classroom teacher's observation sheet 06/08/2019)

4.3.2. Cycle Two—Making a Peking Opera mask

For the second visual arts activity, the teacher-researcher also made two plans. During the second cycle, the topic was about colours. In Plan A, she was thinking of letting students colour some portraits to show how people from different cultures look different. She expected them to describe their portraits to the class after they had finished them. For instance, a student could use the colour words they learnt in Chinese to describe the colour of the body parts that they coloured. As for Plan B, she designed an activity that allowed students to make a Peking Opera mask (see appendix 8 students' artwork samples), which they would then colour and finally, give a presentation to the class to introduce its colour. When students were presenting the masks they had made, they would be expected to use the Chinese words they had learnt for body parts and colours, to describe the colour of the mask, for example, "The nose is black, and the mouth is yellow". This kind of mask is really full of bright colours. The purpose of this activity was to allow students to demonstrate their ability to use the words they learnt about colours and body parts in Chinese. Students would also be encouraged to talk about the meaning of the colour on the mask because different colours represent different human characteristics. After a discussion with two supervisors and reflecting on her own experience, she decided to use Plan B. This was because Plan B allowed students to learn something different and intercultural while they are using Chinese language, in the process of making an artistic mask. Students were very engaged, and the classroom teacher said it was "a good concluding lesson to finalise

students understanding of Chinese names of colours”.

4.4. Factors influencing the implementation of an activity-based approach

From this research, the teacher-researcher has summarised five factors that affect the implementation of classroom activities: the choice of teaching content; the use of appropriate language in delivering content and giving instruction; time management prior to and during the class; classroom management; and, classroom atmosphere. These factors were generated from the teacher-researcher’s reflection and classroom teacher’s feedback. This section will elaborate each single factor as follows:

4.4.1. Appropriate choice of teaching content

Content means the knowledge, understanding and skills that students need to learn (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Content is the main element that needs to be taken into consideration in the process of teaching and learning in a foreign language classroom. This is because students’ engagement and participation in the classroom are heavily dependent on the content their teacher delivers. If the content is beyond their ability to learn, students are more likely to lose interest in learning and become disengaged, as they are young learners. When you take into consideration the educational background of both the teacher-researcher and Australian students, the use of appropriate teaching content in the Chinese language classroom becomes even more important. This is because the Chinese language is considered as a second or third or an additional language in the local primary public school, in which the research took place and learners’ prior knowledge about the Chinese language, including vocabulary, short phrases and expression, is very limited.

To keep students engaged and focused, the teacher-researcher chose appropriate teaching content to deliver. This meant that the content needed to match the level of students’ language ability and be built on students’ prior knowledge. The content also had to be built up, little by little, lesson by lesson. As Chinese character recognition and writing and Chinese grammar are too difficult for Stage Two students, the teacher-researcher focused on speaking and listening skills instead of reading and writing. Using the K-10 Chinese Syllabus and its scope and

sequence, the teacher-researcher picked two topics as the main teaching content for the research—body parts and colours.

The teacher-researcher chose to teach the Chinese words for different body parts in the first two or three lessons. After students mastered these Chinese words, students could attempt to speak simple sentences with the help of the teacher, in the final lesson of the first cycle (see Table 4.1). The number of new words introduced was no more than five and a review lesson was necessary to reinforce and assess the students' learning outcomes. This review lesson was incorporated in the second cycle. Besides, the teacher-researcher kept the teaching content in a sequential flow so that students could make a final presentation combining what they had learnt in the whole term. Teachers need to be familiar with their students' background, especially their language level and prior learning experience, to be able to successfully teach lessons.

Table 4.1: Summary of lessons in the research cycles

	Timeline	Main teaching content	Types of activities involved	Activities
Cycle 1	lesson 1	head, shoulders, knees, feet	drama games	Simon says
	lesson 2	eyes, ears, nose, mouth	drama games	Chinese whisper; mime
	lesson 3	review lessons (1& 2)	two body songs	body parts songs
	lesson 4	This is (its) eyes/ears/nose...	visual arts	assemble a paper panda and present it
Cycle 2	lesson 5	red, yellow, blue, green	drama games	traffic lights
	lesson 6	black, white, orange, purple	drama games	hot potato
	lesson 7	review lesson (5 & 6)	two songs	colour songs
	lesson 8	The eyes are black...	visual arts	make a mask and present it
	lesson 9	The mouth is red...		

4.4.2. Language of teacher instruction

As shown in 4.1, there were different drama games, songs activities, and visual arts activity

which were built on Cycle One. In Cycle Two, the teacher-researcher pay more attention to teacher's instruction with the activities. Instruction-giving plays an important role in students' learning and how well activities are carried out (Sowell, 2017). He also points out that "in multilingual classes, it is an unrealistic expectation for the instructor to manage explanations in multiple languages (p. 17)".

The teacher-researcher chose more age-appropriate language when giving instructions. Instructional words were chosen carefully in lesson preparation and modification of instructional words were made if any student does not fully understand the instruction. Take the Simon says activity for example. At first, the teacher-researcher used half Chinese and half English to give the instruction. The instruction was "Simon says, 摸摸你的头", which means "Simon says, touch your head". However, only a few students were able to respond to the teacher-researcher by touching their heads. This is because the only Chinese word students recognised in the instruction was "head-头", which they had learnt in the lesson. They did not know the words for 'touch' and 'your'. After realising the problem, the teacher-researcher modified her instruction and gave the instruction again: "Simon says, touch your 头 (tóu) ". The modified instruction ensured that there were no unknown words in the instruction so that all the students could understand what they were expected to do. Moreover, teachers can attempt to teach additional instructional words in Chinese after students have a solid foundation of the basic words they learnt in the class. In Cycle Two, the teacher-researcher made some modifications on the teaching instructions based on her experience of Cycle One. She wrote down the teacher's instruction that might be used in activities and polished the language to avoid make students confused before lesson. Unfamiliar Chinese teaching instructions were carefully chosen or fully explained prior to the implementation of activities, which made the activities in Cycle Two such as Traffic Lights and Hot potato carry out smoothly. To sum up, instructions must be given specifically and clearly and be understandable to all students to increase their understanding and allow them to give correct responses during the activities.

4.4.3. Time management

4.4.3.1. Planning time prior to the class

In the Australian school context, Chinese is not viewed as a high priority subject and limited hours are allocated to Chinese learning in schools (Orton, 2008). In Australian primary schools, it is not mandatory to teach Chinese as a subject. However, some primary schools voluntarily offer Chinese as a subject, with the time allocated to it rather limited—20 to 30 minutes per week. Take the school in this research for example. There is only one 30-minute-Chinese class per week for Year 3 with a maximum of 5 hours in total per term. What makes teaching Chinese more challenging is that teachers have a lot of things to cover in a short time period of 20 to 30 minutes. These things include: settling down the class; reviewing what students have learnt from the previous lessons; teaching new content and implementing hands-on activities to reinforce students' learning; and, evaluating students' learning. Therefore, to successfully deliver the lesson, teachers must thoroughly prepare the lesson by allocating adequate time on each section as well as having alternative plans when unexpected issues arise. Appendix 9 contains a sample lesson plan.

4.4.3.2. Managing time during the class

Teachers need to manage the time effectively so that each classroom activity is allocated adequate time for students to complete the task. Teachers also need to be flexible when unexpected issues arise. For instance, teachers should have alternative plans to gain students' attention and keep them on task when students are distracted and become off-task.

In the first cycle, the teacher-researcher planned two drama games for the second lesson—mime and 'freeze-frame'. Students were excited to comment on the pictures in the mime activity (see Figure 4.1). The class failed to engage in the freeze-frame activity as more time was spent on the mime activity due to students' overexcitement. In the visual arts activities, some students finished making art craft objects very quickly and some slowly. Therefore, managing the time and being flexible toward changes is really important for a successful lesson.



Figure 4.1: Slide of mime pictures

4.4.4. Classroom management

According to Oliver, Wehby and Reschy (2011), classroom management has been defined broadly as any action a teacher takes to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning (cited by Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Classroom management is another challenging task for the beginning teacher. Students talk over others, which may produce noise and discourage a respectful learning environment. The teacher-researcher needs to teach students to listen respectfully when others are talking, managing the situation promptly to make sure the activities smoothly move on.

Under some circumstances, students could be overexcited about classroom activities resulting in classroom management issues. Students who are overexcited in the classroom tend to distract their peers, making it challenging for teachers to keep them focused. For example, when playing the drama game Traffic Lights, some students tried to touch others or lie down on the carpet without permission from the teacher. Even though students had a lot of fun playing the game, such behaviour has a negative impact on learning. As for the disruptive behaviour, the teacher-researcher lacked skills of classroom management in the beginning and the classroom teacher offered her a huge amount of assistance to manage students.

Make sure you do not allow any students to talk over the top of you, if students speak whilst you are instructing, stop and wait for them to stop. Remind them of expectations. (Transcript of classroom teacher's interview 31/07/2019)

The teacher-researcher reflected on this issue and in the following lessons, she tried to use

some classroom management techniques such as, “One two three, eyes on me”, “Hands on head”, “**Hand up** if you know the answer”, and “Repeat after me, **together**”, to manage students and remind them of expectations. The classroom management strategies worked effectively in terms of gaining students’ attention and keeping them engaged.

4.4.5 Classroom atmosphere

The classroom atmosphere is a vital component of teaching and learning that helps establish and maintain rapport between teacher and students, build motivation and confidence among the learners, and facilitate the processes of teaching and learning (Senior, as cited in Lee & Mak, 2018, p. 1.)

Classroom atmosphere refers to the social, psychological, and emotional features of the atmosphere of the classroom. The teacher-researcher found the classroom atmosphere did affect the implementation of classroom activities. In the first lesson, there was little interaction and engagement since the teacher-researcher was nervous and students were in a low spirit for some reason.

I kept glancing my watch to make sure I was on the timeline for each part of my lesson plan. I was wondering why students are so quiet today and only a few of them showed enthusiasm. Is my instruction clear? Is the content or activity boring? I was keeping asking myself in mind. (Teacher-researcher’s reflective journal 31/07/2019)

When the students were first playing a drama game, some of them started to show interest in the activity and they started to actively participate in the activities. Meanwhile, a positive classroom atmosphere was established gradually. Surprisingly, in the following week, students showed high levels of engagement and participation. During the second week, activities were smoothly implemented; students performed very well, and the classroom atmosphere was relaxed. Both students’ and teacher’s attitude/emotional status may result in students’ disengagement and the negative classmate climate may affect the implementation of classroom activities.

Chinese class began after a dance activity. Today students look very happy and relaxed. When we did the reviewing, I was so impressed that they responded beyond my expectation. A good classroom atmosphere is half of the success. Last time, when I went to the class, I felt students were

blamed for doing something wrong. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 06/08/2019)

As for the interesting activities, most of the students wanted to be the game leader/presenter. Students could become upset if they were not picked. To solve this problem, the teacher-researcher always tried to create a fair classroom atmosphere by letting students take turns to be the leader/presenter. For example, "Girls first, boys second", "I'd like to pick one girl and one boy", "Whichever pair finishes early has the chance to present", or "I'd like to pick someone with beautiful manners". Besides this, the teacher-researcher also addressed students' emotional/affective needs when she saw a student who tried to get the teacher's attention. A fair and positive classroom environment is key to learning; it not only helps students to learn effectively, but also promotes students' well-being.

4.5. Summary

This chapter first has described the results of implementing three types of learning activities—simple drama games, Chinese songs, and visual arts activities, combined with Chinese language and Chinese culture. Each activity was carefully selected and modified by the teacher-researcher to achieve the learning outcomes that are outlined in the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage 2 students. Most of the activities worked very well, as evidenced by the full participation of the class and positive feedback from the students and classroom teacher, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Where there was room to improve, these adjustments were made in the second cycle.

Secondly, this chapter discussed five main factors that affect the implementation of classroom activities, including: choosing teaching content; the use of appropriate language for delivering content and giving instruction; time management prior to and during the class; classroom management; and, classroom atmosphere. Whether a lesson is delivered successfully or not depends on the complex interplay between the factors mentioned above. Therefore, teachers should create a positive classroom atmosphere in which they can manage the time effectively, present the instruction and expectations explicitly and cater for individual student's learning needs.

Chapter 5: Findings aligned with syllabus

This chapter will demonstrate how learning outcomes, which are outlined in the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage Two students, have been achieved through the implementation of an activity-based learning approach to learning Chinese language and culture. Also, this chapter will use a critical perspective to analyse the evidence of learning, related to the syllabus and according to literature views of activity-based learning described in Chapter 2. The evidence consists of: data collected from the:

- students— checklists completed by the students and focus groups of six students
- classroom teacher— the interview with the classroom teacher and the classroom teacher’s observation of lessons
- teacher-researcher herself— from a weekly reflective journal.

5.1. Outcomes listed in the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage 2

According to the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus, the overall aim of studying Chinese from K–10 is to enable students to “communicate with others in Chinese, and to reflect on and understand the nature and role of language and culture in their own lives and the lives of others” (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2017, p. 13). The Chinese syllabus clearly outlines the learning objectives and outcomes of the study of Chinese in K–10, which will be achieved through the communicating strand and the understanding strand. These strands reflect important aspects of language learning related to communication—analysis and understanding of language and culture, and reflection. These two strands are interdependent. In terms of the communicating strand, students are expected to use language for communicative purposes by interacting, accessing and responding, and composing (speaking). The understanding strand requires students to understand the systems of language and the role of language and culture.

