

**Thesis Title:** The relationship between teacher perceptions of textbooks and their teaching practice: Chinese as a Foreign Language teaching in the NSW context.

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24 October, 2014

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Thesis summary**

This thesis examines the relationship between teacher perceptions of textbooks and their teaching practice in the context of Chinese as a Foreign Language teaching in NSW schools. A quantitative survey and qualitative interviews of currently practicing secondary teachers reveal that L1 Chinese background teachers experience tensions in several aspects of their work.

This study seeks to highlight the importance Chinese background teachers of Mandarin place on textbooks, as well as the extent to which textbooks impact on their teaching practice.

Results indicate school languages programs commonly use a suite of teaching materials, including hard copy textbooks. The way these resources are utilized varies from school to school, with some factors intrinsic to individual teacher preferences, and others externally determined. Teacher participants of this study admitted an awareness of pedagogical heritage as a determiner of textbook status. They also shed light on what can be described as a diverse community of teaching professionals in cultural and pedagogical transition.

Implications include an argument for improvements in pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development programs, which can bridge cultural and linguistic gaps between Chinese background teachers and their colleagues, as well as promote confidence in the use of multi-modal approach to the creation and use of teaching materials.

## 1.2 Background

The current curriculum requirements for students in NSW Government and non-Government schools, in relation to compulsory Languages study, are as follows:

“The study of at least 100 hours in one language, to be completed over one continuous 12-month period, is a mandatory requirement for eligibility for the award of the Record of School Achievement. The 100-hour course must cover the Stage 4 outcomes and content of the chosen language syllabus, and must be studied between Years 7–10, but preferably in Years 7–8.”

[http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus\\_sc/pdf\\_doc/7-10-course-descriptions.pdf](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_sc/pdf_doc/7-10-course-descriptions.pdf)

The official language of China, Mandarin, is one of the languages offered through a Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) developed syllabus in NSW schools. There are several possible scenarios in which students can access the 100 hours Chinese course, and this depends mostly on decision making within schools, and is particularly constrained by each school's languages staff mix. Even though BOSTES recommends delivery over a 12-month period, schools have some autonomy to compact or extend this model to suit their staffing and timetabling needs. What they cannot change are the learning outcomes. Outside the parameters of the 100 hours course, the Chinese language is non-compulsory and so an elective model operates at other levels of study in NSW schools, that is, Years 9-12. The teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) has been gaining popularity and momentum around the globe in the past decade, with Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) estimates numbering 100 million learners in 2011 (Wang, Moloney and Li, 2013). In 2008 there were approximately 84 000 students studying Chinese in 319 Australian schools (Orton, 2008).

Teachers of these students, Orton reports, are predominantly from the Chinese Mainland and thus are L1 Mandarin speakers. The number of new Mandarin language teachers graduating from Australian universities each year is somewhere between 10 and 20 (Orton, 2008) in each of the more populated Australian states. Orton's report reveals that many L1 Mandarin teachers who apply for Chinese teaching positions are turned away from independent schools because of concerns about capabilities in managing Australian classrooms and engaging Australian children. It is not the scope of this study to address all aspects of this issue. It will, however, focus on one pertinent element of the enculturation of

Chinese background teachers to NSW schooling, namely, how CFL teachers value textbooks and to what extent these teaching materials shape their practice.

Textbooks are very important to L1 teachers of Mandarin. In the PRC textbooks are elevated to a status of the primary knowledge source for teachers and students, and they are seen to form an academic bond between teacher and student. Given this status, it will be argued they exert a significant influence on teacher lesson design and classroom pedagogy. Around 90% (Orton, 2008) of L1 Chinese teachers working in NSW schools have, by and large, been educated in the PRC. This suggests they may believe there is a vital link between textbooks and learning. When they were school students themselves, what these teachers experienced can be generalized as being taught the Maths textbook, being taught the History textbook, being taught the Science textbook, and so on. Their own teachers would have been under pressure from educational bureaucracies to teach the textbook from the first page to the last, and students were examined on anything contained within the set text.

Of concern are the 90% referred to by Orton (2008) who may still hold fast, whether consciously or sub-consciously, to intrinsic Chinese pedagogies, and operate by them in NSW classrooms. Being a product of your own system is not a crime, however, given the divergence of the two education systems, problems arise in the classroom, one of which perhaps stems from over-reliance on textbooks.

Textbooks used in CFL instruction derive from three main sources. One can be described as western-based (Australia and USA) educational publishing houses, such as Macmillan, Pearson Prentice Hall, Chinasoft (Australia) (<http://www.chinasoft.com.au/>), and Better Chinese (USA) ([betterchinese.com](http://betterchinese.com)). The second source is East Asia-based independent publishers such as The Far-East Book Company<sup>1</sup> (Taiwan). The third is the Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (or Hanban: <http://english.hanban.org/>). In recent years Hanban has been engaging in the international mass marketing of textbooks and supplementary materials for teachers of CFL globally.

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1. <http://eng.fareast.com.tw/main.htm>

In their own words, “Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters, as a public institution affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education, is committed to providing Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide, ...”<sup>2</sup>

Given the growing power and influence of Hanban globally, momentum in relation to promoting a textbook-as-course-book may be more and more difficult to resist, especially due to the limited nature of school budgets, not to mention the generosity of Hanban as it sponsors teaching training trips to China and donates textbooks to participants.

This research aims at uncovering the extent to which L1 Mandarin teachers rely on textbooks in their classroom practices. It is hoped that findings will enhance future CFL teaching and learning.

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<sup>2</sup> [file:///localhost/\(http:::english.hanban.org:node\\_7719.htm\)](file:///localhost/(http:::english.hanban.org:node_7719.htm))

### 1.3 Important terminology

CFL	Chinese as a Foreign Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
Hanban	Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language
Hanzi (汉字)	written Chinese ideographs/characters
L1 teachers	teachers who teach their first language as a foreign language
L2 learners	students who are learning a new language as a foreign language
Radical	a graphical component of a Chinese character, often related to its meaning
TM	teaching materials
Zou ba!	<i>Zou ba!</i> is an online course for NSW government high schools offering courses in Chinese (Mandarin)

### 1.4 Notes on the Author

Scott Smith trained as a Secondary Social Sciences teacher and after 9 years experience in NSW Government schools, spent 9 years living and working in the PRC. His experiences in China include formal Mandarin study, work as an EFL teacher to tertiary students and trainer of online language coaches. In Australia he has experience as an ELICOS Academic Manager and IELTS examiner. Most recently he worked for the NSW DEC promoting Mandarin language in Government primary and secondary schools in Sydney. His interests lie in Mandarin language education in Australian schools, and particularly in teacher beliefs.

## **2. Literature Review**

In order to explore how textbooks work to support the construction of Chinese language acquisition, and to inform the methodology of this study, this literature review will focus on research relevant to CFL teaching in general, as well as in the Australian context, followed by reference to studies involving how culture is learned through foreign languages education. The fourth section reviews existing methodological approaches to surveys and interviews in educational contexts. This review leads us to two research questions.

### **2.1 Status of textbooks and teacher beliefs in foreign languages teaching**

Textbooks carry particular significance in a Chinese educational schema. This project acknowledges that in the contemporary context the term ‘textbook’ has been superseded by ‘teaching materials’. The latter refers to hard copy books, as well as soft copy pdfs and other digital resources. This is because supplementary hard copy and online multimodal resources frequently support hard copy textbooks.

Some scholars believe that textbooks are situated at the crossroads of culture, pedagogy, publishing, and society (Stray, 1993), or simultaneously a consumer product, medium for academic knowledge, an ideological and cultural vector, and a pedagogical tool (Choppin, 1980, 1992). Others, however, may see the textbook as a cultural artifact or even a surrogate curriculum (Venezky, 1992). In this sense, they can be seen to have the capacity to facilitate topic selection by teachers and provide an orientation in the way these topics are taught (Martínez-Gracia, Gil-Quílez, & Osada, 2006). Some researchers go so far as to say textbooks help define school subjects as students experience them (Valverde, Bianchi, Wolfe, Schmidt, and Houang, 2002). While textbooks may well be powerful determinants of the curriculum, it is the teacher who adapts them and determines how they are used (Anderson and Tomkins, 1983). Teachers, as facilitators of learning, are the ones who should be aware of the problems and limitations of the textbook their students are using (Haggarty & Pepin, 2002). In post-modern approaches to teaching and learning there ought to be an open questioning of what Courtland and Gambell (2010) call the “grand narratives that traditionally have under-girded the way we have defined ..... the development of resources and textbooks ...” (2010, p26).