The teacher-researcher focused on the use of activity-based learning in a Chinese language class to engage Stage 2 (Year 3) students in western Sydney region, especially with regard to

Chinese speaking and listening. The learning of Chinese writing conventions and grammar was not considered in the research and is not discussed in this thesis. The teacher-researcher designed the lesson plans by following the syllabus objectives to achieve the outcomes for Stage 2. These learning objectives and outcomes are listed below (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Learning objectives and outcomes for Stage 2 of the Chinese syllabus

Strands	Objectives	Outcomes A student:	Types of activities	Examples of activities
Communicating	Interacting	interacts with others to share information and participate in classroom activities.	Drama games	Simon Says Traffic Lights' Hot Potato mime
	Accessing and responding	locates and classifies information in text; responds to texts in a variety of ways.	Songs	Head Shoulders Knees and Feet Colour songs
	Composing (speaking)	composes texts in Chinese using modelled language.	Visual arts	Two presentations about art craft objects they made (paper pandas and facial mask)
Understanding	System of language	recognises pronunciation and intonation patterns of Chinese	Drama games & Songs	Chinese Whisper Loud and Soft
	Role of language and culture	recognises how terms and expressions reflect aspects of culture	Visual arts	Assembling a paper panda & making a facial mask

5.2. Interacting

Interacting is an objective outlined under the communicating strand; it involves students in “exchanging information, ideas and opinions, and socialising, planning and negotiating” (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2017, p. 14). To achieve the objective of interacting, students were encouraged to interact with each other in terms of sharing ideas and participating in classroom activities. Meanwhile, the teacher-researcher needed to encourage students to be actively engaged and create a learning environment, conducive to communication. According to Yulia and Budiharti (2019), “A good classroom interaction depends on how teachers give a chance to students to talk to each other, ask or share the information they get during the lesson”. This idea is underpinned by Khan, who states in his paper that classroom interaction contributes to the students being active in the learning process (Khan, 2009). Therefore, the teacher-researcher implemented an activity-based learning approach, which involved a wide range of activities that provided students with numerous opportunities to interact with each other, to share their opinions and ideas, and to get involved in classroom activities. It is worth mentioning that the activities used by the teacher-researcher not only promote students’ verbal interaction, but also their non-verbal interaction. Wigham (2012) also investigated the interplay between verbal and non-verbal interaction which supports verbal participation and production in a foreign language. Although a variety of activities may promote interaction, specifically, the teacher-researcher made use of simple drama games to achieve the outcomes of interacting and participating.

Drama games can take many forms and are used for multiple purposes in school-based learning. In this research, the teacher-researcher used several drama games to enhance student’s interaction, both verbal and non-verbal. Taking into consideration the students’ language level and their ages, the teacher-researcher used the non-verbal drama games: Simon Says, Traffic Lights and mime, and the verbal drama games: Hot Potato, Chinese Whisper and Loud and Soft. Take Hot Potato as an example. In Hot Potato the teacher-researcher played music while students passed a potato toy from one by another. When the music stopped, the student who was holding the potato needed to answer a question asked by the teacher-researcher, the

question being both asked and answered in Chinese. This drama game was played when students were learning to say different colours in Chinese, and the question asked by the teacher-researcher to the student, who was holding the potato toy when the music stopped, was: “What colour do you like?” This interaction between the teacher-researcher and the student created an opportunity for students to practise their Chinese speaking skills in a more relaxing environment. In fact, unlike the traditional way (of directly asking and answering), which fosters a tense atmosphere in the classroom, asking students a question while playing a simple drama game can significantly reduce the anxiety of students. This also found in previous study such as Nezami et al. As anxiety makes learners nervous and afraid, it contributes to poor aural and oral performance while drama-based activities can enhance students’ confidence and decrease their anxiety (Nezami et al, 2018).

As soon as I started to play the popular song called Hot Potato, students became excited and quickly were ready to play. From my observations during the game time, I found out that a few students did not want to let go of the toy potato. They wanted to be the one who was holding the toy potato when the music stopped so that they could have the chance to answer my question. Another interesting observation was that some students were willing to share more answers than they were expected. Most of the students gave one favourite colour, for example, “我喜欢红色 (I like red)”. However, some students tried to say more than one colour that they liked, for example, “我喜欢蓝色和绿色 (I like blue and green)”, although they were not able to say ‘and’ in Chinese. Such kinds of interaction surprised me. I was pleased with the students' willingness to share information with each other and their efforts to express more. (Teacher-researcher’s reflective journal 03/09/2019)

Apart from the verbal interaction involved in drama games, there were some non-verbal interactions, as well. Non-verbal interaction plays an important role in learning (Boyce, 2017; Mehrabian, 2017; Gladwell, 2005). This point of view is also supported by Fisher (2014) who points out that approximately 60–90% of communication in a child’s daily life is non-verbal. Therefore, drama games such as Simon Says, Traffic Lights and mime were selected to increase non-verbal interaction among students. In fact, using such games is an effective way to assess students’ Chinese understanding and listening skills. For instance, the two drama games-Simon Says and Traffic Lights required the teacher-researcher to provide students with instruction and

then students needed to give responses by making corresponding body movements or gestures. All the students were included and participated in these drama games. In the process of participation, students could practise their listening in a pleasant atmosphere and the teacher-researcher was able to evaluate students' understanding of what they had learnt, according to their responses.

The main purpose of the above-mentioned non-verbal drama games was to improve all students' understanding of what they had learnt, and their listening skills. In addition, the teacher-researcher modified the games so that some students would have the opportunity to practise their Chinese speaking skills. To achieve this, these students were encouraged to take the role of the teacher-researcher to give instructions to their peers. As a result, it could be concluded that simple drama games are a good tool to achieve the outcomes of participation and interaction between students.

When we played drama games, students actively participated in the games; sometimes, they could be a little bit loud. Surprisingly, when we played the Traffic Lights, students were so cooperative and quiet today. When I said 'red' in Chinese, they stopped suddenly; when I said 'green', they walked swiftly and silently; when I said 'yellow', they stood on one leg. I decided to invite a volunteer student to play the role of leader to give the instruction; students were so excited, and everyone wanted to be picked as the leader. They ran to me and suddenly I was surrounded by the children. The game went on smoothly and successfully. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 27/08/2019)

5.3. Accessing and responding

To achieve the outcomes of students being able to locate and classify information in text as well as respond to texts in a variety of ways, the teacher-researcher used two Chinese songs in each cycle.

In the first cycle, students learnt a Chinese song regarding body parts named 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Feet'. This Chinese song has an English version called 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes', which is quite popular among children in Australia. These two songs have the same

melody, but there is one word different in the lyrics. The Chinese version has the word ‘feet’ in the song while the English version replaces the word with ‘toes’. This song (see Table 5.2) was chosen purposefully by the teacher-researcher who took into consideration the students’ prior knowledge and their learning ability.

Table 5.2: Lyrics of the song Head, Shoulders, Knees and Feet

Chinese lyrics	English translation
头，肩膀，膝盖，脚，膝盖，脚	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and feet.
头，肩膀，膝盖，脚，膝盖，脚	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and feet.
眼睛，耳朵，嘴巴，鼻子	(And) eyes and ears and mouth and mouth and nose.
头，肩膀，膝盖，脚，膝盖，脚	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and feet,
(重复一遍)	knees and feet.
	(repeat)
头，肩膀，膝盖，脚，膝盖，脚	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and feet.
头，肩膀，膝盖，脚，膝盖，脚	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and feet.
眼睛，耳朵，嘴巴，鼻子	(And) eyes and ears and mouth and mouth and nose.
头，肩膀，膝盖，脚，膝盖，脚	Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and feet,
	knees and feet.

Incorporating Chinese songs into language learning helps students to locate information in a song and to respond to the song in different ways. On the one hand, singing this song with the corresponding movements helps students associate body parts with their Chinese names they are learning. When the students hear “head (头)” in the song, they need to touch their heads. Locating their body parts by touching them, can scaffold students learning and assist them to understand the meaning of words. On the other hand, singing songs helps students respond to text in a variety of ways because it involves three types of senses: sight, hearing and touch. The involvement of the three kinds of sense is part of a process of accessing and responding to the information they are singing about. After a video of the song was played three times, the teacher-researcher turned the music off. Surprisingly, students had already learnt how to sing the song without the music. The teacher-researcher was impressed when she realised that

students were able to sing the song, touching the right body parts at the same time. In this case, this singing activity clearly demonstrated that students were able to locate information in text and also respond to the text in a variety of ways. In fact, until the last week of Term 3, students were still able to sing this song well.

Due to the familiar rhythm, students picked up this song quickly. As soon as I played the Chinese version of the song Head, Shoulders, Knees and Feet, two students asked me if they could stand up and dance. I said “sure” and led them to sing the Chinese songs together. They were really happy to sing and dance with the music. I noticed that they could touch the corresponding body parts correctly while singing with the music. After I played the music three times, I turned the music off and they were still able to sing and dance well by themselves. I was pleased to see they had learnt the song by heart rather than just imitating. Song singing is a better way to locate the words with body movement rather than matching games on the worksheet. It is a more effective way to encourage students’ participation and involvement. (Teacher-researcher’s reflective journal 13/08/2019)

One week later, before the class started, I asked students to sing and dance with the body parts song to warm-up, I found that students remembered this song and corresponding movements very well. (Teacher-researcher’s reflective journal 20/08/2019)

During the second cycle, students learnt a Chinese song about colours. A video of this song depicted eight balls in different colours bouncing from a pipe. The lyrics are below (Table 5.3). Since they students had learnt how to say different colours in Chinese for two weeks, the teacher-researcher instructed students to sing and dance with the music. To be more specific, students who were wearing the clothes which had the same colour as the ball appearing in the video needed to stand up and then move their bodies. Students sang and danced following the sequence of colours in the song: red, yellow, blue, purple, green, orange, black and white. This is a process of locating and classifying the colour words. When the music was played, the students needed to first identify the colour when they heard the Chinese name of the colour. Then they had to identify if the colour they were wearing matched the colour with the ball shown in the video and lastly they needed to move their bodies. The teacher-researcher could see if students wearing red stood up and danced first, followed by students wearing yellow,

blue, purple... This activity gave a process for students to identify different colours in an active way, rather than have them simply colouring in a worksheet. This activity engaged students in a dynamic classification. After practicing the song three times, and even though the teacher-researcher had minimised the window of the video, students were still able to make correct response by just following the music. This was evidence that showed how students could learn colour words with the help of song singing. In short, the song activity helped students achieve the outcomes of locating and classifying information in text as well as responding to texts in a variety of ways.

Table 5.3: Lyrics of the Chinese colour song

Chinese lyrics	English translation
我们学颜色吧，准备好了吗？ 红色，黄色，蓝色，紫色， 红色，黄色，蓝色，紫色站起来， 红色，黄色，蓝色，紫色转个圈， 高高高，举起手， 红色，黄色，蓝色，紫色坐下吧。 绿色，橙色，黑色，白色， 绿色，橙色，黑色，白色，站起来， 绿色，橙色，黑色，白色，转个圈， 高高高，举起手， 绿色，橙色，黑色，白色，坐下吧。	Let's learn colour, are you ready? Red, yellow, blue, purple, Red, yellow, blue, purple stand up, Red, yellow, blue, purple, turn around, High high high, raise up your hands, Red, yellow, blue, purple, sit down. Green, orange, black, white, Green, orange, black, white, stand up, Green, orange, black, white, turn around, High high high, raise your hand, Green, orange, black, white, sit down.

I am afraid they may not pick up this song quickly, because there are some unfamiliar instructional words (including turn and raise up hands) for them. However, what surprised me was that they did it better than I anticipated. As soon as they heard the colour word which matched the colour with what they were wearing, they stood up and followed the movements they were required to do. They enjoyed listening to the music and making body movements. Looking at their happy faces, I know they enjoyed learning in this way. After three times, I minimised the window of the video. More surprisingly, students could make correct response by just following the music without looking at the images of video. I was happy to see that they learnt something, and they felt happy in the process. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 10/09/2019)

This journal entry showed a different thing that happen in Cycle Two. This song used the repetition of the words to make students familiar. This colour song activity helped students achieve the outcomes of locating and classifying information in text as well as responding to texts in a variety of ways.

5.4. Composing (Speaking)

According to the Chinese syllabus (see Figure 5. 1), there are four macro skills – listening, reading, speaking and writing (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2017, p. 28). Each of the macro skills is related to one or more of the following syllabus objectives within the communicating strand: interacting, accessing and responding, and composing. This research focused on Chinese speaking and listening skills, and so the writing skill is not part of this discussion about composing. In lessons taught during the research project, students were able to meet the outcome of composing (speaking) by composing texts in Chinese using modelled language.

Macro Skills

The four macro skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing are related to syllabus objectives within the *Communicating* strand in the following way:

Interacting	Accessing and responding*	Composing
Listening	Listening	Speaking
Reading	Reading	Writing
Speaking	Speaking	
Writing	Writing	

* The response to texts may be in English or Chinese depending on the outcome or content.

Figure 5.1: Macro skills

To help students compose texts in Chinese, the teacher-researcher designed two presentation tasks in the visual arts activities. Based on the previous learning of vocabulary, the teacher-researcher paid attention to modelling sentence structures and gave examples before students did a presentation in pairs. Taking into consideration their limited grammar knowledge, the sentence structures were carefully selected by the teacher-researcher. The purpose of the presentations was to provide an opportunity for students to improve their Chinese speaking skills by using modelled simple sentences in a relaxed environment.

In the first cycle, after students finished the activity Assembling a Paper Panda, the teacher-researcher invited students to present their paper panda craft to the class, in Chinese. To encourage the students to use the modelling language in their presentation, the teacher-researcher reviewed the pattern and structure of simple sentences with the students and demonstrated the examples on the interactive board as a scaffold to assist students during their presentation. The simple sentence that students were expected to make started with the phrase, “This is ...”; students were encouraged to add any body part they had learnt the word for and refer to it on the paper panda. They were expected to make several full sentences. Students had assembled the paper panda with a partner, and they were asked to make the presentation with them. This was so that they were able to develop interpersonal skills such as collaborative and interactive skills. Figures 5.2 shows one of these presentations. (Permission to take photographs of the students had been obtained.)