Literature pertaining to the design and use of CFL textbooks is undeveloped. I will rely therefore upon examination of methodologies and findings from existing ESL/EFL research to inform my research. Risager and Chapelle (2012, p. 1), strongly assert that, “to this day, much language teaching is structured by published textbooks, even if it is supplemented with other materials from the Internet or elsewhere”. This phenomenon is not limited to any specific foreign language study. A sample from Newcastle High School’s LOTE webpage will suffice as a representative example of the prominence of textbooks in NSW high school Languages departments. The following is publicly available information for parents of Year 7 students, showing the title of the textbook, a subtle persuasion to purchase the consumable workbook, as well as a separate reference to the addition of cultural content.

*“Students are using the Text "Touche" and most have purchased the companion Workbook to use in class. Topics include: simple introductions of self and others, my family, my home and neighbourhood, my pets. Students are tested after each unit of work.*

*French culture, history and geography are also studied. Students learn about La Fete Nationale (Bastille Day) and other important festivals on the French calendar.”*(<http://www.newcastle-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/curriculum-activities/lote-faculty>)

In the realm of English language teaching there are diverse views about the efficacy of textbooks (Sheldon, 1988), however they are an almost universal element in ELT (Hutchinson & Torres 1994). These views range from textbooks as valid, labour-saving tools to a belief that they contain “masses of rubbish skillfully marketed” (Brumfit, 1980, p30). Nevertheless, research shows it is rare for an ELT professional never to use published course materials in their career (Byrd 2001, Cunningsworth 1984, Harmer 1991, Litz 2005, McDonough & Shaw 1993).

Sheldon (1988) points to a conflict of interest over how textbooks are chosen. Financial affordability and pedagogical appropriateness are often mutually exclusive. In addition, others (Allwright, 1981, Sheldon, 1988), taking a broader look at language teaching, refuse to accept a textbook can satisfactorily cater for the needs and desires of learners and teachers. An example of this is seen in the way spoken language is presented in textbooks. Many use artificial, whole-sentence dialogues, despite researched information available

relating to the truncated nature of authentic oral interaction (Cunningsworth, 1987). In fact Cunningsworth (1984) argues very strongly for four criteria when conceptualizing ideal language textbooks. These are, (i) teaching materials should match aims and objectives of learners, (ii) materials selected will enable learners to use language for their own purposes, (iii) language input should be graded and structured in such a way that learners get a chance to feel that they are getting somewhere and (iv) language learning is a highly individual process. His conclusion is no such textbook exists, nor will it ever be written, so the logical implication is that teachers will actively and continuously engage in the production of their own teaching materials.

With regard to teacher beliefs, much has been researched (Weinstein, 1989; Richards & Killen, 1993; Edwards, 2007) in relation to the propensity of pre-service teachers to carry with them, into both their teacher training and teaching careers, a set of beliefs about their ability to instruct, influence, modify and persuade. Not insignificant among these are their cultural and pedagogical heritages. There is a lack of clarity in the literature as to whether these heritages are fixed or whether they can be molded during the training process. Both Grossman (1992) and Dunkin (1996), in contrast to Kagan's (1992) insistence on the fixed nature of beliefs, were able to show changes taking place in the beliefs and assumptions of pre-service teachers. Others (Zeichner and Gore, 1990), argue the catalyst for change lays in the school environment rather than the nature of teacher training. Later, Winisky and Kauchak (1997) accepted that both arguments had merit, but distinguished between individual pre-service teachers with vague beliefs and those with fully developed belief systems, asserting the former would be more likely to change during the process of pre-service training. Importantly, Kennedy (1999) warns that the opportunity during pre-service training to challenge and/or reinforce teacher beliefs is high.

These generally contrasting statements about the heritage and vulnerability of beginning teachers raise interesting questions in contexts such as second language acquisition (SLA) where teachers with a Chinese cultural and pedagogical heritage, for instance, enter the Australian classroom as teachers of CFL. The textbooks they choose, how they use them and what they believe about SLA are largely unresearched in the Australian context.

## **2.2 Existing studies of teachers and CFL education in Australia**

Further to her report into Chinese language education in Australian schools (Orton, 2008), Orton (2011) makes comments pertinent to textbook efficacy for contemporary and future language education in Australian schools. For instance, she criticizes the limitations in hanzi (汉字) learning from current textbooks in that, given CFL textbooks typically present Chinese characters in topic-related lists to memorize at the beginning of each unit, there is no conceptualization of the writing system. This means learners memorize ideographs, “without analysis of orthographic features and their relationship to sound and meaning” (Orton, 2011, p.340). She also laments the absence of metalinguistic awareness in learners who only have access to a single textbook, and suggests a suite of learning materials, including online resources, is optimal.

In the U.S. it has been observed that textbook pedagogy dominates (Chi, 1989) the teaching of Mandarin. PRC-educated teachers are regarded as the sole source of knowledge in Chinese Mainland classrooms (Moloney and Xu, 2012), and they “give answers according to ‘correct’ knowledge from a set curriculum and textbook” (ibid p.472). Moloney and Xu’s (2012) qualitative research elicited clear statements from PRC-educated Mandarin teachers in Australia relating to the dominance of textbooks in China and the transitional nature of their own professional development in Australia. One respondent said, “In China we just have a textbook, and the textbook followed the syllabus, so we don’t have to think about syllabus. For me, to use the syllabus, it’s a new thing: more creative and more innovative.... There is no best textbook, there is only syllabus and then you have to think how to get your students there” (ibid, p480).

In addition, Moloney (2013, p.402) points out that teacher beliefs are grounded on the teacher’s own schooling; the idea that you ‘teach the way you were taught’, and if textbooks were predominant, then they are likely to continue to be so unless there is significant and successful intervention in the form of upgraded professional development. Even so, to date, most teacher education has achieved only weak intervention (Tatto, 1996) in altering ingrained beliefs and their manifest pedagogies.

Given teacher modeling and memorization of texts is orthodox in a traditional Chinese education schema, Chinese-educated teachers of Mandarin in Australia, and particularly those who emigrated in the 1980s (Moloney and Xu, 2012), are unlikely to possess reflective

skills. This means they are less likely to embark upon critical analysis of the textbooks they use, let alone confidently embrace new technologies.

There is, however, evidence of reflection relating to the need for localized textbook content in Wu, et al's (2011) study of teacher professional identity. One respondent stated, "Sometimes I feel that content is not relevant to students' backgrounds; for example, street names in Taiwan. Some of my students are not Taiwanese, and they do not know the streets. When I discuss this, they cannot participate in the discussion. The textbook might need to be changed to one not so Taiwan-oriented" (ibid p.57).

CFL in Australia has been struggling to attract and retain students for many years (Orton, 2008) and so its quest for recognition and distinction is now in the balance as Australia adopts a national curriculum, with the goal of an increasing uptake of Asian languages. Authentic localized texts, online tools and resources (Scrimgeour, 2014) should become the norm, rather than the exception to what has been perceived as facilitation of an orderly progression through the textbook.

### **2.3 Developments in approaches to culture learning in CFL teaching materials**

Much has been written about the importance of teaching language in the context of culture (Strasheim, 1981; Byram, 1993; Kramsch, 1993; Stempleski & Tomalin, 1993) . Relying on a single textbook as the main source of foreign language teaching is problematic when considering the cultural input. Typically, textbook cultural content fails to highlight difference. Instead it generally homogenizes beliefs and behaviours due to a prevailing static notion of culture. This only acts to reinforce stereotypes and intensify the boundaries between cultures (Rico Troncoso, 2012). Indeed, broadly speaking, instead of being used to challenge stereotypes and (pre)conceptions of 'self' and 'other' and of native and target cultures, cultural aspects presented in textbooks are used narrowly to describe and compare tangible 'facts', behaviours and customs. This is also the case for CFL textbooks (Tang, 2006; Yu, 2009), which results in Chinese culture teaching being reduced to:

"... Chinese products and their origins, such as moon cakes, red envelopes, and festivals, that do not delve into a deeper layer of Chinese ways of thinking or their mentality, values, and ideology. For culturally-specific language behaviour,

considerable emphasis is placed on teaching formulaic expressions, such as those used for greeting, parting, and expressing gratitude, but this approach leaves other spoken and written discourse unexplored.” (Zhang, 2011, p. 204)

Indeed, many textbooks merely assume tourism as the end goal of the foreign language learner. This correlates with Rico Troncoso’s assertion that, “cultural information in course books is still treated incidentally or even worse it is treated as *additional* information” (Rico Troncoso, 2012, p. 141).

Generally speaking, teaching material (TM) developers choose either of two paths for integrating ‘culture’ in language textbooks. One path avoids the abstract, nuanced complexities of culture in communication and concentrates instead on the ‘tangibles’ – concrete examples of culture in communication. How Chinese people use chopsticks or how Japanese people bow when they greet each other, are cases in point.

To develop and incrementally integrate sustainable intercultural dimensions in the curricula of school language programs, theorists and practitioners need to stop looking at these one-size-fits-all solutions. They need to incorporate ambiguity constructively into the development of TM from beginning levels. Development of these types of skills, referred to as teachers’ *pedagogical competence* in intercultural language learning, has been increasingly discussed in recent literature (cf. Byram, 2012a; Houghton, 2012; Houghton & Yamada, 2012). It is about teaching practice, not textbook design.

It is therefore important to consider what lies at the core of intercultural competence and its development: *critical (inter)cultural awareness* (Byram, 2012a, 2012b; Houghton & Yamada, 2012). Critical awareness can be triggered by instances of ‘cognitive dissonance’, that is, the cognitive, mental conflict that people experience when they are presented with evidence that their beliefs or assumptions are limited (Montier, 2002). The theory of ‘cognitive dissonance’ (Festinger, 1957) essentially argues that contradicting cognitions serve as a driving force that compels the mind to acquire or create new thoughts or beliefs, or to modify existing beliefs, so as to find a point of least dissonance.

While bilingualism, the sense of ‘self’ and the construction of ‘hybrid identities’ through one’s mother tongue(s) and second language(s) have long been the focus of scholarly

attention (cf. Koven, 2007; Pavlenko, 2006), the implications of this scholarly research have only been linked to languages education in recent years. It is suggested that textbooks should then incorporate material from migratory literature (Kramsch, 1993a, 1999; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat, & Crozet, 1999), in which people find themselves in places of restlessness, shifting identities, leading to hybridity.

Finally, in creating, adapting and developing their own intercultural teaching resources, CFL teachers need to address the underlying tension between theory and practice. This tension can only be addressed by reconciling pedagogical beliefs about the now widely acknowledged ultimate goal of language education – the development of interculturally competent speakers. This, in turn, entails a reconceptualisation of the language textbook from a grammar-driven road map to an open space for intercultural dialogue characterised by exploration, experimentation and celebration of diversity.

#### **2.4 Literature relating to teacher perceptions: survey and interviews**

This project aims to collect teacher perceptions of textbooks used in the teaching of CFL. The project will first construct and offer an online survey exploring teacher choice and perception of textbooks. Then, survey participants will be invited to further participate in a 10-15 minute semi-structured interview to more deeply explore teacher attitudes to CFL teaching materials and their use.

Interviews are one of the most commonly used qualitative research tools (Kitchin, 2000). Semi-structured interviews are relatively informal and conversational in nature (De Groot, 2002), and their benefits are well documented. They can be used as a stand-alone tool, as a supplement to other methods, or indeed as a means for triangulation in a multi-methods research project (De Groot, 2002; Riazi & Candlin, 2014). In relation to the contemporary relevance of this method, Pintrich (2000) advocates that understanding the individual in context will dominate future research (De Groot, 2010). The teacher choosing and using textbooks for CFL teaching is the context, and thus undertaking semi-structured interviews is of practical import (Schoenfeld, 1999) in that it has the potential, not only to lead teachers through a process of reflection, but also to inform better textbook use in the future. The interviews will be audio-recorded, and transcribed. The transcripts will be read and re-read for emerging themes, and analysis conducted (Ryan and Bernard, 2000). The two sources of

data will provide triangulation and credibility of data.

## **2.5 Research Questions**

The project emerging from this literature review is significant and relevant to the needs of CFL development in Australia. There is a clear lack of research in perceptions and use of CFL textbooks in Australian schools. Searches have revealed that no similar studies have been undertaken to date. Having reviewed the literature, this thesis moves now to discuss the methodology undertaken to seek answers to the following two research questions.

1. What value do L1 teachers of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) place upon textbooks?
2. To what extent do L1 CFL teachers believe that textbooks shape their practice?

### 3. Methodology

The methods employed to answer the research questions are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Methods employed by researcher to answer research questions

Research questions	Method	Data sources	Data analysis	Purpose
1. What value do L1 teachers of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) place upon textbooks?	Qualtrics online survey and teacher interviews	Survey data and interview transcripts	Analysis of survey data and exploration of interview transcripts for themes	To identify common practices and themes in CFL teaching and qualify CFL teacher perceptions of the importance of textbooks.
2. To what extent do L1 CFL teachers believe that textbooks shape their practice?	Qualtrics online survey and teacher interviews	Survey data and interview transcripts	Analysis of interview transcripts and synthesis with survey data analysis	a) To identify beliefs about teacher background and teaching practice. b) To establish the extent to which L1 CFL teachers rely on textbooks in their teaching. c) To summarise themes which may describe current practice in CFL teaching in the NSW context.



### 3.1 Subjects and Data Collection

This study is taking place in an educational context where a constructivist learning model operates. Under constructivism language students are expected to construct and discover knowledge through interactions and meaningfully use the language in those interactions. This means that the textbook, like the teacher, is no longer the sole source of knowledge. In terms of teacher perceptions, I expect to discover a mixture of teacher beliefs against which they will rationalize their choice of textbooks.

This thesis combines qualitative and quantitative methods to ask teachers of L2 learners of Mandarin about their use of textbooks. The first tool is an online survey of 31 questions administered through the Qualtrics survey platform. Online survey questions were divided into the following categories;

- Teacher background
- School context
- Budgeting and decision making at school
- Core Textbook pros and cons
- How textbooks are used

(See **Appendix 2** for online survey questions)

The second tool consisted of semi-structured interviews of four Mandarin teachers who taught L2 learners in NSW schools in 2014 (See **Appendix 3** for interview questions). This tool rendered more in-depth responses and strengthened the study because different data sources allow for triangulation of data (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The interviews involved approximately 15 questions, requiring a combination of both short and long responses, to obtain qualitative data.

### **3.2 Data Analysis**

Qualtrics quantitative survey data was examined and categorized as indicated in the analysis below (Chapter 4). Qualitative Interview data was audio-recorded, transcribed, then read and re-read. It was examined for themes, corroborations, and contradictions (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

This study acknowledges the role and assumptions of the researcher, as a possible factor impacting on how the data is 'seen' (Russell & Kelly, 2002) and interpreted. The nature of engagement in dialogue , necessary for the interview data, involves the researcher participating in 'co-responsible inquiry' (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Wardekker, 2000). Having outlined the methodology, including research subjects, data collection and data analysis, the thesis will now discuss the results of each tool.

## 4. Results

This section aims at providing an in-depth interpretation of the results as to how the collected data can help to answer the research questions in this study. Online survey responses and face-to-face interviews serve as the major sources of data for determining what teachers of Mandarin to L2 learners believe about the use of textbooks in CFL teaching.

The results summarize online survey results from practicing teachers in NSW schools, incorporating data drawn from semi-structured interviews of four teachers who taught beginners Mandarin courses in NSW schools in 2014. Generally, data will reveal areas of agreement and disagreement over the importance and use of textbooks and these can be seen as indicators of strengths and weaknesses in textbooks and their use in NSW schools.

The following analysis reports the major topics investigated by the survey (n=34) and follow-up interviews (n=4). It is presented as a discussion in two sections; Quantitative data (4.1) and Qualitative data (4.2). The following subheadings are used to distinguish each theme. From the quantitative survey, the *make-up of the Australian CFL classroom*, *frequency of textbook use*, and *choice and use of textbooks by NSW teachers*, data are reported. From the qualitative interviews, *teacher's background*, *teacher perceptions of the importance of textbooks*, and *teachers' perceptions of the essential elements of textbooks* data are reported.

### 4.1 Survey Results

#### 4.1.1 Make-up of the Australian CFL classroom

The survey identified a data set of teachers with a range of teaching experience from less than 2 years to 10+ years. The mean was between the 2-5 years and 5-10 year's experience divisions. It also represents an almost even mix of government and non-government teachers. Government schools teachers represented 57% of the sample.

68% of survey respondents reported having students with a Chinese background in their beginner's course or teaching a mixed-course class. The most common incidences of these students range from less than 10% to 10-30% of the total class population, meaning an incidence of 2-6 Chinese-background students in a class of 20. It must be noted here that this question yields no information about Mandarin language proficiency upon commencement of the course. Hence, the precise meaning of "Chinese background student"

comes into question. The NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) has received mixed feedback in relation to its *Eligibility for Stage 6 Languages Courses* document. (See: [http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus\\_hsc/lang-eligibility-criteria.html](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/lang-eligibility-criteria.html))

Many teachers, parents and students are dissatisfied with the way the document has been interpreted for class placement purposes. In addition, academics, such as Orton (2008), expressed strong opposition to the amalgamation of background and/or heritage students with non-background students in the same classroom, even if teachers attempt to teach separate courses simultaneously with separate textbooks.