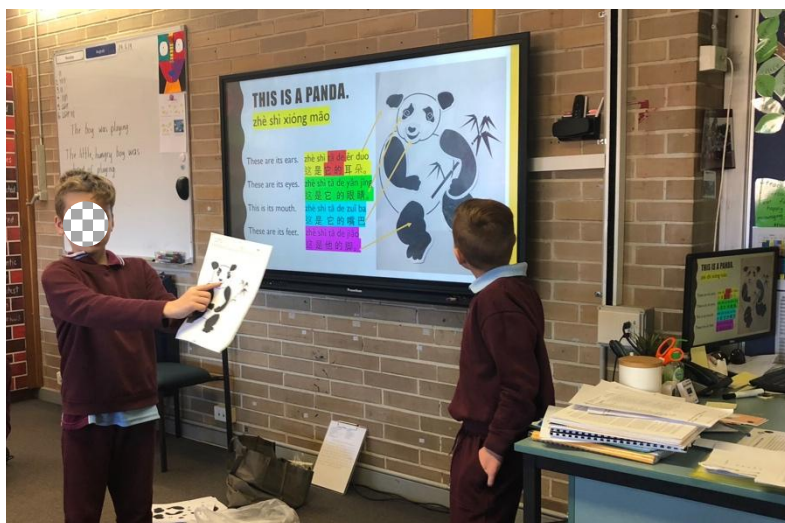


Figure 5.2: Presenting the paper panda

After students finished assembling their paper panda, I invited a pair of volunteer students to introduce their paper panda in front of the class. They started with telling the class that their panda’s name was Bob, and then they started to introduce the body parts of the panda by pointing to them. For example, ‘这是它的耳朵，这是它的鼻子，这是它的嘴巴，这是...(These are its ears; this is its nose, this is its mouth.)’. When one of them forgot how to say the word ‘eyes’ in Chinese, the other student helped, reminding him that it is ‘眼睛(eyes)’. I listened carefully and I was also ready

to help them whenever it was necessary. Although they had some pauses and hesitations while speaking, others in the classroom could understand what they were saying. I felt good to see their effort to introduce and express in Chinese. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 20/08/2019)

In Cycle Two, students made Peking Opera facial masks (see also Section 5.6. below) and in the last lesson of the cycle, the teacher-researcher helped the students to knot the elastic cords on the mask they had made. After that, students put on their masks and they were encouraged to use Chinese to introduce the colour on their masks. The teacher-researcher demonstrated the examples of sentence on slides on the interactive board as assistance to help students with their speaking. Before each student started to talk about their own mask, the teacher-researcher presented her mask using a PowerPoint slide. This presentation combined the two topics they had learnt in this term. The sentence structure involved in the presentation was: xxx (A face-part word) is/are xxx (colour word), for example: “The eyes are blue; the mouth is red; the nose is green; the ear is yellow”. Students actively raised up their hands, willing to share their joint work. They cooperated with their partner very well. As shown in Figure 5.3, below, one student introduced the colour and the other one put up their masks like an opera actor.



Figure 5.3: Modelling the mask

During the presentation, I noticed that one student mistook the Chinese word yellow for red. The student's partner who was wearing the mask pointed out the mistake and corrected it. (Teacher-

researcher's reflective journal 24/09/2019)

Compared to the presentation of a paper panda, students were more interested in giving a presentation of their mask. My concern was that the students may have forgotten the body parts; however, they have not. At least five pairs of students had the chance to present in Chinese by using the modelled sentence structure. In fact, the example I provided helped them to compose what they tried to say. This is the last week of the term; I was really proud to see their improvement. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 24/09/2019)

According to the teacher-researcher's reflective journal, it was evident that students could use the modelled language to compose spoken texts through the oral presentation in pair work. The visual arts activity provided a good opportunity for students to practise Chinese speaking and actively participate in the presentation in a relaxed environment.

5.5. System of language – Pronunciation and intonation

Chinese is one of the few tonal languages in the world, in which the tones are significant to distinguish the meanings of the words.

The challenge in pronouncing Chinese therefore lies both in pronouncing the difficult sounds from Pinyin representations, involving positioning the tongue accurately, and in changing the relative pitch of one's voice when sounding out not only the isolated but also the clustered tonal syllables (Hu, 2010, p. 105).

For a non-Chinese background learner, it is difficult to recognise the pronunciation and intonation patterns of Chinese. Although the teacher-researcher taught the intonation patterns of Chinese at the beginning of Term 1, through various methods such as gesture and pictures, sustained and consistent practice and effort are required from students to fully grasp the use of intonation. However, it is worth mentioning that the best way to help students learn intonation and pronunciation of a language is to encourage them to repeat and speak. In this language classroom, the teacher-researcher plays a role of facilitator, who monitors students' performance, corrects their mispronunciation, builds students' confidence and maintains their interest in learning. Therefore, incorporating the intonation patterns into drama games is a good way to

help students with pronunciation.

Chinese Whisper is a suitable and simple drama game to help students recognise and practise the pronunciation and intonation of Chinese words, which also encourages collaboration. To play this game, students are divided into groups of six or seven. In the process of whispering a word, students need to recognise the word their playmate has said and quickly whisper the correct pronunciation of the word to the next playmate. The last student of each group needs to say the word to their group members and the group members need to check if the word has been correctly whispered. Then, depending on the results of the game, the teacher-researcher emphasised the pronunciation and intonation of confusing words with gestures and stressed the process of “listen carefully-whisper carefully-listen carefully-check”.

After I introduced the new colour words, we played a drama game named ‘Chinese Whisper’. I divided the class into four groups according to their seating arrangement. I whispered a different colour word in Chinese to the first student of each group—red, yellow, blue and green to the first student of each group, respectively. Then the first student of each group whispered the word to the second student in their groups and so on. After the word was whispered to the last student of the group, the last student of each group told the class what they have heard. The last student in Group 1 said it was ‘yellow’. I realized that some of them mixed ‘yellow’ and ‘red’, so I asked other students in Group 1 if they had any other answers. Three students said it was ‘red’. I said ‘yes’, and then repeated red and yellow in Chinese to help them distinguish between the two. The last student of the fourth group told us the word whispered was ‘Louisa’. I realised that they knew the word- ‘green’ but did not pronounce it correctly. So I corrected the pronunciation of this word. Then we played another round... (Teacher-researcher’s reflective journal 03/09/2019)

Chinese Whisper, the passing on of pronunciation is a drama game that not only helps students to develop their skills of pronunciation and intonation patterns of Chinese, but also to encourage self-correction and peer-correction. Many students were able to pronounce correctly in the game. In the meantime, this simple drama game created a relaxed atmosphere for students to practise speaking.

Repetition is used as one of the orthodox methods to teach a second or additional language. Notwithstanding, criticism arises because repetition is seen to be mechanical and meaningless

and consequently discourages students from learning (Ghazi-Saidi & Ansaldo, 2017). It is important for teachers to choose suitable activities that allows student to practise for multiple times and at the same time maintains their interest and motivate to learn.

‘Loud and Soft’ is another drama game designed for young Chinese learners used by Chinese teachers. The rule is that the teacher reads a word in an exaggerated way, either loudly or softly, and students need to respond to them using the opposite volume voice. If the teacher-researcher said a word with a high volume, students needed to repeat it with a soft voice. If the teacher-researcher said a word with a low volume, students needed to recognise it and repeat it in a louder voice, but not a screaming voice. The young learners found this more interesting than just repeating like a robot. Moreover, it was a good way to attract student’s attention because they needed to pay attention to the teacher’s pronunciation and voice volume so that they could respond with an opposite voice volume. It is a kind of choral response to involve all the students in practicing pronunciation and intonation.

‘Loud and Soft’ is a popular drama game among Chinese teachers in primary education but it is a new game for Australian students. I explained the game rules clearly to the students and they picked them up quickly. Before the game, I was concerned that they would find the game disengaging as they might think the game was boring for Year 3. Surprisingly, students were highly engaged in this simple activity and they enjoyed the way they learnt while having fun. It worked well to repeat and correct pronunciation and intonation. (Teacher-researcher’s reflective journal 06/09/2019)

To conclude, Chinese Whisper and Loud and Soft assisted Australian students to achieve the outcomes of recognising pronunciation and intonation patterns of Chinese words. These activities are simple to implement and easy for students to understand; They also encourage effective teaching and promote student’s full participation. Hence, Chinese Whisper and Loud and Soft were suggested to be used for all topics in further Chinese teaching.

5.6. Role of language and culture

Culture plays a fundamental role in language learning (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). The acquisition of a foreign language is also the learning of the culture of the target language. In

this research, students have learnt to recognise how terms and expressions reflect aspects of culture through two visual arts activities—Assembling a Paper Panda and Making a Peking Opera Facial Mask.

There were two cycles of research in Term 3; the first cycle lasted four weeks and the second cycle lasted for five weeks. In the first three weeks of Cycle 1, the teacher-researcher used a variety of activities, including drama games and songs to teach students Chinese vocabulary of different body parts. It turns out that such activities helped students to build a solid understanding of the content. In the last week of Cycle 1, the teacher-researcher conducted a visual arts activity to incorporate Chinese culture into language learning. The activity was called Assembling a Paper Panda. The purpose of choosing the panda was that the panda is a significant symbol of the culture of China and learning facts about a panda provided students with a platform to perceive Chinese language and culture.

Before assembling a paper panda, the teacher-researcher spent one-third of the class time to discuss and introduce the panda, to assist students to develop their intercultural thinking ability. First, the teacher-researcher showed two pictures, with an image of a panda in one picture and an image of a kangaroo in the other. Then the teacher-researcher led a class discussion on identifying the similarities and differences between these two animals. After that, the teacher-researcher encouraged students to ask questions about aspects of the animals that they were fascinated about. Interestingly, some questions asked by the students were surprisingly intriguing. For instance, one student asked if pandas can play kungfu, because he had watched the animated movie in which the main panda character is a master of kungfu. Another student asked if a panda walks like a kangaroo or a human. The question that impressed the teacher the most was, “Are pandas good friends or enemies with kangaroos?” This question made the teacher-researcher realise that students were actively engaging in intercultural thinking, and they had built a connection between their culture and Chinese culture. Throughout the class discussion, the teacher-researcher found that the questions students asked provided evidence for intercultural thinking. Such discussion makes intercultural learning more meaningful than merely knowing about another culture. As Scarino & Liddicoat (2009, p. 19) state:

learning to be intercultural involves much more than just knowing about another culture: it involves learning to understand how one's own culture shapes perceptions of oneself, of the world, and of our relationship with others.

After this discussion, the teacher-researcher started to introduce the Chinese characters for panda '熊猫' to the class. The teacher-researcher started with the literal meaning of each character. She explained that the literal meaning of the first character 熊 is 'bear' and the second character 猫 means 'cat'. Then she pointed out the fact that pandas biologically belong to the family of bears; however, their appearance resembles a cat. Apart from explaining the literal meaning of 熊猫(panda), the teacher-researcher started to focus on developing students' intercultural understanding by highlighting that pandas are native animals to China, as are kangaroos to Australia. To enrich students' intercultural learning experience, the teacher-researcher described the panda's appearance, characteristics, diet habit, natural habitat and their way of living. At last, the teacher-researcher used a dynamic picture to show students how real pandas walk. Students were excited and they expressed their affection for pandas by commenting on how cute the pandas were.

After students were told some facts about pandas, they showed greater interests to do the next panda-assembling activities. Students actively engaged in practicing, based on the understanding of Chinese culture. There was an interesting story, when students were making the paper panda with their partners, a student asked me 'can I colour the panda?'. Then I asked the question to the rest of the class 'can we colour a panda?' Other students said 'no, pandas are black and white' I nodded and told the student who wanted to colour the panda that if she coloured the panda, the panda would look more like a colourful cat. The student responded to me with a smile. At this moment, I realised that the reason why students believe that they should not colour paper pandas was because they understood the significance of pandas in Chinese culture, and they value and respect the Chinese culture. (Teacher-researcher's reflective journal 20/08/2019)

To sum up, the teacher-researcher has taken into consideration the role of language and culture while designing activities regarding the topic of body parts. This activity helps students to achieve the learning objective about recognising how aspects of culture are reflected in terms and expressions.

During the second cycle, the first three weeks were spent on learning colour words in Chinese through drama games and songs. In the last two weeks, the teacher-researcher conducted a visual arts activity, which allowed students to make a Peking Opera facial mask. The reason for the teacher-researcher choosing the Peking Opera facial mask activity was because it not only related to the colour topic, but also represented a very important cultural element. Peking Opera is a national treasure of China with a history of 200 years. According to China Highlights, (2018), Peking Opera is:

a synthesis of stylized action, singing, dialogue and mime, acrobatic fighting and dancing to represent a story or depict different characters and their feelings of gladness, anger, sorrow, happiness, surprise, fear and sadness. The characters may be loyal or treacherous, beautiful or ugly, good or bad,

which is vividly manifested by their facial masks. The teacher-researcher designed this lesson by combining two topics that were taught in Term 3, body parts and colours, which means students needed to use their prior knowledge to complete the task.



Figure 5.4: Colours of Peking Opera masks

The teacher-researcher instructed students to review all the body parts words and colour words in slides that she showed them and then introduced the Peking Opera facial mask and demonstrated how it works. In Chinese language, the way that the mask changes is called ‘变脸’, which has a literal meaning referring to ‘face-changing’. In the past, the secretive art of face changing was passed down within families, mainly among males. Even today, not many people understand the trick of this secretive art. When the teacher-researcher showed the

performance of face changing to the class, the whole class was engrossed, and students were fascinated about how faces changed within a second.