#### **4.1.2 Frequency of textbook use**

92% of survey respondents reported CFL core textbooks are used either every lesson or 1-2 times a week in class. This clearly represents a dominant presence of textbooks in NSW CFL classrooms. Many teachers in fact require their students to bring their textbook every lesson just in case it is required. The provision of student lockers in many NSW schools, where students store textbooks and other resources, likewise reinforces the importance of ready access to textbooks. In schools where students do not purchase their own, or are not issued with their own textbook, more often than not, a class set exists that the teacher can carry or wheel on a textbook trolley to the classroom. It is more and more common today that student workbooks accompany the textbook, given publishers prefer to release suites of teaching materials.

According to survey results, the student workbook, which is typically published with fewer colours and less visual appeal to save cost, is sometimes used in class as the source of practice material. It is often employed immediately following teacher instruction as students practice what they have just learned. It is even more common, however, for teachers to rely on the student workbook for setting homework exercises.

Interestingly, 63% of teachers surveyed rarely refer to the Teacher's Book/Manual from their suite of teaching materials. Even though publishers will often gift the Teacher's Book when a class set is purchased, teachers reported they use it once a week or 'not applicable', which is taken as never. There may be several reasons for this. One may be that teachers are experienced and competent enough to plan their own lessons. Another, and perhaps the

more prevalent, is that teachers are either too busy or too unmotivated to employ the strategies written into the teaching materials; strategies often designed to engage students more effectively. A majority of teachers surveyed indeed reported the layout and content of the core textbook matched the way they like to teach.

#### **4.1.3 Choice and use of textbooks by NSW teachers**

Appendix 4 lists CFL core textbooks currently used by teachers in NSW. In survey question 7, teachers were asked when their CFL core textbook was last updated or replaced and 78% reported they had been replaced since 2012. This confirms a minimal budget does exist in schools to ensure a certain level of currency of teaching materials. It is also common for teachers to spend their own money on a suite of textbooks and other materials to use as reference sources, albeit according to their own financial means.

Teachers' reasons for updating a core textbook included: *language being presented in a more logical order* (58%), *more content* (46%), *more student exercises* (46%), and *more colour and graphics* (46%). Modern design and increased cultural content were valued at 29% and 33% respectively. The value placed in more colourful textbooks may be an indication that students today are more engaged with visual literacy and motivated if their learning materials are perceived as modern and professionally published.

It is common for teachers offering a beginner's course, to students in the first two years of secondary school, to prescribe a core textbook to complement the 100 hours BOSTES course. Across NSW secondary schools book titles vary. All but one survey respondent indicated they were using the most current edition of their textbook. If surveyed teachers reported using textbooks in addition to the core textbook, these were predominantly used for *supplementary teaching materials* (88%), *material for extension exercises* (58%) or *teacher reference* (50%). Homework supplements and assessment tasks resources were the other two reasons given.

On the survey, a large majority (82%) of CFL teachers reported that they work in a foreign languages department with a current written teaching program for the 100 hours Chinese course. Many survey participants (40%) reported having authority to make their own choice about a core textbook for this course, while others (44%) did so in consultation with

colleagues or the Languages Head Teacher. When focusing on the choice of core textbook, survey respondents indicated the most important factor (81%) was their own preference. This was followed by budget constraints.

Core textbooks were generally used either 1-2 times per week or every lesson. In fact, these two may equate with each other given the typical timetabling of a 100 hour course is 1-3 periods a week, depending on timetabling models and lengths of each teaching period. All the core textbooks mentioned have an accompanying student workbook which, according to responses to survey question 19, were mostly used 1-2 times per week for either homework exercises or other varied tasks such as in-class exercises, class tasks and classwork. From question 20, most teachers surveyed believe their students like the core textbook. Another caveat is however warranted here because this question cannot tell us why, or to what extent, they felt positively towards their textbook.

Only half of the respondents reported that their core textbook had a corresponding Teacher's Book. This, I believe indicates a degree of unawareness or even perhaps reluctance to engage with such a resource. Responses relating to how often a Teacher's Book might be used in lesson preparation were mixed. This may show a degree of indifference or disagreement as to its value.

In survey question 24 teachers were asked to reflect on aims of their core textbook. In frequency order, the following six responses indicate what teachers perceived as the aims of their core textbook. This data may reflect differences in textbook design, but more importantly it reveals teachers' perceptions of the aims of a textbook.

1. To ensure students understand and use Mandarin grammar accurately.
2. To enable students to learn how to read Mandarin.
3. To enable students to gain basic knowledge of Mandarin before they move to the next level.
4. To provide teachers with lesson materials.
5. To enable students to learn how to speak Mandarin accurately.
6. To provide students with homework exercises.

Grammar, reading proficiency and stage progress were seen as the top three aims. Interestingly, out of the thirteen possible responses, “to provide teachers with lesson materials” was the fourth most frequent response. When asked to comment on the degree of success their core textbook achieves in the instruction of various skills, teachers pointed to writing, reading and grammar as the three highest.

Survey question 28 revealed a weak tendency (54%) towards following the textbook page order in teaching practice. From this it is unclear whether or not Mandarin teachers in NSW schools today have a tendency to allow the content and pedagogical sequencing written into CFL textbooks to shape their own pedagogical practice. Survey question 30, however, reveals a potentially stronger reliance (67%) on textbook design and sequencing to guide the content and progression of lessons. This is evidence that an impact exists. Interestingly, a surprisingly high proportion (75%) of teachers indicated they choose to teach different language skills according to student needs or what they themselves want to teach each lesson. This seems contradictory to the previous response that indicated a tendency to follow textbook page order, thus reflecting the tension of being in transition between two sets of pedagogical beliefs.

More than half of the respondents indicated they are happy with their current core textbook, with others being *happy with some reservations*. Reservations listed include the following: “*vocabulary list too long, could do with a couple more chapters, scaffolding language skills, not localized for Australia, and a better one with more content break down so that the content can be chunked.*” Half of the respondents complained there are not enough dialogues in the core textbook and 70% wanted more listening resources.

## **4.2 Qualitative interview data**

### **4.2.1 Teacher backgrounds**

In addition to the online survey responses, four teachers from government schools participated in semi-structured face-to-face interviews. One of these teachers comes from an Anglo-Australian background, with twenty years of Mandarin teaching experience. The other three are Chinese PRC nationals, two having immigrated within the last 10 years, and the other a recently graduated international student. These teachers have been de-identified and are referred to as T1, T2, T3 and T4. T1 is a Chinese female recent graduate who currently teaches part time in an academically selective girls high school in the North of Sydney. T2 is a Chinese male fulltime teacher of seven years experience in an academically selective coeducational high school in the inner west of Sydney. T3 is a Chinese female part time teacher in an academically selective coeducational high school in the south of Sydney. T4 is a highly experienced Australian female fulltime teacher in an academically selective girls high school in the North of Sydney.

In relation to educational background, T1 identifies herself as having a Chinese background. She was educated in the People's Republic of China at both primary and secondary levels. She came to Australia to complete a 4-year Bachelor of Arts with a Diploma of Education. She is currently completing a Masters in TESOL. Her desire to become a teacher of Mandarin stems from her love of Mandarin as a student in China. She planned to become a L1 Mandarin teacher in China however discovered she could train as a CFL teacher in Australia and teach Australian students.

T2 came to Australia in 2002 with a Bachelor of Business from a Chinese university. He completed a 4-year Bachelor of Education in Australia before beginning his career as a CFL teacher. T3 came to Australia from the PRC as an adult, having worked for several years as an EFL teacher. She completed a one-year Diploma of Education and began teaching Mandarin in Community language schools in 2002. From 2005, she has worked in various part time roles in government and non-government schools as a CFL teacher. T4 is Australian born, of an Anglo-Saxon background and educated in Sydney. Having taught other disciplines for 15 years, she "came to" Mandarin. Her initial motivation was personal interest and she then completed a Mandarin teaching degree at Macquarie University. She has now acquired over twenty years of CFL teaching experience. Even though the semi-structured



interview sample size is small, I believe it is broad in experience and representative of the diversity of CFL teaching in NSW schools.