This is the first time that I have seen students so amazed at something in the Chinese class. They all stared at the screen of the interactive board, repeatedly saying, “wow, wow”. (Teacher-researcher’s reflective journal 17/09/2019)

Apart from showing students how face-changing works, the teacher-researcher also focused on introducing the meaning of the colour of the face. Each one has a unique meaning and they have profound Chinese culture connotations in opera. A Peking Opera facial mask consists of many different colours; however, the dominant colour on the face represents the personality of a character. For example, red means loyalty and righteousness. The typical character with a red face is Yu Kuan, who is seen as the martial god in Chinese society in the time of Three Kingdoms. The colour green represents violence; blue means fierce and insidious; black means straight-minded; yellow means slyness; purple means steadiness, and white means evil.

Students listened curiously and carefully to the introduction of Peking Opera facial masks. After that, the teacher-researcher moved on to instruct and scaffold students in making facial masks out of paper plates. Students were excited to make their own masks. Some of them double-checked with me if a colour they chose matched the characteristic of the character. This activity clearly showed evidence that students’ cognitive engagement and intercultural thinking were fully developed.

One girl told me that ‘I would like to colour a red mask because it means a good person’. Another boy said, ‘I would like to make mask that means evil’. What colour is that? ‘White.’ ‘Can you say that in Chinese?’ ‘bái sè (白色) .’ I was satisfied with the answer he provided, because he has remembered how to say the colour in Chinese, and he has also understood how colours connect to the Chinese cultural connotation. (Teacher-researcher’s reflective journal 17/09/2019)

5.7. Analysis of feedback from the classroom teacher and focus groups

5.7.1 Analysis of interviews, observation sheet and focus groups

At the end of each cycle, the teacher-researcher collected feedback from both the classroom

teachers and students, and it turns out that all the participants showed a high level of satisfaction. Some excerpts from the teacher-researcher’s transcripts of a teacher interview, with assigned codes are shown in the chart below:

Table 5.4 Identified coding of the first interview

Types of data	Excerpts	Initial coding	Focused coding	
Transcription of teacher interview- at the end of Cycle 1	I've noticed that they really engaged, they enjoyed the way you teach them, the way you introduced them to new body parts, the use of interactive whiteboard and a variety of activities, different games and songs that you used to teach them the body parts have been really effective and the children really engaged and were really enjoying the time during Chinese lessons. They always look forward to Chinese time and I always have a lot of positives to say once you leave each day too. So, it's been really wonderful.	Really engaged and really enjoying	highly engaged	
	When I was going to the staff room after our lessons, I often noticed that in the other classes, some of them the students engagement has not been as great, so they haven't been able to hear as much of the teacher's instructions. But in this classroom, the children seem to be really settled and focused during the lesson which I think is improving or increasing their outcomes because they can concentrate a little bit more.	really settled and focused ; concentrate		
	I think the approach you’ve been using of various of songs, games and visual arts is a fantastic way for kids to learn. It's really fun and engaging. And you got that engagement happening. And I think that's a great way to teach them new things. Continuing that way and doing lots of games and songs is a really good idea and making learning fun which I think the	fun and engaging		

	kids are enjoying but in almost accidentally learning the Chinese language at the same time. So, I think it's working really well.		
	The fact that you are doing a variety of games and songs and things and makes it interesting. It's making it creative for them. It's a bit unusual and different to what they're doing otherwise when you're not in the classroom. So they are really enjoying it. They are always excited about Tuesdays and Chinese time because they do enjoy it so much.	creative and different ; enjoy	

According to the first interview, the classroom teacher gave positive feedback about how the implementation of activity-based learning affected the Chinese language classroom and how the students became highly engaged in the learning of Chinese. As previously noted in Chapter 2, student engagement is defined by Axelson and Flick (2010, p. 38) as “how involved or interested students appear to be in their learning and how connected they are to their classes, their institutions, and each other”. In this 15 - minute interview, the classroom teacher mentioned words “engaged; engaging; engagement” eight times. She observed high engagement of students’ learning and involvement. Also, the word “fun” was mentioned five times. Besides, students were settled and focused while doing the activities. The high frequency of mentioning these words and the concentrated behaviour showed that students were highly engaged, both emotionally and behaviourally. Besides the interview, the evidence can also be seen from the classroom teacher’s observation sheet. The following comments (see Table 5.5) were made by the classroom teacher when observing the teacher-researcher teaching in the classroom.

Table 5.5 Summary of classroom teacher’s observation sheet

Dates	Evidence and Comments
30/07/2019	Students were on-task and engaged; Students answered a variety of Miss Yuan’s questions;

	Students participated very happily.”
06/08/2019	Students were able to recall body parts in Chinese; Students were keen and enthusiastic. Students enjoyed participating and answering questions.
13/08/2019	Students were engaging videos and activities. Students were being able to move- stand up and sit down.
20/08/2019	Students are improving at recalling body parts in Chinese. Students showed improved understanding/recalling by the end. Students were very keen and enthusiastic. They really love answering questions and giving task a go in Chinese lesson. The accuracy was improved all the time. Grant is often quite and rarely answering question. He gave it a go today and shared (the paper panda he and his partner made) with the class.

On the other hand, students gave their feedback of several things at the end of the first cycle in the first focus group. This is the first time for students to do a focus group, the teacher-researcher found some interesting comment from these young learners. They gave positive attitudes toward to the Chinese language learning as follows:

“It is cool to learn Chinese because some schools don’t (have it). You see, we live in Australia, and other people live in China and it is good that people, come over and tell us their language, so later if we ever go to Chinese (China), we know their language, we can talk to people.”

“I think it is good to learn some languages and maybe make some friends if you are going to China. Go there, you can go to the festivals and stuff.”

The teacher-researcher was gratified to see their interests towards to Chinese language and culture, as well as their desire to travel or make friends in China. These are all very good points. The teacher-researcher felt the responsibility to maintain students’ current interest and encourage students to learn in a relaxed and conducive environment.

“They are fun activities, and then people will probably like to learn different country’s type of things. If trying to have different games, we can learn their games and you can learn ours.”

“It is fun to learn (songs) because we maybe can sing to our family.”

“Simon says help me to learn new words.”

“Teacher game (Simon says) helped me.”

(Two of them said) “I like the paper panda the best.”

According to the focus group, students expressed their opinions about the activities they engaged. Two of them mentioned the simple drama games, two of them liked the visual arts activities and all six students reached a consensus toward Chinese songs. Students’ interest, as well as their emotional engagement play a significant role in the Chinese language learning. The teacher-researcher was satisfied to see the engagement from the feedback of classroom teacher and students in the first cycle. The classroom teacher firmly confirmed the advantages of activity-based approach applied in the Chinese language class even though there are still some space to improve for the beginning teacher-researcher.

Table 5.6 Identified Coding of the second interview

Types of data	Excerpts	Initial coding	Focused coding
Transcription of teacher interview	I've noticed that there was an increase in the students' understanding and engagement. Many of the students who didn't know the names of colours a couple of weeks ago. And now really excited to answer questions and play the games and things about the different colours.	Understanding and engagement;	highly engaged
	I definitely think activity-based learning is an exciting way for students to learn. And students are always really actively involved. There isn't much just sitting and listening which is great as it is the student's favourite way to learn and like to be active.	Active involvement	
	I can say for sure that their learning outcomes have being achieved. And they are learning a lot here. They definitely understand and learn more than they did at the start of the class.	learning outcomes achieved	
	The big advantage is really the fact that it makes the learning memorable. If it's memorable and it's got more chance of sticking and becoming concrete and therefore becoming part of what they know. So I think it's really important to do activities-based learning and it helps them to make that meaning memorable and therefore helps them to learn.	making learning memorable	

The main finding from the interview between the teacher-researcher and the classroom teacher is that activity-based learning promotes high engagement of the students. In the interview, the teacher-respondent pointed out that activity-based learning helps increase students' understanding and engagement as well as promotes their involvement. More importantly, the

respondent emphasised that activity-based learning helps students to achieve the syllabus learning outcomes and it makes learning more enjoyable, memorable and meaningful. Besides the interview, the evidence could also be noticed in the weekly observation from the classroom teacher when observing the teacher-researcher teaching in the class; the following table shows a summary of the comments in the second cycle:

Table 5.7 Summary of classroom teacher’s observation sheet

Dates	Evidence and Comments
27/08/2019	Another successful lesson; lots of opportunities to revise and repeat body parts in Chinese. As for colours, students demonstrated improved/increased understanding.
03/09/2019	Students thoroughly enjoyed games today. Students were very focused today. Students were enthusiastic about responding/ participating.
10/09/2019	Students were able to recall names for colours. Great colour revision video/song. Students’ knowledge and understanding is developing quickly each week.
17/09/2019	Students had good recall. Rainy day seemed to impact a little on students’ concentration today. Miss Yuan did well to keep class on task. Students are always very excited to participate the activities.
24/09/2019	A good concluding lesson to finalise students’ understanding of Chinese names for colours. Students were able to accurately respond. Students very engaged because activities were interesting and exciting. Students enjoyed responding/answering questions about what they have learnt.

According to the table 5.7 above, it showed that students were quite engaged in participating activities in the learning of Chinese. The classroom teacher gave positive feedback on students’ engagement of behaviour, emotion and cognition. Compared with the first cycle, more gratifying comments and progress were caught by the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher’s observation and interview reached agreement on the teacher-researcher’s reflection. The high engagement could encourage students to maintain their interest and passion in the

Chinese language learning when these young learners move to next stage.

Students' valuable feedback were also obtained regarding their attitudes, feeling, and opinions. When the focus group was conducted at the end of second cycle, the teacher-researcher asked the six participants to read aloud flashcards, including words of body parts and colours, which they had learnt in Term 3. The result was satisfying, with all the students being able to read aloud the words on the flashcards correctly without hesitations. This result is underpinned by the classroom teacher, who stated in their interview that activity-based learning made Chinese memorable.

At the end of the focus group, the teacher-researcher invited six students to participate in a focus group to share their feelings and opinions about the activities they had engaged in during the Chinese language class. The teacher-researcher prepared several interview questions to ask the students, and the teacher-researcher led the interview by encouraging each student to express their ideas. Below are excerpts from the focus group.

Question: What is the best part that you like?

Student A: I like the song, because they are funny and the drama games I like. With the Traffic Lights one, we said different colours; we had to do something different and that was fun.

Student B: I like the games. Games are awesome, [I mean] the drama activities.

Student C: I like the songs because they were very fun.

Student D: I like the masks and how we got make our own masks and see, try to figure out how masks-changing works.

Question: Are these activities helpful? Which one are helpful to you to learn?

Student A: The Traffic Lights because if I didn't learn some of the colours, I could not know what to say when I was doing the Traffic Lights.

Student B: Hot Potato, it is really fun.

Student C: Chinese Whispers, because from start, the first one, you have to try and see if you get it [there].

Student D: Traffic Lights, when you say it, we would do the actions to follow your instructions and we did that again and again. So, I learnt the words.

From students' responses, it is clear that all students were cognitively, emotionally and physically engaged in the various classroom activities that were designed for them. More importantly, all the participant students stated that they had learnt the Chinese words they were expected to learn because the activities they engaged in helped them to learn, practise and reinforce the knowledge.

5.7.2 Analysis of students' drawings

Apart from answering questions, at the end of focus group, students were also asked to draw a simple picture as an additional task to express their feeling towards Chinese learning. This data can be used to gather a solid or deeper sense of students' experiences of Chinese language learning because some students might not be good at expressing themselves verbally so that they can use drawings to show their feelings. Students mentioned the fun activity but also mentioned sharing with their families at home in the focus group. These comments could be also confirmed in the students' drawing. They all drew a different but smiling face to demonstrate their feelings and attitudes towards Chinese language learning. The teacher-researcher can draw a much solid conclusion from what students say, what they write and what they draw. Below are the pictures students drawing and their interpretation for the pictures.

Student 1: Because I like Chinese and it is very fun, and the songs are very funny and very cool. (She drew a smiling girl and wrote down "I feel happy because Chinese is fun".

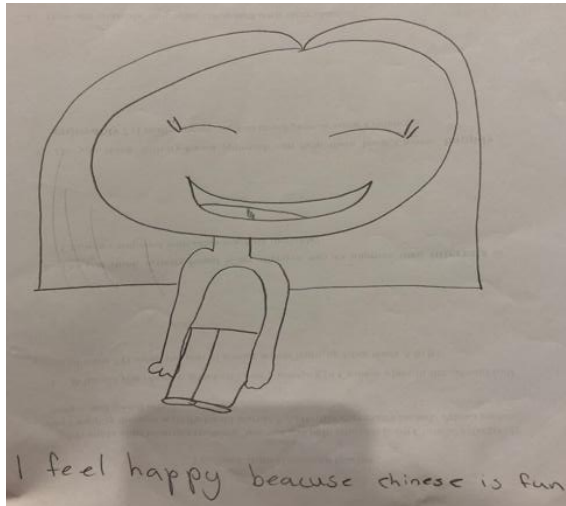


Figure 5.5: Student 1 drawing

Student 2: [I draw] a smiling face, because I am happy when I was doing activities. (He drew a face with big teeth and eyes.)

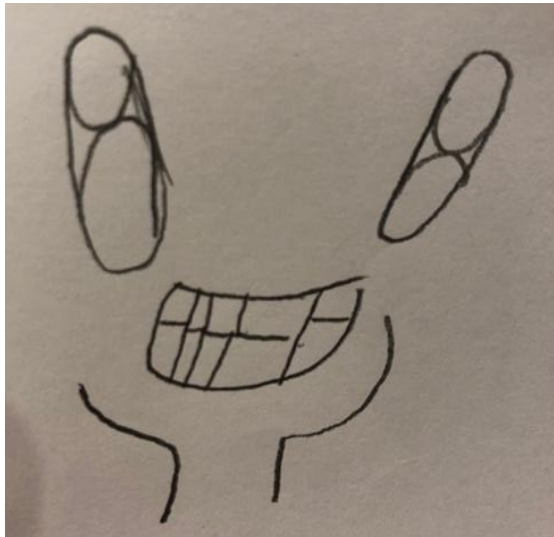


Figure 5.6: Student 2 drawing

Student 3: I like Chinese because I like learning new things and then share it with my mum and dad. (She drew a girl with a big smiling mouth.)