#### **4.2.2 Teacher Perceptions of the Importance of Textbooks**

Teacher perceptions of the importance of CFL textbooks can be approached in various ways. This research sought responses in two ways. One was to ascertain reasons for and frequency of use of CFL textbooks in classroom teaching (reported above from survey data). Semi-structured interviews were also used in an attempt to encourage teachers to reflect upon the importance of textbooks in their own practice. This section will discuss qualitative responses to each research question. The value teachers place in textbooks will first be shown, followed by evidence relating to the extent to which teachers believe textbooks shape their practice.

At the outset of the interview, T1 immediately drew a distinction between a Chinese and Australian view of the status of textbooks.

*T1: "Um, it's an interesting question, of course. Because we have different um, perspective between Chinese ...like we have Chinese perspective think textbook is like very significant um, but Australian people, like Australian teacher, they don't only rely on one textbook."*

Immediately we see a clear distinction based on the number of textbooks that are used in teaching and learning. T1 admits, by implication, that it the norm for Chinese teachers to use one textbook. A second insight we can gain is a default position of teaching the way the teachers themselves were taught.

*T1: "because I'm educated in China for a long time, like more than 10 years, so I kind of have part of Chinese perspective. So I think I will use one textbook in the classroom with students, ...."*

Interestingly, T1 immediately adds the following, almost as if correcting herself,

*T1: "....but I don't only rely on that textbook. I will try to use other textbook as resources. And give them the worksheet from other textbook or other resources."*

This discourse is a very helpful live insight into the tension that exists in the minds of many L1 CFL teachers. We see an almost fatalistic concession that pedagogical heritage

determines choice. A qualifying statement about her attempts to utilise other teaching materials immediately follows this.

When asked about the importance of textbooks in CFL, T2 responded very quickly with, “50/50”. He explained this by saying they were not very important, but quite helpful. When justifying why textbooks might be useful, he referred to expert authorship as a trustworthy basis for using textbooks in CFL teaching. He added they were written in line with the NSW syllabus, and presumably could be relied upon to deliver BOSTES learning outcomes. The other significant value of a textbook lies in its use as a practice or homework tool.

T3 clearly communicated that teaching with just one textbook is limiting. When comparing teaching in China and Australia, she praised the variety available to Australian teachers, citing digital resources as an example. At the same she referred to ‘basing’ her lessons on *Nihao 1* and *Chinese Made Easy 1*, which are hard copy CFL textbooks. Her staffroom has class sets of these textbooks, which she carries back and forth to the classroom.

It was expected, given her background, that T4 would provide a clearly contrasting view of the importance of textbooks in CFL teaching, however, this was not the case. She echoes the thoughts of T2 in relation to expert authorship being a significant and positive factor in favour of the use of textbooks.

*T4: “I think, most particularly for some subjects, such as languages and Maths, professional people writing textbooks and they write them systematically and everything’s building on whatever has previously been studied. I fear that if you’re not using some sort of systematic, system such as that, you either have to build it yourself or you can rely on the textbook.”*

When asked about the ideal textbook, T4 indicated there is value in having practice tests and extension exercises. She even commented on the significance of using textbooks that are colourful.

*T4: “The kids love colour. They’re very fickle. They love colour. You know, they’re just like that.”*

Here the interviewee is making a comment about the fact that 21<sup>st</sup> century teenagers have higher expectations when it comes to the quality and design of audio-visual materials.

Nevertheless, she summarized her opinion, in favour of textbooks, by pointing to their capacity to provide *“a clear picture to refer back to where they’ve been and where they’re going.”* In other words, students benefit from a structured teaching program that holds them accountable to expected learning outcomes.

In the following paragraphs, evidence relating to the relationship between textbook use teaching practices is presented. Some teachers admit, given their pedagogical heritage, that there will be a degree of reliance on textbooks. In addition, there was a range of factors determining how textbooks impact teaching practice. Some see textbooks as convenient tools for students to practice what they have learnt, while others commented they help solve administrative problems created by multi-level classes. Textbooks were reported as helpful to teachers who lack the necessary skills to engage students. In other words, textbooks assist in keeping students academically engaged. Yet, others commented on the ageing nature of several publications, and particularly the existence of out-of-date words and phrases in spoken Chinese.

T2 clearly outlined a personal pedagogy, which involves the initial learning of cultural items related to language items, then the writing system (especially from radicals), vocabulary, sentence formation and practice to consolidate knowledge. He identified textbooks as a convenient tool for practice of what has been taught and learned in class. He takes a more structured approach to his use of textbooks. For him, the textbook has a fixed place in pedagogy. In the statement below, T2 not only explains this clearly but also reveals his commitment to the integration of cultural learning in the languages classroom.

*Interviewer: What percentage of each lesson would you actually have the textbook open?*

*T2: “Well, it depends. Actually like for each time if students are learning a new topic, I don’t have textbook for them. I will introduce the cultural part and as well as the in Chinese we call the radicals, which is the basic element of the spelling. So I introduce that part first. So this is the first lesson. They get to know the culture know the context and then the second period will be into the vocabulary like for same topic for example occupations, for transportations so they get to know the vocabulary and then we’re going to use the textbook for the third period.”*

By way of criticism, T1 comments on the unreliability of some textbooks, saying they are out of date, or not very authentic in the language used.

*T1: "Lots of teachers, they're using it, like in Australia, but they still have some little mistakes. Or we don't really, it's too formal for daily conversation. And they really consider about the context or the situation about speakers, or how we use it. It's kind of like pragmatic thing."*

Based on her experience as an EFL teacher in China, T3 revealed an interesting dilemma as she reflects on the way she taught English to Chinese students in the PRC. In contrasting the two very different types of students, she not only made the point that Chinese pedagogy is unsuitable in Australian classrooms, but she also affirmed its efficacy as a method for second language acquisition.

*T3: "I would say the essential part of the content is like we say intensive reading part is important, because intensive reading part you will read essential vocabularies and the grammars really important. And in China if we use intensive we pretty much you have to read them very familiar. If you can recite, this will be ideal. But hard to do in Australia. And then intensive reading, intensive reading, I think they have enough work there. I think in Australia, if you have a basic text then enough work around, centred on the text will be good. Really give students. They learn something and they enough exercise to reinforce what they have learned."*

Recitation of texts is still a common learning approach in the PRC. On school and university campuses today, students of foreign languages can be seen pacing around with their heads down focused on a written text in their textbook, whilst mouthing the text word-for-word. This is because they can expect to be asked randomly by their teacher to recite it in class whilst everyone listens. Hence, textbooks in the PRC hold value, to some extent, as the sole source of texts for learning by memorization and recitation. The author believes T3 may have disclosed that there is still value placed in this method of teaching, even though it is impractical in Australian classrooms. Impracticality, it seems, stems more from unwillingness on the part of students than anything else, as indicated by T3 in the following,

*T3: "Because the students are totally different. So um in China they more the students ready to do as the teacher whatever the teacher said. But in Australia I think they more like, they like, they want or they ready to learn, rather than something from outside. I think here is something more like from inner of the students."*

T4's assertion about the practicality of textbooks, in what she calls "multi-lingual classes", raises a question about cause and effect. In mixed-course classes, T4 reported textbooks "are a lifesaver", given she can "have different levels working on different books".

It is possible that, for the case of NSW CFL, the prevalence of Mandarin classes composed of students of two or three distinct language proficiency levels, may necessitate the use of hard copy textbooks in order to provide a way to keep students engaged in learning activities, while the teacher attempts to divide his or her time and attention to individuals who require it. If textbooks are unavailable for any reason, such as cost or lack of quality, the school may be limited in its course offerings. What we see prevailing in many NSW schools that offer CFL today, however, compromises learning quality. Ha (2013, p114) refers to one aspect of teacher identity as 'juggler', which she describes as the daily exercise of creating and maintaining learning experiences for a variety of language levels in the one classroom. This has been a necessary evil in languages teaching as a means of creating viable classes for decades. The number of students selecting Languages beyond Year 8 directly determines staffing numbers in school Languages departments. This human resource constraint, leading to composite classes, sees teachers teaching two, and often three, Chinese courses simultaneously. It is no wonder they opt for user-friendly textbooks to manage the learning of the students under their care.

Interestingly, T4 gives us an insight into the unique influence Australian school principals can have over the utilization of textbooks at a whole-school level.

*T4: "Well I know there's a lot of people, including our previous Principal, and possibly our present Principal, who don't necessarily like textbooks."*

Here we gain an insight into the gatekeeping role principals can play in NSW secondary schools. If from a particular educational philosophy standpoint an individual principal has an aversion to the use of hard copy textbooks, all academic departments within the school will

find it nearly impossible to have teaching material budgets, that include such purchases, approved.

Student preference is another factor identified by T4 as she reflects on what her students like about textbooks.