Figure 5.7: Student 3 drawing

Student 4: I like Chinese because I like new things. (He drew a smiling boy and wrote down “I love Chinese because we learn new things”.)

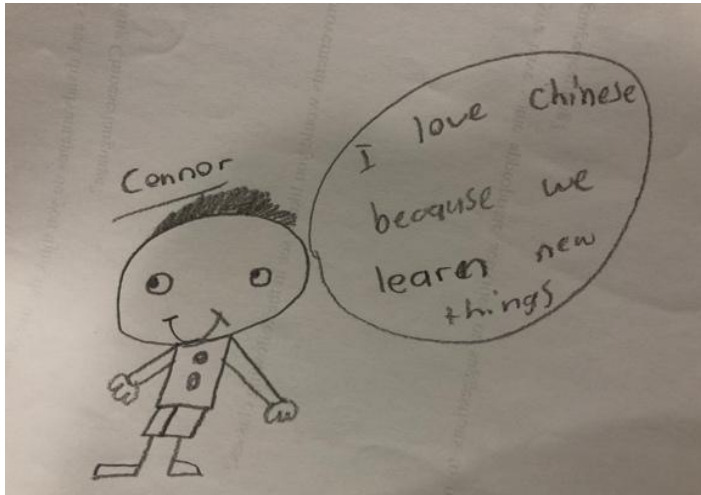


Figure 5.8: Student 4 drawing

Student 5: I like learning Chinese because it is fun. (She drew a girl with smiling eyes and mouth and wrote down, “I feel happy because I like learning songs because it is fun”.)

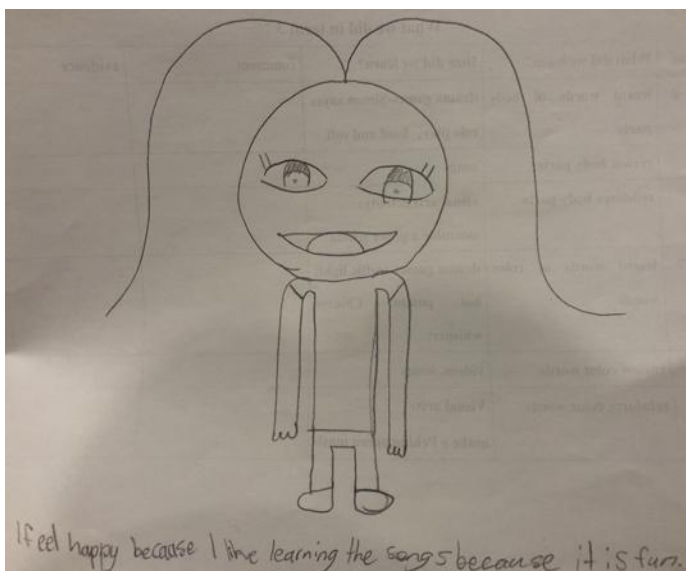


Figure 5.9: Student 5 drawing

Student 6: I feel very happy when we were doing Chinese, because we learn more things and we get to laugh. (He drew a simple boy with a smiley face and wrote down “I feel happy”.)

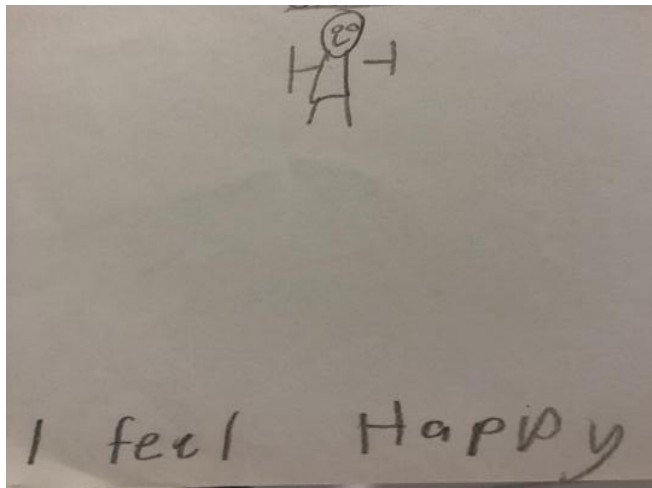


Figure 5.10: Student 6 drawing

It can be concluded from the students' lovely drawings and verbal expressions that there is a high level of enjoyment, motivation to continue learning and a willingness to share the knowledge they had learned in the Chinese language class with their families.

5.8. Analysis of student checklists

Apart from the teacher-researcher's weekly reflective journal, the interview with the classroom teacher, and the focus group with students mentioned above, students completed checklists (see appendix 5 and 6) at the end of each cycle. The student checklists were designed by the teacher-researcher to carry out a summative assessment of their listening skills and a self-assessment of their speaking skills, as well as provide an opportunity for them to express their feelings about Chinese learning.

At the end of the Cycle 1, 23 students completed the checklist regarding body parts words they learnt from Week 2 to Week 5 (see Appendix 10). The first part was a simple listening test. In this listening test, there were seven items. Each item had two words. The students were expected to circle the word they heard and there was only one correct answer for each item. In fact, this was the first time these students had taken part in a Chinese listening test. Although

seven of them did not quite understand what to do, those who understood the instruction showed their ability to identify correct body parts in Chinese.

Table 5.8: Result of listening test about body parts words (student numbers =23)

No. of correct answers (out of 7)	7/7	6/7	5/7	No correct answers
No. of students who gave the correct answers	8	4	4	7

Table 5.8 shows the number of correct answers and the number of students who gave the correct answers. The table shows that seven students failed to give any correct answer. In fact, they circled all the words in the answers for each item rather than circle the one word they heard. This result may be due to them not adequately understanding the question and instruction, which led them to fail to answer the question in the way that they were expected. By contrast, the remaining 16 students, who understood the instruction, did quite well—eight out of 16 scored 7 out of 7, four out of 16 had six items correct and the remaining four students had five items correct. Overall, the result of the listening test was quite satisfying, and it clearly showed that most of the students had learnt the Chinese words for body parts well.

The second part of the checklist provided students with an opportunity to assess their speaking skills. This part was relatively easier for these young students to understand. There were eight items and each item had three different emoji faces representing “Yes, Not sure, and No” next to them. The teacher-researcher read aloud each item for the class, and what the students needed to do was to circle one of the emoji faces to show how confident they were to say the item.

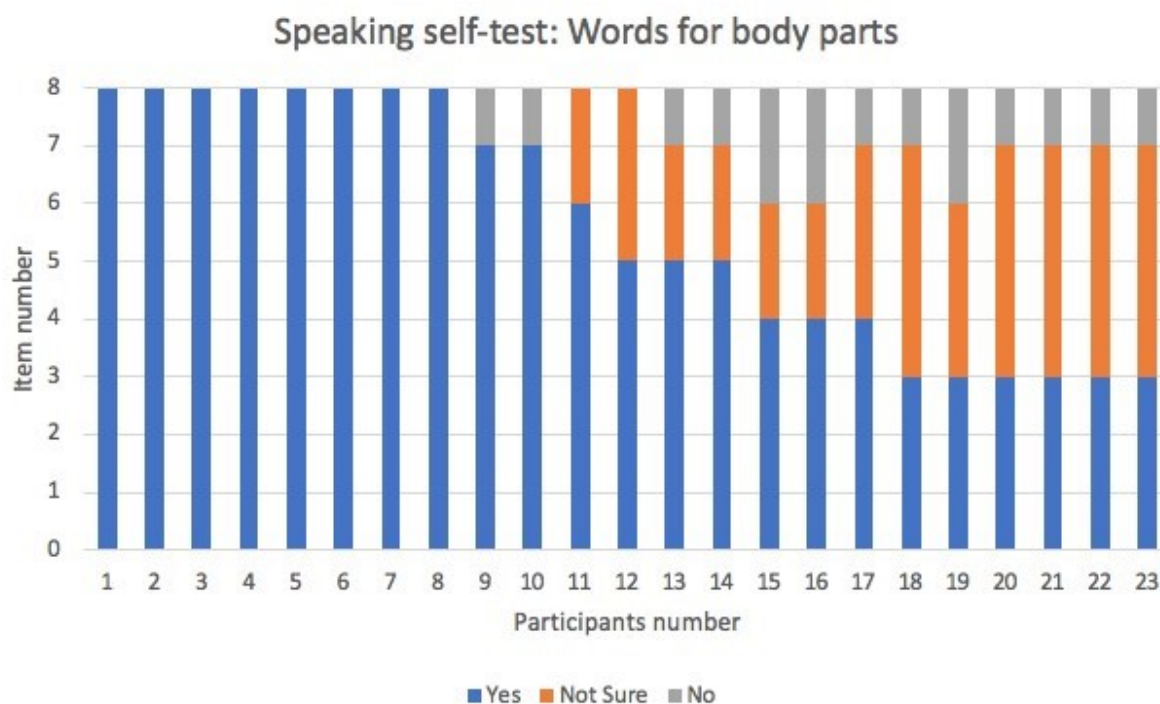


Figure 5.11: Result of Speaking self-test: Words for body parts

In Figure 5.8, the blue columns represent students feeling they could speak the words. According to the figure, a total number of 23 students took part in the speaking self-test. It clearly illustrates that many of the students felt they were able to speak most of the words of body parts in Chinese. According to the figure, eight out of 23 students were able to say all the eight items, two out of 23 students were able to say seven items, the rest of students were able to say three to six items. Although, there were six students who could only give correct answers to three items, more than half of the students (17/23) were able to say at least half of the items. This was a quite sound result.

To sum up, following the first cycle of implementing the activity-based learning, most students did well in the checklist listening and speaking test regarding body parts words.

At the end of the second cycle, the teacher-researcher also used a student checklist to: assess students' listening skills; to conduct a self-evaluation of their speaking skills; and, to ask three questions on their feelings about learning Chinese through activity-based learning (see Appendix 11). A total of 24 students completed this checklist regarding the Chinese colour

words they had learnt from Week 6 to Week 10.

Table 5.9 shows the results of the listening test in the second Cycle.)

Table 5.9: Result of listening test about colour words (student numbers =24)

No. of correct answers (out of 7)	7/7	6/7	5/7	4/7	No correct answers
No. of students who gave the correct answers	9	3	4	2	6

The results of the listening test were improved in this cycle compared with the first. According to the table above, nine out of 18 students gave all the correct answers, three out of 18 gave six correct answers, four out of 18 gave four correct and two out of 18 gave four correct answers. Six students might have misunderstood the teacher-researcher instruction and they ticked all the items. Overall, all the students who understood the instruction for this listening test gave more than half the correct answers.

As for the self-evaluation of speaking, the teacher-researcher used eight colour word items to assess students' ability to say those colour words. For each item, there were three choices: Yes, Not sure and No, represented by three emoji faces, because of the participants' age. For example, if the student was confident with saying the colour word, then they needed to circle the smiley face. The results are presented in Figure 5.12 as follows:

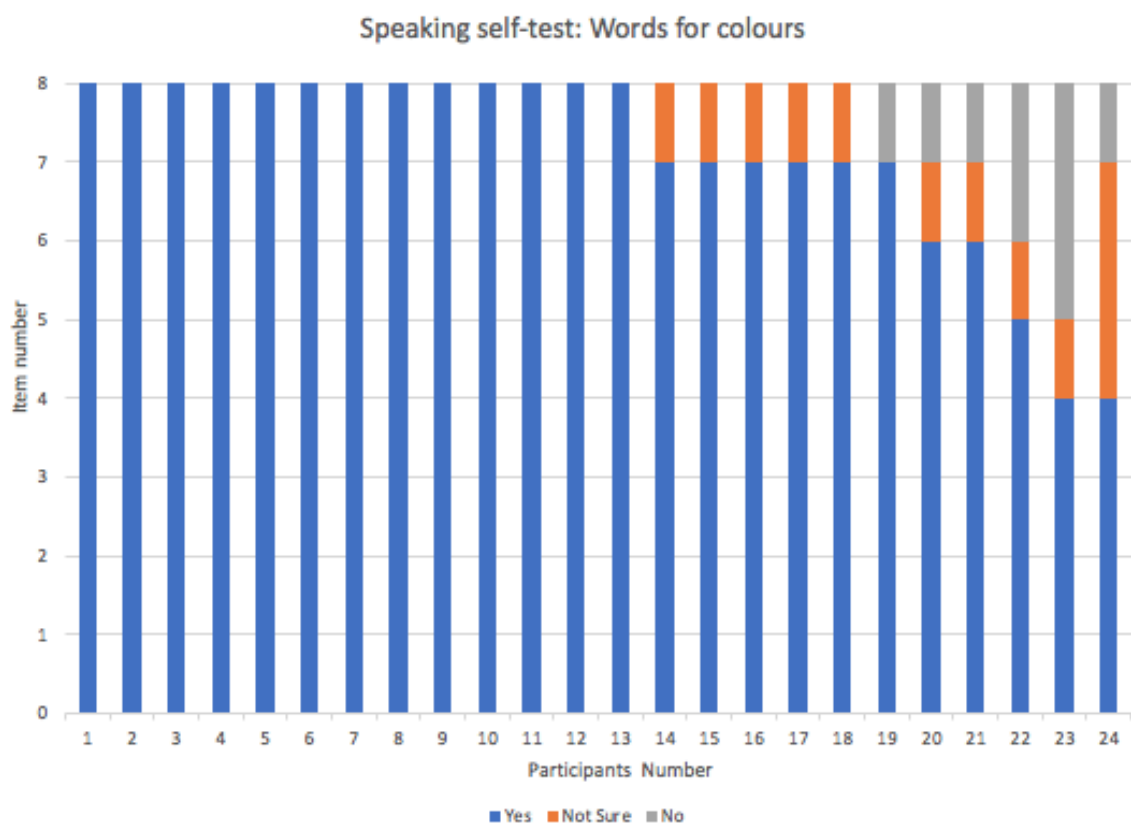


Figure 5.12: Result of speaking self-test: Words for colours

A total number of 24 students participated in the test. It is clearly illustrated that a majority of students were able to speak those colour words. According to the figure, 13 out of 24 students could say all the eight items, six out of 24 students could say seven items, two students could say six items and three students could say four or five items. It can be concluded that all the students could say at least half the items, which is a quite satisfying result. Comparing the results obtained from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, showed that students were more confident in speaking skills when the activity-based learning was implemented in the second cycle.

Moreover, there were three additional questions to give students chances to express their feelings about the Chinese class:

Question 1: Do you feel happy when doing Chinese?

Question 2: The part I like the most is _____ (drama games; songs; artefacts)

because_____

Question 3: How do you like Chinese class?

As for the first question, 22 of 24 students responded that they were “happy” when doing Chinese, only two of them gave a response of “not really”. When students were asked to choose the part they liked the most, nine out of 24 students chose the artefacts, nine out of 24 chose the songs and 6 out of 24 chose the drama games. As for the reason why students made their choices, 15 out of 24 students said it was fun while the remaining nine students gave more specific reasons as follows:

I like videos;

I like work with kind partners;

Chinese is the best;

I made cool things;

It is nice to see Chinese arts;

Artefact is colourful;

I like arts;

I like China;

I like learning new words.

As for the third question: “How do you like Chinese class?”, 23 out of 24 students gave responses with positive attitude, however, only one student did not respond to the question. To sum up these three questions, students were emotionally engaged in a variety of classroom activities and very positive feedback were obtained after Cycle 2.

According to the overall result from the student checklists, it can be summarised that students enjoyed their Chinese class, and most liked the various activities because they were ‘fun’ to them. High emotional engagement could be concluded from students’ feedback in the checklists. According to Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014), “positive emotions facilitate

exploration and play, leading to the opportunity to have new experience and learn in an efficient way”. At the same time, the result of these two simple listening and speaking tests showed that students had learnt the words taught and there was a noticeable improvement in their performance from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. Therefore, it could be concluded that the application of activity-based learning had a positive impact on Chinese listening and speaking through the whole term.

5.9. Summary

To conclude, this chapter has analysed the evidence of learning outcomes following the implementation of an activity-based approach to learning Chinese language and culture according to the Chinese K–10 Syllabus for Stage Two. The teacher-researcher pay attention to make modifications that built on Cycle One for Cycle Two. For the drama games, Cycle Two made modifications to the teacher’s instruction, classroom management including time management so that activities could be carried out more smoothly. For songs activities, Cycle Two made modifications to the activities built on Cycle One by building less familiar material from English language but using repetition strategies. For the visual arts activities, Cycle Two include the knowledge in Cycle One and some strategies were added in Cycle Two to increase students’ interaction. Cycle Two works better based on those modification according to the feedback and reflection. It was clear that students engaged cognitively, emotionally, and were highly involved in a wide range of activities and evidence of the learning outcomes was obtained through analysis of data from the teacher-researcher, classroom teacher and students. Students improvement in Chinese listening and speaking was shown by analysing student checklists. As well, the activity-based learning was conducive to creating a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

6.1. Overall reflection on teaching

Based on the analysis of findings in previous chapters, it could be seen that students have learnt a variety of activities and activity-based learning help them learn new words and expressions to express their idea in Chinese. Students enjoyed learning Chinese language in such a pleasant environment and became interested in the continuity of learning Chinese in the next stage. As a beginning teacher-researcher who does not have a lot of experience in teaching in a foreign country, there have been many obstacles to overcome. For example, choosing activities, planning the teaching procedures, conducting teaching practice, and evaluating the lessons. The teacher-researcher learnt about what things interested students so that she can choose appropriate activities with the help of classroom teacher and the students were very keen to continue of this study. The teacher-researcher also learnt how to manage the classroom, how to give clear instructions, and how to enhance students' interaction. Reflecting is one of the important stages in the mode of action research because it helps the teacher-researcher to modify the planning and practice for the second cycle based on what she taught and the experience she acquired in the first cycle. Besides, it also unconsciously shapes her professional development in the long run

During the first cycle, the classroom management was a huge challenge for the teacher-researcher. This is because the activities she introduced to the students in the Chinese class are innovative and interesting, therefore sometimes the students got overexcited and were off task. However, the teacher-researcher had to learn to handle the situation. To be more specific, she was not able to get students' attention immediately and lead them back on the task. This drawback is also mentioned in the observation sheet and interview from the classroom teacher. She noticed the students were a

“little bit talkative at times, make sure you do not allow any students to talk over the top of you. if

students speak whilst you are, stop and wait for them to stop. Remind them of expectation.” (classroom teacher’s comments in the observation sheet,06/08/2019)

“I think the area for improvement or more focus may just be developed over time is a little bit more of connection with the students so that they can be even more engaged and even more settled. So, making sure that the teacher isn’t talking over the top of the students, has the time to wait for them to be focused and settled before continuing agreeing on set rules and conditions so that everyone can be focused, and everyone can hear.” (classroom teacher’s interview, 20/08/2019)

Moreover, the drama games and cutting activities were very engaging. It was important to be very specific and clear when giving instructions of these types of activities, particularly to young children. Giving clear instruction can lessen the tendency for children to call out, which may distract other students. Hence, the teacher-researcher, in her reflection, identified the factors that influence the classroom management and analyse how to manage the class while activities are carried out. Besides classroom management and teaching instruction, five factors were analysed in the second section of Chapter Four, including the use of appropriate language of delivering content, time management prior to and during the class and classroom atmosphere.

Another challenge was to maximize students’ interaction by using the Chinese language they have learnt. In the “Assembling panda” activity, students were required to cut out the body parts she provided and glued them into the panda’s body in another paper. During the process of making the artwork, the teacher-researcher encouraged students to talk about those body parts in Chinese. The teacher-researcher provided this opportunity to allow students to use what they learnt; this also helps to improve peer interaction and student-teacher interaction while making an artefact. As a matter of fact, some of them were trying to speak a few Chinese words of body parts and the teacher-researcher was pleased to hear that. However, most students preferred to talk in English rather than Chinese; For instance, they asked their partner or the teacher-researcher “Is this nose?” in English. Students’ reluctance to speak Chinese causes the teacher-researcher concern. To encourage students to speak Chinese and maximize the interaction, the teacher-researcher tried to lead them to give answers in Chinese. For example,

if a student asked her a question such as “Is this nose?” She would respond “Yes, it is nose, but can you tell me how to say nose in Chinese?” or praised their quick and lovely work then ask them to tell her the body parts in Chinese such as “Wonderful job, could you introduce these body parts’ Chinese name for me?” With the help of encouragement and questions, students took the chance to practice Chinese speaking in class.

During the second cycle, the teacher-researcher made some modifications based on the merits and demerits in the first cycle. The teacher-researcher tried to create a positive classroom atmosphere in which she can manage the time effectively, present the instruction and expectations explicitly and cater for individual students’ learning needs. Take the instruction for example, the teacher-researcher wrote down the instructions while planning the lessons so that she could present fluently and save some time on explaining multiple times. Obviously, the classroom management was improved which helped the activities to be implemented more smoothly. The teacher-researcher also realized that she needs to keep practicing and improving her management skills and as the classroom teacher suggested in the interview that classroom management will be developed over time as long as teachers keep practicing it. These experiences will also remind the teacher-researcher to keep working to improve teaching and managing skills in the long run.

To solve students’ problem of less aspiration to speak Chinese, the teacher-researcher reflected herself and consulted her mentor and classroom teacher. The mentor suggested her to give high praise or distribute rewards such as stickers to those who speak Chinese to motivate other students to do the same. In the process of making an opera mask in the second cycle, the classroom teacher and the teacher-researcher observed students’ interaction and encouraged them to discuss the colour and face part words in Chinese. To reward students who speak Chinese, the teacher-researcher and classroom teacher handed out the cards called “Caught you being good” to stimulate other students to discuss the colours and face parts in Chinese while they were making the facial mask. It resulted in positive response and feedback, there was an increasing number of students who began to say Chinese and some of them also handed up their work to show the classroom teacher and the teacher-researcher that they could express all

the colour words or the face parts words on their own.

This is a pleasing progress that students gradually turn to be an active learner rather than a passive recipient. They made good use of this environment to use the words they learnt. Despite the Chinese words and sentences Australian students have learnt, they still preferred to use English as their main communication tool. The teacher-researcher solved this problem; it was evident that giving students rewards and maximize the chance for students to use the language they learnt is beneficial for achieving their language learning outcomes. These strategies also opened up the teacher-researcher's mind and assist her to achieve the teaching objectives.

To conclude, based on the implementation and reflection of two-cycle, the teacher-researcher has learned teaching and management experience which will benefit her or any other beginning teachers in their professional development. Activity-based learning made the students' actions the focus of the lesson and the learning was enjoyable since students actively participate in the classroom rather than being passive learners who just sit and listen. There was an increase in student's understanding and engagement, according to the classroom teacher. Moreover, when students are involved in the activities with context provided, students can link the context in the classroom to their real-life experience, which makes the learning more relevant and meaningful.

The teacher-researcher's professional teaching has improved with the help of students, mentor, classroom teachers, and her own reflection on a regular basis. Students positive feedback encouraged and motivated her to work harder, and colleague's kind and constructive suggestion helped her to make use of strategies to improve and perform well. Thanks to the mode of action research, which reminded her to reflect on her own teaching all the time. The ideas and comments in the interview from the classroom teacher and students' focus group contributed to her reflecting, which enlightened the teaching practice and improvement of teaching skills.

6.3. Key findings

This research explored how activity-based learning can be used to teach Chinese language to young learners who do not have a Chinese language background, in a western Sydney primary school. Analysis of the data showed that the use of activity-based learning can engage young language learners and facilitate the acquisition of Chinese language. The key findings are as follows.

6.3.1. How can activity-based learning be used to teach Chinese language to learners who do not have a Chinese language background in a western Sydney primary school?

This study started with the research question of how an activity-based learning approach can be used to teach Chinese as a foreign language to students in a primary school. According to Hansraj (2017), activity-based learning is based on hands-on experiments and activities rather than passively listening to lessons.

The research showed a strong correlation between student achievement of learning outcomes and the selection of learning activities. As a result, the teacher-researcher carefully selected a wide range of hands-on activities in terms of drama games, music and visual arts. These activities were used to assist students to review, reinforce and practise Chinese listening and speaking. Using the teacher-researcher's weekly reflection on teaching, the teacher-researcher chose the most relevant activity and then modified the activity to better accommodate students' learning needs and stimulate their engagement. As a result, activity-based learning was incorporated in the classroom and students responded well to each activity. Moreover, students had more opportunities to practise Chinese listening and speaking in the process of doing the activities, so that they were more likely to grasp the knowledge faster and have it more solidly embedded.

In the first cycle, the drama games Simon Says, mime and Loud and Soft were used in the learning of body parts words. These drama games involved various interactions. The combination of non-verbal interaction and verbal interaction enhanced students' listening and understanding. Students find it easier if they are picking up some kind of visual cue like a

gesture or someone pointing at or emphasizing a body part. Besides, a Chinese body parts song, the Assembling a Paper Panda activity was also incorporated into the Chinese language class to reinforce the students' learning in Cycle 1. According to feedback from students and the classroom teacher, as well as teacher-researcher's own reflection, this activity-based approach helped students learn Chinese in an enjoyable way.

Based on reflections on Cycle 1, the drama games Traffic Lights, Hot Potato and Chinese Whisper were used in learning colours in the second cycle. The teacher-researcher also reinforced students' learning through the colour songs and the Making a Peking Opera Facial Mask activity. Students were highly engaged and gave positive feedback on their learning of Chinese. Based on the classroom teacher's interview and her own reflection, the teacher-researcher modified some of her teaching practice to better support how the activities were applied. The approach of activity-based learning is an ideal way for children to learn Chinese because it is hands-on, and students are actively involved rather than just sitting and listening. According to the classroom teacher, "There is not as much chance to get distracted; it is fun and engaging; they loved it". However, the difficulty for children is to learn the correct pronunciation and that is shown by the fact that even with something as simple as the Chinese Whisper game, some of them did not quite manage it. Students understand more easily from something they see, but less easily from what they hear, especially if they have to try and transfer what they hear to somebody else.

6.3.2. What factors influence the implementation of an activity-based approach of this kind?

The second research question was regarding the factors that influence the development/implementation of an activity-based approach. From the teacher-researcher's weekly reflective journal and classroom teacher's interview, five factors that determine whether the classroom activities could be successful, were described.

The first and the most important factor is the appropriate choice of teaching content. If the teaching content is too easy or too challenging, the activity will become less attractive to students, which will result in students disengaging. The second factor is the language the teacher uses when giving instruction. When the instructional words are beyond students'

knowledge, it is less likely that students will fully understand the instructions. As a result, students will feel confused and reluctant to engage in the activities. The factor of time management also has an impact on the implementation of activity-based learning. Due to limited class time, teachers should plan and allocate class time wisely for each activity. Classroom management is another key factor. The flow of the activities is dependent on how well students follow the instruction as well as the classroom rules. Students with behavioural issues can be disruptive and have a negative impact on the progress of an activity. In other words, managing misbehaviour is important when it comes to implementing activity-based learning. The last factor is to create a positive and fair learning environment for students to be more motivated in learning.