*T4: "Some kids tend to really like them, because it gives them a direction and gives them, like they know where they're going. It's another thing besides their notes. It's quite a clear picture of what they need to know."*

Many teachers are sensitive to the preferences of their students. Some may respond positively to student desires in order to keep the peace, while others may do so for more noble reasons, such as a desire to tailor teaching to student needs.

#### 4.2.3 Teacher Perceptions of Essential Elements in CFL Textbooks

Survey question 16 asked teacher to rank certain elements of textbooks in order of importance. Content division into themes and coverage of language macro-skills were confirmed as the two most important elements. Respondents indicated that *units arranged by topic/theme with smaller chapters, or chapters arranged by topic/theme*, were most desirable. Other elements of significance were the existence of graphical content such as *photos, diagrams and sketches*, along with the inclusion of the *four language macro-skills* (speaking, reading, listening and writing). This question also revealed what teachers thought to be insignificant in textbook quality. For instance, whether the book has a hard or soft cover, and whether or not links to web resources exist, were almost equally unimportant. Further investigation of the latter may reveal a belief that published links to web resources date too quickly. Alternatively, it may indicate a reticence to engage with web-based learning materials.

The perceived importance of logical and/or planned sequencing of learning material is reflected in both the online survey and interviews. Interestingly, it was the non-Chinese background teacher (T4) who emphasized most strongly the value and reliability of an expertly planned textbook.

*T4: "I think, most particularly for some subjects, such as languages and Maths, professional people writing textbooks and they write them systematically and everything's building on whatever has previously been studied. I fear that if you're not using some sort of systematic, system such as that, you either have to build it yourself or you can rely on the textbook."*

T1, when reflecting on the use of *Ni Hao 1* and *Hanyu*, contrasted what made the books interesting and what she called "depth of knowledge". She elaborated on 'interesting' by suggesting cultural knowledge, songs and interactive activities, with the caveat that high school students were disinterested in childish songs, but preferred pop songs. This highlights the dearth of age-appropriate songs that can engage junior high school L2 learners of Chinese. Mandarin pop music (Mando-Pop) is written for L1 speakers of Mandarin in junior and senior high and so they are largely inaccessible to L2 learners in Australia. This type of resource is also limited in its scope to teach pronunciation. Even though song lyrics can be simple and repetitive, and used for vocabulary learning (through pinyin or hanzi), tonal

pronunciation is non-existent. In other words, song lyrics and tones in Mandarin are mutually exclusive. Even for L1 speakers of Mandarin, comprehension is difficult if only listening without printed lyrics.

T2 mainly uses Chinese Made Easy as the core textbook for teaching L2 Chinese learners in the Year 7 class. He later introduces *Ni Hao 1* and a NSW DEC online course called *Zou Ba!* He places most of his confidence, however, in his school's Mandarin teaching program because it is written to achieve the outcomes of the NSW curriculum. He is therefore satisfied that students can achieve the expected outcomes. His use of a variety of teaching materials is based on professional judgment as to which resources are appropriate for Year 7 or Year 8 learners. In relation to change in textbooks over his seven-year career, T2 acknowledged not much change had taken place.

*T2: "Chinese Made Easy, it's basically the same for these seven years. Ni Hao they have upgraded from first version to the third one. And Zou Ba! Online program so it's basically the same."*

When asked to elaborate on changes made to *Ni Hao 1*, T2 pointed to improvements made to listening and speaking exercises. Authenticity and flexibility were highlighted here.

*T2: "First one is the listening part. I think it's more practical use. You know like those... because before the dialogue, they made it on purpose, however, it's not really, like say, how to say, not really practical. They are just trying to use the vocabulary, so doesn't make much sense. The second one is the exercise they cut lots of repetitions, so they allow students to be more creative in practicing."*

As a teacher and native speaker of Mandarin, T2 appreciates the inclusion of authentic Mandarin in listening and speaking exercises because it represents how Chinese people really speak. In T1's words,

*T1: "Or we don't really, it's too formal for daily conversation. And they rarely consider about the context or the situation about speakers, or how we use it. It's kind of like pragmatic thing."*



T2 also raises an interesting point about the value of open-ended exercises. His comment about “allowing students to be more creative” relates to speaking exercises in the *Ni Hao 1 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*.

T1 gives us an insight into the difficulty teachers may face when teaching Chinese grammar. She points out it is false to assume an L1 speaker of Mandarin is necessarily competent in explaining its grammar, and that a textbook can provide the required support.

*T1: “I can create things based on my previous knowledge, or my like, my, my background knowledge. But I still prefer to use it because I’ll feel like something I can rely on. And especially for grammatical knowledge, because Chinese people, we don’t learn, don’t really learn grammar in Mandarin in China. But here as a second language learner, they always, like, try to focus on grammar. So mostly I rely on the grammar knowledge in the textbook.”*

T4 also indicated she relies on textbooks for, not so much grammar instruction, as a road map for the logical introduction of new grammatical items.

*T4: “I use a textbook as a base only for topic area and you know direction with the grammatical progress.”*

Even as a highly experienced teacher of more than 25 years, T4 articulated a deep trust in the expertise of textbook designers because she believes that she can follow the given sequence of increasingly complex grammar structures. Unfortunately, if others elements of language presentation are pedagogically problematic, such dialogues that lack authenticity, or a unit with too many new vocabulary items, the textbook will immediately lose value.

Others interviewed confirmed the reliable nature of planned, structured teaching materials, in the following;

*T2: “I think some textbooks, because are written by some experienced teachers, it does help those language teachers to teach in class.”*

*T1: “Like this term we’re going to learn about family, so how we gonna learn it and we have step 1,2,3,4. And you might use only one textbook, but you can add things on there.”*

*T3: "I think in Australia, if you have a basic text then enough work around, centred on the text will be good. Really give students. They learn something and they [offer] enough exercise to reinforce what they have learned."*

If a teacher is inexperienced, busy or tired, a structured presentation of language, organized in themes, is a valuable and convenient tool in the hands of its user.

In relation to the development of teaching materials, T2 pointed out that *Ni Hao 1* has been upgraded to include more authentic and more flexible listening resources.

*Interviewer: "Have you seen any improvements in Ni Hao 1?"*

*T: "Um, a little bit."*

*Interviewer: "What changes have they made?"*

*T: "First one is the listening part. I think it's more practical use. You know like those... because before the dialogue, they made it on purpose, however, it's not really, like say, how to say, not really practical. They are just trying to use the vocabulary, so doesn't make much sense. The second one is the exercise they cut lots of repetitions, so they allow students to be more creative in practicing."*

Authenticity of the target language is of increasing value in CFL. Younger CFL teachers, in particular, are likely to hesitate before using dialogues in textbooks as exemplars of contemporary oral discourse. T1, for instance, who is in her mid-twenties, verbalized her objection to using model dialogues from her textbook because it is simply not how she speaks.

### 4.3 Summary of Results

In this section I will summarize the results of this research by referring to each research question in turn. A synthesis of quantitative and qualitative results will be offered to identify the broad outcomes of the survey and interviews.

In relation to what value L1 teachers of Chinese place in textbooks, it is clear that many teachers are in transition between a Chinese education schema, which holds textbooks in a prominent position, and the Australian education schema, in which hard copy textbooks are de-emphasized and a multi-modal approach is encouraged. It is however important to note that these two schema are not opposing extremes in relation to the use of textbooks. Even though Australian university teacher training supports diversification of teaching materials, in practice there is still significant reliance on hard copy textbooks in Australian schools. Textbooks are seen to offer a degree of certainty and security especially in the mind of the teacher who is preparing students for major matriculation examinations such as the NSW Higher School Certificate, or in fact the language teacher who is teaching a multi-level Chinese class. I set out to question the value of textbooks in the minds of L1 teachers of Chinese in NSW schools, and have shown textbooks are still valued as authoritative teaching materials and also supportive to 'responsible' curriculum delivery in the classroom.

Turning now to the question of what extent do L1 teachers of Chinese believe textbooks shape their teaching practice, we can clearly see tensions pulling teachers in two directions. On one hand their pedagogical heritage draws them towards a pedagogy that favours control, characterized by teacher-centredness and deference to a third party authority: the textbook. On the other hand, the context of their current teaching practice is the 2014 Australian classroom. They are surrounded by students who demand something different and by colleagues who model something different. The results of this research show many L1 Chinese teachers are indeed conscious of the tensions and are trying to adapt their own pedagogical heritage and adopt Australian pedagogy. I also set out to disclose the extent to which L1 CFL teachers believe textbooks shape their practice and discovered an acknowledgement that having a Chinese pedagogical heritage renders teachers prone to default to textbooks for authority and order. While elements of this are pragmatic, such as in the case of the explicit teaching of Chinese grammar, or managing multi-level classes,

teachers themselves have realized the need for conscious and purposeful engagement with a range of teaching materials, including the creation of new and localized resources.