Thus, the teacher-researcher concluded that teachers should create a positive classroom atmosphere in which they can manage the time effectively, present the instruction and expectations explicitly and cater for individual students' learning needs. These findings are useful for the future teaching practice for the teacher-researcher as well as for other beginning teachers.

6.3.3. What evidence of learning, in relation to outcomes listed in the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage 2 students, can be ascertained following the implementation of an activity-based approach to learning Chinese language?

In regard to the third research question, the teacher-researcher provided evidence of achieving the objectives and outcomes from the NSW Chinese K–10 syllabus for Stage 2 students, following the implementation of an activity-based approach. Evidence could be found in the teacher-researcher's reflective journal. Also, through playing the simple drama games, students were encouraged to interact with others to share information and participate in classroom activities. Also, students recognised pronunciation and intonation patterns of Chinese while playing drama games such as Chinese Whisper. Through learning the Chinese songs, students could locate and classify information by singing and dancing with the music, showing that they could respond to texts in a variety of ways, including through images, sound and movements. What is more, students were exposed to a Chinese-speaking environment through a repetitive melody. According to Pourkalhor and Tavakoli (2017), by being exposed to the repetitive

rhymes, children engage with the linguistic signs of unforgettable and appealing songs, develop various language skills. Incorporating songs in language learning is conducive to promoting language acquisition, improving the memorability for young learners. Students recognised how terms and expressions reflect aspects of culture through the implementation of two visual arts activities, through the teacher-researcher's guidance, as well as through students' own cognitive thinking. Students developed their intercultural thinking by gaining a better understanding of the language and culture of others. It was also evident that students could compose simple texts (speaking) in Chinese, using modelled language, to give a short presentation to introduce the art craft objects they had made.

The analysis of the interviews from the classroom teacher showed that the appropriate use of different kinds of activities actively involved students and enhanced their Chinese language learning. An increase in students' understanding and engagement was noticed by the classroom teacher. More importantly, the classroom teacher pointed out that the fact that activity-based learning makes Chinese more memorable was a big advantage of this approach.

The evidence gathered from the participating students indicated positive feedback on learning Chinese. According to the focus groups, students stated that they found it was fun to learn Chinese through drama games, songs and art craft activities which always attracted their attention and interests. Henley (2010) also identified several approaches to meet students' need for fun, such as incorporating music and art in the lessons, or adapting television game show formats for classroom use. Emotional engagement is quite important for young learners because it discourages student boredom and facilitates their learning by engaging them in these activities. Students said that they would like to share with their families about what they learnt in the Chinese lessons. Their current interest suggest they will continue to learn in the next stage.

6.3.4. Limitations of the findings

Action research is less capable of being generalised since it is "localized and conducted with an existing group of people, who may or may not represent a random selection from a larger population" (Pine, 2008, p. 89). As this research focused on a western Sydney primary school

with a particular social-economic background, the findings from this research may not be able to be generalised to other Australian schools or participants. Even though the data and results are valid, they are considered to apply to this particular research context.

Another limitation of the research design is the short time period (a nine-week project) and that only one class was used for the research, although the teacher-researcher has collected substantial data and evidence. The research design and findings might be different if more classes or stages of language learning could be included in the research, and for a longer period of time. What is more, the participants of this research were around eight years old. The teacher-researcher attempted to provide students with a suitable summative assessment tool, but not all students could use it successfully. Further investigation is needed into a standard and simple instrument for assessing language learning outcomes for young students.

Overall, students were highly engaged in Chinese language learning through the use of activity-based learning, and they achieved learning outcomes in a pleasurable environment. Students enjoyed learning Chinese through various forms of activities and those activities made Chinese language easier to learn.

6.4. Implications and recommendations

From reflecting on the factors that influenced the teaching and learning practice and based on the data analysis, the teacher-researcher highlighted two specific implications of the research—for Chinese teachers in the Australian context and for language beginning teachers – as well as recommendations for future teaching practice.

6.4.1. Implication for Chinese teachers in the Australian context.

This research has valuable implications for Chinese teachers in the Australian context, especially in a region like that of western Sydney. The activity-based learning encouraged individual students to be actively involved in learning. Appropriate activities not only encouraged students' full participation, but also created a productive learning environment. Students enjoyed learning Chinese language in this way and it elicited sound outcomes.

Therefore, this activity-based approach could be used in the future by ROSETE Chinese volunteers or other local Chinese teachers who have limited Chinese teaching experience in the Australian context. The following Chinese volunteer teachers can build their research and teaching practice on this study to fully achieve the goals of ROSETE program, which aim to capture students' interests, give them a sense of success and inspire their continued learning of the Chinese language and culture. They can try other creative arts activities to solid this pedagogy or include large-scale class to acquire a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of activity-based learning.

6.4.2. Implication for other beginning language teachers

Beginning teachers lack the teaching experience, to have a wide range of teaching strategies at their disposal. This research can provide insights into teaching strategies and learning activities that could be used by beginning language teachers, helping them to design and conduct their lessons. The teacher-researcher used a variety of activities including simple drama, Chinese songs, and craft-making. Some of these activities were borrowed from Australian teachers and some came from the teacher-researcher's own learning and teaching experience in Chinese classes. Some of these activities could be used in other language classes to help students learn in an enjoyable environment.

6.4.3. Recommendations for future teaching practice

In the context of western Sydney in Australia, activity-based learning is an effective approach to engage students in Chinese language learning. It is recommended that teachers should try various forms of activities to engage students and retain their interests in a foreign language class. Drama games, music and visual arts activities have many advantages. They can make the learning memorable and create an enjoyable learning environment, although they can make students overexcited. The advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Importantly, students enjoy learning through various activities, which can appeal to students with various preferred learning styles. Some recommendations for this age group for future teaching practice follow.

First, it is recommended that teachers should make Chinese easier to learn by using activities which result in learning being enjoyable. Enjoyment and interest motivate students

to continue to learn. Language classes can integrate arts elements like drama, music and visual arts so that students learn by active participation rather than through passive listening and repetition. Activity-based learning is a good approach to engage students while learning a foreign language. The selection of activities is the key to success. If students do not engage in the classroom activities, it is unlikely that they will learn effectively. Some generalisable activities (useful in any context) are suitable for students to play in the language classroom. According to Rumley and Sharpe (1993):

Generalisable game activities carry all the advantages of games: they foster interest and motivation, they provide opportunities for real communication in a meaningful setting, and they facilitate plenty of repetition without it seeming tedious.

Take *Chinese Whisper* in this research as an example; it can be used to reinforce, or review vocabulary or action phrases and it is suitable for all ages. According to the teacher-researcher's teaching experience, *Hot Potato* is another engaging activity for young learners to reinforce words or interaction with teachers in a relaxed atmosphere. To scaffold students' learning in a language class, the design of the activity should be purposeful and appropriate for the students' age and the learning objectives. Some prompt materials may be necessary, for example pictures, flashcard, video and so forth. The teacher can fade out the use of the prompt, based on the students learning progress.

The research questions changed after the Confirmation of Candidature (see appendix 8) process. The original first subsidiary research question was about the development of an activity-based approach. In the process of the research, this became 'the implementation of ...', which was much more practical for a beginning teacher-researcher and given the limited time available.

Second, teachers need to be aware that effective classroom management and time management are quite important for the implementation of activities, whether it is a simple drama game or a time-consuming visual arts activity. Teachers need to make a sound plan for teaching activities but also plan for changes. When the unexpected arises, teachers should be flexible and manage the class so that the lesson can be carried out smoothly. Even though for beginning teachers, the skills of class management are a huge challenge and require a long time

to improve, it is rewarding to have some success with better management of the class and time.

Third, teachers should engage in critical reflection so that their teaching practice will be improved. Action research played an important role in this research. In fact, students will only improve when the teacher's teaching competence improves. There are a number of methods for teachers, especially beginning teachers, to improve their teaching, for instance: observing experienced teachers, keeping weekly reflective journals, taking feedback from students and colleagues, reading articles from other educators and so forth.

6.5. Conclusion

To conclude, the use of an activity-based learning approach for young learners in this school in the western Sydney region has had a positive impact on their Chinese language learning. By the implementation of various activities, including simple drama games, songs and visual arts activities, students have achieved the outcomes outlined in the Chinese syllabus in a pleasant learning environment. Children enjoyed learning Chinese and they maintained their interest in learning. It is important for them to be able to build on their knowledge as they continue further study in primary school.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Human research ethics approval



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

28 May 2019
Associate Professor Anne Power
School of Education

Dear Anne,

Project Title: "Development of Activity-based Language Learning of Chinese for a Primary School in Western Sydney, A Participatory Action Research Study"

HREC Approval Number: H13191

Risk Rating: HREC - Moderate

I am pleased to advise the above research project meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018).

Ethical approval for this project has been granted by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018).

Approval of this project is valid from 28 May 2019 until 28 May 2020.

This protocol covers the following researchers:

Anne Power, Gege Yuan, Kay Carroll

Summary of 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.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Research 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.

7. Project specific conditions:

There are no specific conditions applicable.

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 humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au as this email address is closely monitored.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Professor Elizabeth Deane.

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

Western Sydney University
ABN 53 014 069 881 CRICOS Provider No. 00917K
Locked Bag 1797 Penrith NSW 2751 Australia
westernsydney.edu.au

Appendix 2 : SERAP approval letter



Miss Gege Yuan
81/B Lord Sheffield Circuit
Penrith
NSW - 2750

DOC19/626677
SERAP 2019142

Dear Miss Yuan

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Development of Activity-based Language Learning of Chinese for a Primary School in Western Sydney – A Participatory Action Research Study*. 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 31 July 2020.

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
Gege Yuan	WWC1744218V	23-Aug-2023


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


Robert Stevens
Wednesday, 31 July 2019



SCHOOL POLICY AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
NSW Department of Education
Level 11, 105 Phillip Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 | GPO Box 33, Sydney NSW 2001
Telephone: 02 9244 5060 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

Appendix 3 : Activities for Chinese language learning

Activity sample 1:

After learning colours and body parts in Chinese, the teacher will organise a simple activity to review what they learn:

All the children sit in a circle on the floor, the instructions are that when the teacher says, “HAND and WHITE, [or RED and TOE...]”, students should respond as quickly as they can and then use a hand to touch that coloured item that is in the classroom. After several rounds, they may be more familiar with the colour and body parts words. Then the teacher points out one leader (who has the correct pronunciation) to give instruction to other students as the teacher did before. Different appropriate students can take turns to be leader.

This activity aims to scaffold the Chinese pronunciation and the Chinese meaning of the colour and body parts words. The purpose of the colour activity is to express colours in real life situations in their world, using Chinese language. The teacher asking them to use the particular body parts to touch the particular colour is a kind of involvement and reinforcement.

Activity sample 2 ‘Guess who’

After learning some Chinese names of animals like cat, dog, chick and duck, the teacher will conduct an activity called ‘Guess who’: The teacher will say an animal word like “duck” and then students should imitate the sound of a duck as soon as possible. After several rounds, the teacher will invite a student to imitate the sound of an animal randomly and ask the other students to say the Chinese name for it.

This activity aims to make full use of the sound imitation of students to double check if they can understand and pronounce the words for animals. Young children are interested in animals and good at imitating and they will be encouraged to learn by acting the sound out in their own way. Creating a pleasant learning environment is another purpose of this activity.

These are introductory, basic activities that combine fun, socialisation, interaction and playing with language. They use group dynamics, in a playful classroom; they are designed to establish student confidence in the teacher and provide the teacher with a basic method of learning in which students can interact and work together in an enjoyable way. This is a base from which the teacher can build or extend, through future classroom activities or experiments with Chinese language.

Activity sample 3: Song activity

The teacher-researcher will first use different ways to introduce and teach students some expressions about greetings including “hello(你好)”, “how are you(你好)”, “good morning(早

上好)” and “good evening (晚上好)”, with the help of flashcards and PowerPoint,. After they have a basic grasp of these expressions, the teacher-researcher will play a Chinese song named ‘Hello song’. After several rounds of singing with the music, students may sing without music, together or individually. The teacher-researcher will invite volunteers to sing the song by themselves, in front of the class.

The purpose of this activity is to reinforce what students learn about Chinese greetings. This song is an appropriate one to connect the simple greetings into one song. Through this song, students would learn how to memorise these expressions in an unconscious way.

Activity sample 4: Visual arts activity

After learning body parts in Chinese, the teacher-researcher will ask students to draw a monster and label the body parts for the monster. The purpose is to reinforce the understanding or memorisation in a natural way with the help of visual aids. This activity makes connections between the Chinese language and visual arts and will help students to reinforce or check if they can do the correct matching.

Appendix 4 : Classroom observation

Observation checklist example—for colour activity

Skill/Strategy Lesson Observation

Teacher _____

Observer _____

I do it	Did the teacher:	Comments
Show	Show pictures of colours to students	
Tell	Tell students how to identify the objects of colour	
	Tell students what he/she was doing	
	Tell students what he/she was thinking	
Responses	Gain responses (If model is long)	
	What they already know	
	Tell students what he/she was thinking	
Language	Present models that are clear, consistent, concise	
Pre-corrections	Anticipate potential errors and pre-correct	
We do it.	Did the teacher:	
	Guide students in using the colour words in a sentence	
	Use language that is clear, consistent, concise	
	Gradually fade the prompting	
	Continue prompting until the students demonstrate accuracy	
You do it.	Did the teacher:	
	Verify students' understanding before independent work was given	
	Carefully monitor students' responses	
	Continue until students were consistently accurate	

Developed by Anita L. Archer based on *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching*

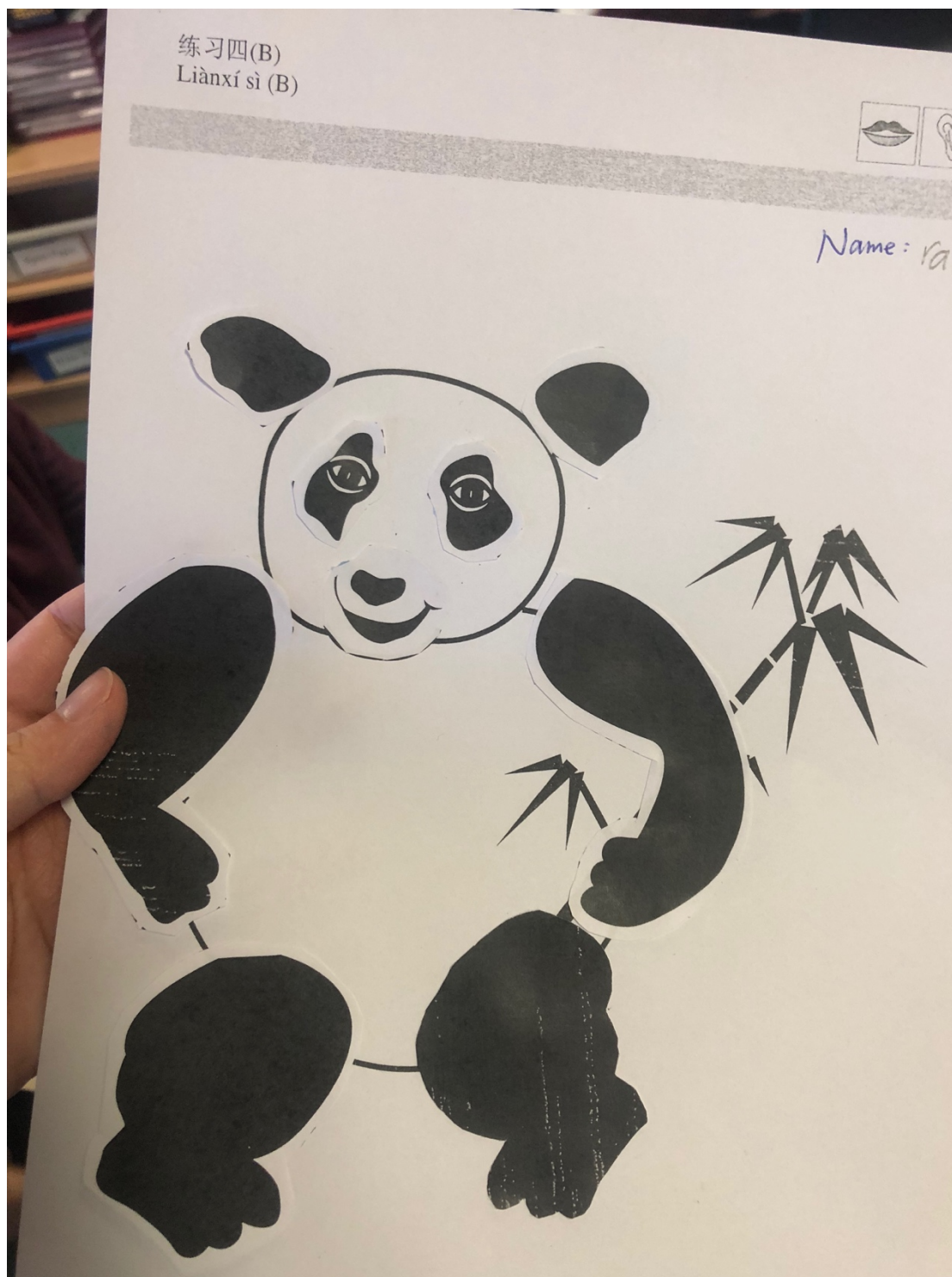
Appendix 5 : Interview questions

1. What do you observe about children's learning in Chinese class in the first half of term 3?
2. How are students' outcomes compared with other classes?
3. Could you continue some of the activities for these students? Which ones?
4. What advantages and disadvantages do you think the use of activities bring to the process of learning Chinese language?
5. What improvements would you like to see in the following classes?
6. Do you have some appropriate activities to recommend in the language learning?
7. Do you think activity-based is an effective way to learn Chinese compared with other teaching methods? What are your suggestions?

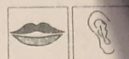
Appendix 6 : Focus group questions

1. Do you like Chinese class? Why?
2. Do you think about speaking Chinese to other people?
3. Do you like to do Chinese classroom activities with others? (In the past 4 weeks, when we learn body parts, we did some drama games like Simon says, role play as a teacher, loud and soft; we learnt songs, made a paper panda)
4. What is the best thing you have learned?
5. What has been the most challenging thing you have learned? Why was that?
6. Are activities helpful to your Chinese learning? Which are the ones that help you remember new words?
7. Can you understand my instructions for activities?
8. Anything else that you want to tell me ? Or do you have any suggestions?

Appendix 7: Students' artwork samples: assembled paper panda

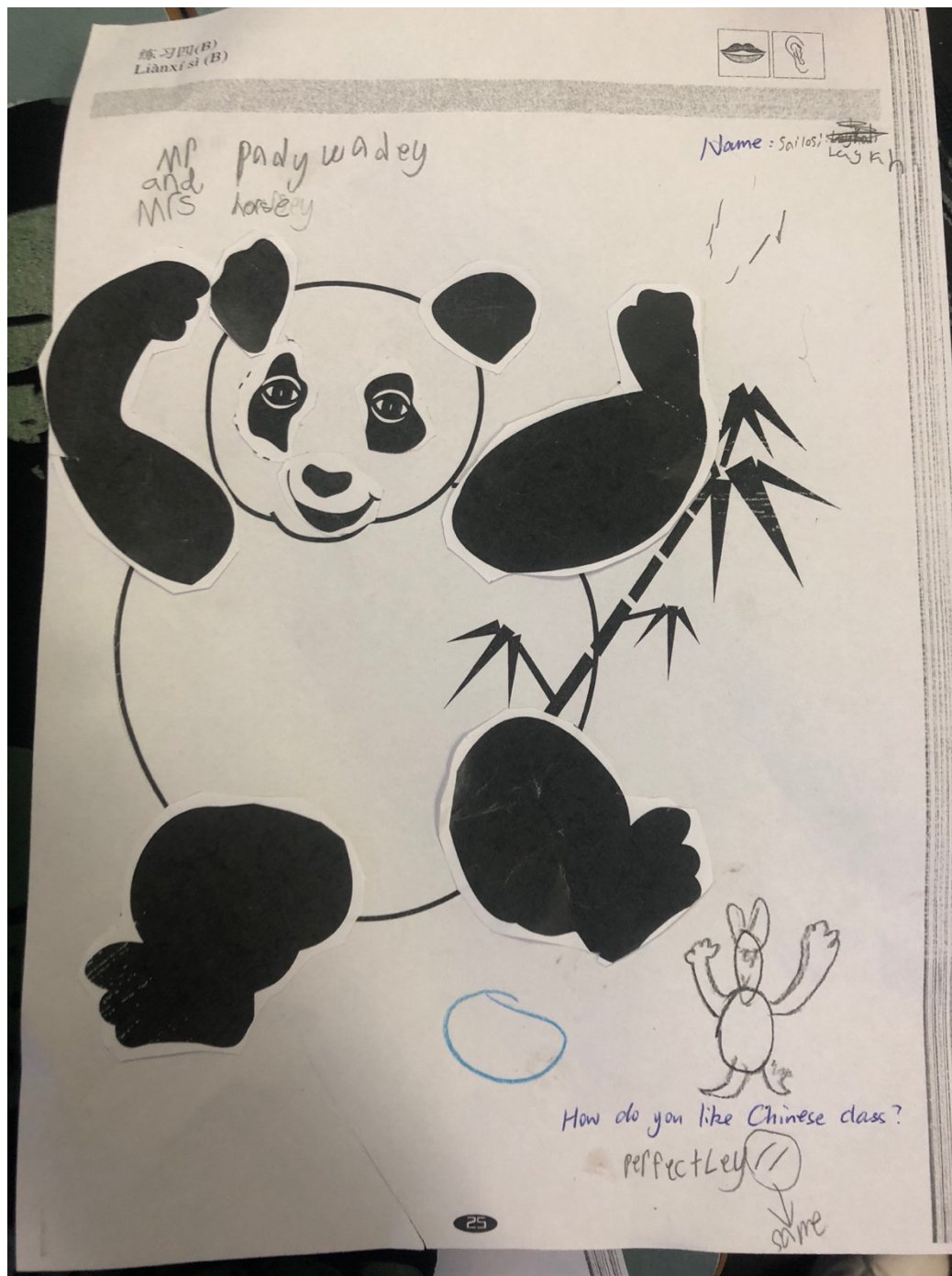


练习四(B)
Liànxí sì (B)



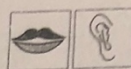
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练习四(B)
Liànxí sì (B)



Name: Harry
potter



How do you like Chinese class?

Asome

Appendix 8: Students' artwork samples - opera facial masks



Appendix 9: One sample of lesson plan

Topic: Colours

Class: H

Time: 30 min

Rationale: The students will learn 4 colour words in Chinese.

Syllabus Outcomes: participates in classroom interactions and activity-based learning in Chinese LCH1-1C

Chinese language learning focus: white, black, orange, purple

Intercultural link: The special meaning of colours in Chinese

Resources / Equipment: flashcards, slides, a potato toy, cards.

Assessment strategies: Observing students' participation; Asking questions

Prior Learning – Before starting this activity students should be able to know how to say red, yellow, blue, green in Chinese.

Time guide	Content: what is being taught?	Strategy: How will you deliver the content?
3 mins	Students settle down & Greeting	Students settle down & Chinese greeting routine
7 mins	Review 4 colour words Warm up- drama game: traffic lights	The teacher-research will lead students review with PowerPoint slides to check their speaking. The teacher-researcher will lead students to do the traffic lights activity together.
10 mins	Learn four new colour words : white, black, orange, purple in Chinese	I will deliver the four colour words one by one by slides start with a question, including 4 questions: 1) What colour is the Australian flag ? Which colour we did not learnt yet ? White 2) What colour is my hair? Yes. Chinese people have black hair, and you guys have golden or brown or black hair. It also shows that we have different culture 3) Guess. There is a kind of fruit, but it is also a kind of colour. What is it? Orange 4) Last one, what colour is the grape? Let me tell you how to say Purple in Chinese.

10 mins	Drama game: hot potato	Let's play a drama game named hot potato. Listen to the rules carefully: When the music is playing, students need to pass around a potato toy; when the music stops playing, the children who is holding the potato toy has to read a Color Word (in Chinese) that the teacher-researcher points.

























Appendix 10: Student checklist Cycle 1

Students Checklist

Circle the word (A or B) you hear.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. A.  头 tóu | B.  眼睛 yǎn jīng |
| 2. A.  鼻子 bí zi | B.  嘴巴 zuǐ ba |
| 3. A.  肩膀 jiān bǎng | B.  膝盖 xī gài |
| 4. A.  耳朵 ěr duo | B.  脚 jiǎo |
| 5. A.  眼睛 yǎn jīng | B.  脚 jiǎo |
| 6. A.  嘴巴 zuǐ ba | B.  头 tóu |
| 7. A.  耳朵 ěr duo | B.  鼻子 bí zi |

Using **Chinese** I can: (please tick ✓)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Say this is head (zhè shì tóu). |    |
| 2. Say these are shoulders (zhè shì jiān bǎng). |    |
| 3. Say these are knees (zhè shì xī gài). |    |
| 4. Say these are feet (zhè shì jiǎo). |    |
| 5. Say these are eyes (zhè shì yǎn jīng). |    |
| 6. Say these are ears (zhè shì ěr duo). |    |
| 7. Say this is nose (zhè shì bí zi). |    |
| 8. Say this is mouth (zhè shì zuǐ ba). |    |















Name : _____


Date: _____

Appendix 11: Student checklist and questions Cycle 2

Tick the colour word you hear. There is only one right answer for each number.

Teacher will say 3 times for each.

1		蓝色 lán sè		红色 hóng sè
2		绿色 lǜ sè		黑色 hēi sè
3		黄色 huáng sè		白色 bái sè
4		紫色 zǐ sè		绿色 lǜ sè
5		红色 hóng sè		黄色 huáng sè
6		黑色 hēi sè		蓝色 lán sè
7		橙色 chéng sè		紫色 zǐ sè

Using **Chinese** I can: (please tick )

1. Say red (hóng sè).   
2. Say yellow (huáng sè).   
3. Say green (lǜ sè).   
4. Say blue (lán sè).   
5. Say black (hēi sè).   
6. Say white (bái sè).   
7. Say orange (chéng sè).   
8. Say purple (zǐ sè).   

•Do you feel happy when doing Chinese? Please tick 😊 😐 😞

•The part I like the most is _____ (games, songs, artefact),
because_____.

How do you like Chinese class?

Appendix 12: Confirmation of Candidature



Ann Ahern <A.Ahern@westernsydney.edu.au>

2019年3月15日 星期五 下午3:06

Gege YUAN; Trim; David Wright; Anne Power; Chwee Beng Lee

[显示详细信息](#)

↩ 答复此邮件的时间为 2019/3/15 下午3:10。

! 此邮件的优先级为高。

Dear Gege,

Congratulations!

We are writing to you regarding your recent Confirmation of Candidature.

All the relevant documents from your School/Institute have been duly processed by the Graduate Research School.

Please retain this message. You will need to provide a copy of this email to the Human Ethics Committee, if you require ethics approval to continue your studies.

This means that your Confirmation of Candidature has been successfully completed and we wish you all the best with your continuing research.

Regards,
Ann

Ann Ahern | Research Training, Policy and Programs Officer
Graduate Research School
P: 02 47360926 | Ext: 2926 (Internal only) |

Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797 Penrith NSW 2751 Australia