## **5. Discussion and concluding remarks**

There has been limited research on CFL in the Australian context. This study focuses on CFL teacher beliefs in relation to the value of textbooks and the nature of evolving personal pedagogies. This issue has the potential to impact the quality of educational outcomes in CFL in NSW schools, it will further impact the uptake of elective courses in CFL, and thus the expansion of CFL in Australia.

It is clear from teacher responses to surveys and interviews that many Chinese background teachers of CFL in NSW are still in transition between the educational context in which they grew up as students and the one in which they now find themselves employed as teachers. Unlike the typical student cohort found in PRC classrooms, NSW students respond less to a teacher-centred pedagogy. They are more culturally diverse, more independent in their thinking, and more critical of teacher performance. They demand contemporary, professional and pragmatic teaching resources. Many CFL teachers are thus under pressure to deliver a new pedagogy in unfamiliar territory.

Data gathered in this study broadly indicates an awareness and willingness, on the part of Chinese background teachers, to adapt Chinese, and adopt Australian, pedagogies. This represents a more positive position than what was expected. It was expected that some L1 CFL teachers would describe a more dogged pursuit of what they think is the best way to teach Chinese, that is, through teacher-centred instruction dominated by drilling and practicing language forms exemplified accurately by textbooks. On the contrary, even though there were indications that textbooks are reliable and important tools of language instruction, teachers have begun to adapt. Interventions through Australian tertiary coursework and practicum have made an impact, but in many cases have left teachers confused and unsupported in their new careers. The adoption of a new pedagogy, both conceptually and practically, is an on going and significant challenge. It is much easier for any individual to teach in the same pedagogical environment they have lived in as a student. For any outsider there are typically many cultural, pedagogical, social, linguistic and personal barriers to effective performance in a NSW school, and more particularly a NSW classroom of L2 Chinese learners.

The literature supports my findings in relation to how some L1 CFL teachers value textbooks. They are certainly seen as a pedagogical tool (Choppin, 1992) and sometimes even as a surrogate curriculum (Venezsky, 1992). Textbooks are clearly important for facilitating topic selection and providing an orientation as to the way they should be taught (Martinez-Gracia et al, 2006). Anderson and Tomkin's (1983) focus on teachers as adaptors of teaching materials is born out in the results of this study. L1 CFL teachers are in transition and the adaptation of teaching materials is becoming normalized in their practice. Teachers also show the capacity to question and critique the limitations of existing textbooks, as Pepin (2002) suggests is an indication of awareness. Awareness in turn needs to be channeled into change, and this means change in materials and teaching practice. Orton (2008) writes of future CFL teaching in this way.

*"Innovative programs should be initiated which permit seriously concentrated periods of time to be spent on the language, [and] targeted resource development of scaffolded practice material, using electronic media." (Orton, 2008, p7).*

Scaffolding of teaching and learning activities, coupled with the use of technology, seems to reflect current best practice in teaching CFL to L2 learners.

The lack of clarity in the literature in relation to the fixed nature of teacher beliefs is also shown through this study. Some teachers have shown significant adaptation in the way they approach teaching Chinese to L2 learners. Others are still struggling after 10 years of experience in NSW classrooms. So Kagan's (1992) insistence on the fixed nature of beliefs may be plausible for some. While for others, and perhaps the majority, there is evidence to support assertions by Grossman (1992) and Dunkin (1996) that changes do take place for pre-service teachers. Significant, however, is the claim by Zeichner and Gore (1990) that the greatest catalyst for change is the school environment. L1 teachers of Chinese reported there was pressure from colleagues and teaching programs to change the way they teach. Quantitative data indicates textbooks are still important and also reveals some contradictions in teacher self-awareness over what they believe about textbooks. Qualitative data proves teachers are in transition and show a willingness to be purposeful in adopting a contemporary Australian pedagogy. What both sets of data are unable to prove is the extent

to which teachers are actually implementing these changing perceptions in their teaching practice. An ethnographic study is hence warranted if these perceptions are to be verified.

### **Concluding remarks**

This study is significant because it begins to fill the gap in CFL research in the Australian context. It is the first study examining L1 CFL teacher beliefs about teaching materials and teaching practice in Australian schools. Even though limited in its scope by focusing on CFL teachers in NSW (survey n=34 and interviews n=4), the researcher believes both samples were representative of the NSW CFL teacher population, given the demographic diversity of each sample. It is also acknowledged that CFL in the state of Victoria is more developed, with higher rates of student uptake and more advanced teacher professional development. A study to include Victorian CFL teaching would yield more data, however a national study would be ideal, given the Australian Government has now launched a national curriculum. It may be that the present NSW data is valid as an average representation of Australia's situation. In addition, a study capturing only non-Chinese background teacher perceptions may add depth to international CFL research, given the accelerating uptake of Mandarin education in countries where Mandarin is not lingua franca.

If Chinese language education is to advance in Australia, the issues of textbook use, teacher training, teacher professional development, levels of engagement with Hanban, digital resources production, and curriculum development must all be researched. Given Australia's purposeful positioning in Asia (Australia in the Asian Century White Paper, 2012), there is a plan to provide quality Asia-orientated learning opportunities for our primary and secondary students. Innovation in Chinese language education in Australia has been recommended for some time now (Orton, 2008; Scrimgeour & Wilson, 2009; Moloney & Xu, 2012; Moloney, 2013).

Pre-service teachers, who have been predominantly educated in the PRC, require more targeted teacher education programs to ensure maximized enculturation and pedagogical orientation prior to appointment to teaching positions in Australian schools. Existing L1 CFL teachers need more targeted support and professional development to ensure their hard work is channeled into better educational outcomes, resulting in a higher uptake of CFL in schools.

The potential of collegial support in Australian schools means L1 CFL teachers who are often alone as teachers of Chinese, can work alongside teachers of other languages, the majority of whom are likely to have been taught and trained in Australia. Hence, that which is modeled by colleagues is likely to be a valuable resource with the power to stimulate in CFL teachers sustained reflection on personal teaching practice.

In addressing questions of innovation in the use of CFL teaching materials in NSW schools, the nurturing of reflection in teachers is paramount. If the current cohort of NSW CFL teachers is either unable, or unwilling, to reflect effectively and regularly on their own teaching practices, then the implementation of innovation will be constantly frustrated. This is because the adoption rate of an innovation is its compatibility with the value beliefs and past experiences of individuals. (Rogers, 1995, p. 4) All Australian teachers are being asked to engage in continuous improvement, which includes taking risks and reflecting upon successes and failures (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). They need meta-awareness of their own cultural background and how this explicitly manifests itself in pedagogical decision-making (Moloney, 2013).

A new path of research is being carved out. It is believed that mixed methods research (Riazi & Candlin, 2014) in Australian CFL classrooms will yield rich data that can inform, not only future educational policy, but also improved teacher training, teaching practice, teacher professional development and the production of more suitable teaching materials.



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## 7. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form



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Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Name: Robyn Moloney

Chief Investigator's / Supervisor's Title: Senior Lecturer, Education

### Participant Information and Consent Form

Name of Project: *A critical investigation into the development of textbooks for the teaching of Mandarin to L2 learners.*

You are invited to participate in a study of the development of textbooks for Mandarin learning. The purpose of the study is to understand better the changes in, and importance of, textbooks for beginner level Mandarin.

The study is being conducted by Scott Smith, ([scott.smith3@students.mq.edu.au](mailto:scott.smith3@students.mq.edu.au)), to meet the requirements of Master of Research, under the supervision of Dr Robyn Moloney (Senior Lecturer, Education of the Department of Education and Dr Xu Huiling (Senior Lecturer, Chinese Studies, of the Department of International Studies.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey about your use and opinion of textbooks for beginner level Mandarin study. The survey is expected to take you 20-25 minutes. In addition to the survey, some participants may be invited to contribute to the research through a 30 minute face-to-face interview. The interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential, except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Access to the data is limited to the researchers identified in this letter. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to any NSWCLTA member upon request by email after December 2014.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Name: Scott Smith  
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

**(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)**

## **Appendix 2: Online Survey Questions**

### **A. Teacher Background**

*Please answer this according to your experience with L2 learners of Mandarin.*

1. Are you teaching a Beginner's Mandarin course this year? YES/NO
2. How long have you been teacher?
3. How many years have you taught the 100 hours Mandarin course?

### **B. School Context**

4. In 2014, I work in a Government / Non-Government school. GOVT / NON-GOVT
5. In 2014, I teach Mandarin to High school students. YES/NO
6. My school has a written teaching program for the 100 hours Mandarin course YES / NO
7. Do you have students of Chinese background in your class? YES / NO
8. If yes, what percentage of the class number are ethnic Chinese?
  - a. Less than 10%
  - b. 10-30%
  - c. 30-50%
  - d. More than 50%

### C. Decision Making in your School

9. How are decisions made about the use of a CORE Mandarin textbook?
- a. I choose
  - b. Another Mandarin teacher
  - c. The Head Teacher of LOTE
  - d. The Principal
  - e. Other executive staff \_\_\_\_\_
10. When was the last time the Mandarin textbook for the 100 hours Mandarin course was changed?
- f. 2014
  - g. 2013
  - h. 2012
  - i. 2008-2011
  - j. Before 2008
11. If you agreed with this change, please give your reasons. (*You can choose more than one*)
- a. Its design is more modern
  - b. It has more colours and graphics
  - c. It has more exercises for students
  - d. It has more conversational opportunities
  - e. It has more content
  - f. It has less content
  - g. It has more cultural content
  - h. It presents language in a more logical order
  - i. It has more grammar explanations
  - j. It is easier to teach from

### D. Core Textbook

12. Is there a textbook issued to / purchased by each student?

YES – purchased by students YES – issued (on loan from the school) NO (go to Question 17)

13. If yes, give the title and author of this textbook.

14. Are you using the most current edition of this textbook? YES /NO

15. What other textbooks do you use? List ....



16. What are the purposes of these other textbooks? (you may select more than one)

- ☐ Teacher reference
- ☐ Supplementary lesson materials
- ☐ For homework material
- ☐ Use in assessment tasks
- ☐ Extension activities

17. What role did you play in the choice of the CORE textbook?

- a. I chose it alone
- b. I chose it after consultation with my Head Teacher
- c. I chose it after consultation with colleagues at my school
- d. I chose it after consultation with colleagues outside my school
- e. I did not choose it

18. If you did not, who chose the textbook?

- ☐ Other language teacher
- ☐ Head Teacher Languages
- ☐ Head Teacher (other)
- ☐ Other executive staff
- ☐ Principal

19. What was the most important reason for the choice of this textbook?

*Put the following in order of importance. (1 = most important reason, 5 = least important reason)*

- ☐ Cost/budget
- ☐ Your preference
- ☐ Other Language teacher preference
- ☐ Head Teacher's preference
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## E. Strengths and Weaknesses of a CORE textbook

*If you are using a CORE textbook for the 100 hours Mandarin course, please answer the following questions.*

20. In general, what elements **should** a CORE textbook for the 100 hours Mandarin course have? *(You can choose more than one)*

- ☐ Hard cover
- ☐ Soft cover
- ☐ Graphical content such as photos, diagrams, and sketches
- ☐ Colour pages
- ☐ Chapters arranged by topic/theme
- ☐ Units arranged by topic/theme with smaller chapters
- ☐ Chapters arranged by grammatical skills
- ☐ Chapters arranged by most common vocabulary
- ☐ Units including all 4 skills (Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking)
- ☐ Vocabulary lists
- ☐ Dictionary at the back of the book
- ☐ Dialogues
- ☐ Class discussion activities
- ☐ Links to web resources

21. Does the textbook have an accompanying Student Workbook? YES / NO

22. How often is the workbook used by students?

- a. Every lesson
- b. 1-2 times a week
- c. Less than once a week

23. In your opinion, do your students like the CORE textbook? YES / NO

24. Does the textbook have an accompanying Teacher's Book? YES / NO

25. How often do you use this in lesson preparation?

- a. Every lesson
- b. 1-2 times a week
- c. Less than once a week
- d. Never
- e. Not applicable

26. Does the design of the CORE textbook match the way you like to teach? YES/NO

27. Does the content of the CORE textbook match the way you like to teach? YES/NO

28. To what extent do you see these statements as the main aims of the CORE textbook you currently use?

*For each of these statements indicate with an "X" the extent to which you agree or disagree.*

AIMS of the CORE textbook	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
To ensure students understand and use Mandarin grammar accurately.					
To enable students to understand what is being said to them in Mandarin.					
To enable students to write a certain number of characters.					
To enable students to understand key cultural differences between China and Australia.					
To enable students to learn about Chinese history and culture.					
To enable students to gain basic knowledge of Mandarin before they move to the next level.					
To enable students to begin conversing in Mandarin.					

29. To what extent do you agree that the following skills, appropriate for beginner level, are taught from this textbook?

*For each of these statements indicate with an "X" the extent to which you agree or disagree.*

SKILLS taught from this textbook	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
Translation between English and Mandarin					
Mandarin writing skills					
Mandarin reading skills					
Mandarin listening skills					
Mandarin speaking skills					
Understanding of basic Mandarin grammar					

## F. How you use the Textbook

30. Which statement best describes the way you most often use the CORE?

### ***Page Order***

- I tend to follow the page order because the textbook has been designed that way.
- I follow the page order as much as possible.
- I rarely follow the page order.

31. Which statement best describes the way you most often use the CORE textbook?

### ***Language Skills***

- I choose from the language skill section (eg listening or reading), I want to use each lesson.
- I choose different skills depending the time of day of my lesson. (eg writing in lessons after lunch, listening in lessons before recess)
- I choose different language skills according to the needs of the students.
- I often allow the students to choose which language skill we will study.

32. Which statement best describes the way you most often use the CORE textbook?

*In relation to the syllabus and school teaching program...*

- a. I usually rely on the textbook to guide the content of my lessons
- b. I usually rely on the textbook to guide the activities of my lessons
- c. I usually plan each lesson from the school Mandarin program and find parts of the textbook that will support the lesson.
- d. I usually plan each lesson from the syllabus and find parts of the textbook that will support the lesson.

33. Which statement best describes your general opinion of the CORE textbook?

- a. It's the best one I've used so far.
- b. It's not as good as the previous textbook.
- c. It's okay except for \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. I don't like using it.

34. Which statement(s) best describes any specific negative opinions you have of the CORE textbook? *CIRCLE your response(s).*

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. Vocabulary                | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| b. Writing Exercises         | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| c. Dialogues                 | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| d. Listening Exercises       | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| e. Reading Texts             | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| f. Characters                | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| g. Content                   | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| h. Pictures                  | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| i. Grammar                   | NOT ENOUGH / ENOUGH / TOO MUCH |
| j. Intro of new language     | TOO EARLY / IN TIME / TOO LATE |
| k. Skips important language? | YES / NO                       |

### Appendix 3: Interview Questions

**(S) = short response (L) = long response**

1. Male / Female? **(S)**
2. In which country did you undertake most of your primary education? **(S)**
3. In which country did you undertake most of your secondary education? **(S)**
4. In which country(s) did you undertake your tertiary education? **(S)**
5. In 2014, are you teaching in a Government or non-Government school? **(S)**
6. How long have you been a teacher? **(S)**

7. How many years' experience do you have teaching beginners? **(S)**
8. What qualities are needed in a good teacher of Mandarin? **(L)**
9. What are the elements of a good textbook? **(L)**
10. Do you think your formal teacher training was adequate for this job? Explain. **(L)**
11. If not, how do textbooks help in your teaching? **(L)**
12. How important do you think textbooks are in teaching? **(L)**
13. OR Can good textbooks make up for a lack of training? **(L)**
14. To what extent are textbooks essential in Mandarin teaching? **(L)**
15. Please list the textbooks you have used for teaching beginners Mandarin. **(S)**
16. What textbook are you using this year? **(S)**
17. How and why was this textbook chosen for 2014? **(L)**
18. What percentage of your lessons in a 10-day cycle (2 weeks), are typically based on the textbook? **(S)**
19. What other resources do you rely upon for classroom teaching? **(S)**
20. What resources do you rely upon for lesson preparation, personal professional reference, extension materials, etc? **(S)**
21. Can you describe any improvements that have been made in textbooks for beginners of Mandarin during your career? **(L)**
22. Can you describe any negative changes to textbooks? (eg) not enough writing practice. **(L)**
23. If you were to write a new textbook for CFL, what would you include, and why? **(L)**

#### **Appendix 4:** CFL Textbooks in current use in NSW schools

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Publication Date</b>	<b>Edition</b>
Nihao 1	Fredlein & Fredlein	2011	3rd
Chinese Made Easy 1	Ma Yamin	2006	2nd
Hanyu for Beginning Students	Chang, Mackerras & Hsiu-Ching	1992	1st
Jinbu 1	Zhu Xiaoming, Bin Yu	2010	1st