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**LEARNING TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND: PEER-INITIATED PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

By

Rui Niu

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

LEARNING TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND: PEER-INITIATED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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This dissertation describes a qualitative study of teachers' learning within peer-initiated professional development. It documents a study group called a Teachers' Learning Community (TLC). The TLC was formed by a small group of elementary teachers working in the town of Coopville (pseudonym). These teachers were responsible for the education of two children from a Chinese immigrant family. Prompted by the specific challenge of teaching English Language Learners (ELL's) anticipating increased diversity in their school and community in the future, and charged by the Federal "No Child Left Behind Act," to teach all learners to high standards, the teachers' participation in TLC was the subject of participant observation research. The research reported in this dissertation found that teachers learned about and reflected on how best to teach English Language Learners and support their learning of English language and literacy as a function of their participation in TLC activities as well as in unanticipated extensions of these activities into their classrooms, wider school community, and town.

This study created opportunities to investigate the group's ongoing interactions as well as to trace individual teacher's experiences. As a qualitative study of teacher learning, the research applied methods of ethnographic research including the framing

and testing of working hypotheses or inferences about local meaning; and testing these by means of triangulation of evidence from diverse data sources. Additionally, in an iterative process called grounded theory development, the research proceeded both inductively and deductively. Reporting the research using both narrative vignettes as the major documentation method and the writer's interpretations of meaning, the study provides an opportunity to learn about participating teachers' awareness, understanding, attitudes, and practical modification and how these are expressed and potentially transformed by means of TLC's peer-led professional development activities. Therefore, the dissertation explores the research questions: What and how did the Coopville teachers learn to engage the Chinese immigrant children to their classroom activities in the TLC contexts?

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Rose finally got there late and dad had to literally push her up on stage. So she sat next to Linda and when we came down to do the bean bag thing we got Katherine to take her up and she sat down and wouldn't stand up or sit down or anything else. Somehow Rose's dad got her attention from the back and motioned for her and took her home. That was it. She never did anything up front. She was to read a story and sing. Yes she was there but she wasn't happy she was up front. All of the rehearsals we practice in front of a microphone with Katherine and Rose's mouth was moving, but when it came down to the real thing in front of all these parents she put on the brakes. Finally she would sit by Linda and then sit down and act stubborn.

--- Mrs. RS [TLC Meeting Notes, 9-27-08]

This work is dedicated to my parents,
Mr. Garth Cooper and those who care and
are concerned about my research work,
with love and appreciation.

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books she recommended provided lots of information and offered me a better opportunity to understand both American schools, schooling, and American teachers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Vignette¹ One: A Small, Peaceful, But Isolated Village

Off this major east/west highway, the ramp curves towards the main road of the town, and it doesn't take long to realize that the majority of the people I see in this small Midwestern community look very similar: most have white skin and blond or brown hair.² Turning right over the highway bridge, the streetlight turns red giving me a chance to look closely at the buildings on both sides of the main street through Coopville.³ On the right hand side of the street is a restaurant, standing brightly with its ocean blue roof and its entryway gift shop, which I'll soon learn is one of the most popular eateries among the local restaurants. Between this building and the next traffic light, there are multiple business establishments such as McDonalds, Wendy's, two gas stations, a small shopping center, and a national chain hotel beside the highway. It seemed that there is not much variety in this town to distinguish it from

¹ Throughout the dissertation I blend expository and descriptive writing. I use what Erickson (1986) calls analytic description in the form of "vignettes" both to illustrate and also to provide evidence for my theoretically grounded descriptions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The vignettes reflect analysis of multiple data sources collected by means of participant observation, interview, analysis of conversation, and ethnographic fieldwork (See chapter 2). The remainder of the chapters contains vignettes in which my own voice as a participant observer and analyzer of data is included along with the voices of the study's participants. I provide quotations from my data sets and attempt to underscore the claims and evidence that each vignette contains while preserving the narrative qualities of descriptive research.

² According to the United States Census Bureau, the village has a total area of 2.3 square miles, of which, 2.3 square miles of it is land and 0.04 square miles of it (1.28%) is water. As of the census² of 2000, there were 2,972 people, 1,156 households, and 754 families residing in the village. The population density was 1,285.2 per square mile. There were 1,211 housing units. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fowlerville,_Michigan.

³ All names of participants and locations in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

other small towns across the American Midwest.

Just at the moment I am thinking about the town's American ordinariness, a delicious food smell catches my attention – it's so familiar – and right away, I recognize that it is the smell of Chinese food cooking. They have Chinese food here? Following the smell, after passing dozens of crowded American shops, hotels, gas stations, and restaurants, I find a Chinese restaurant behind one of the fast food restaurants. Among all the English letters and words on the other business signs, it makes itself obvious with its name in Chinese characters. "Interesting!" I think. "They have a Chinese restaurant here in such a western-styled small town. They may have another one." I start to search among the buildings for any signs that might indicate a store, a shop, a restaurant, or a hotel, or anything that might have associations with Chinese people or Chinese culture. Unfortunately, I am not able to find any. To comfort my own disappointment, I tell myself, "Well, one Chinese restaurant is better than none! At least, I will have one place to treat myself with some Chinese food." However, suddenly, a strange question crosses my mind, "But how can the Chinese restaurant and the Chinese people who are running this restaurant survive in such a town?"

This one-time rural farming community has clearly become what most would call a "bedroom community;" that is a town in which people live but here most drive some distance to their work in one of the larger cities about 30-40 minutes away. Yet the small town flavor of Coopville remains from its days before the highway was

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built. As I look around on my drive to Coopville Elementary School, I don't see any **person** of color on the streets or in the cars. The modest houses are of similar vintage, **and** the atmosphere reflects American middle class taste and values – clipped lawns, **American** flags flying at businesses and also from houses, and yards littered with **children's** toys and bicycles. I find myself really starting to worry about how **comfortable** a minority child would feel in this environment.

At the heart of this community, the main north/south road I am traveling intersects the major east/west street that once carried travelers from one side of the state to the other prior to the creation of the highway. Historically, this road probably brought strangers to the town, some perhaps stopping at the crossroad for a break in **their** drive. But the building of the major state highway now effectively bypasses **Coopville** unless a driver exits for a quick fill up or a drive through one of the nearby **fast** food restaurants. Today people leave Coopville on this super-highway for a larger **city** for a day's work, but few people come to Coopville to seek their fortune.

At the old crossroad I see the Village of Coopville Police Station, and more **businesses** such as a video store, a bakery/café, a floral shop and a small grocery **store.** A little further on there is a decorating center, a small diner, a bar, and a **barbershop.** You can definitely tell that this is the center for commerce in this **Community.** Just past this village center is the fire station followed by a community **Park** which leads into a modest neighborhood. One easily gets the sense that in such a **small** community this park, with its playground, basketball courts, and pavilion, is the

hub of youngsters' activity when school is not in session.

Turning right at the far corner, I follow a short road leading to the school **area**. Passing only a few houses before the road dead ends, I turn left, whereupon I see **a large** school building. Seeing that this is the grade 5/6 middle school and not the **building** I am looking for, I turn right again to see three more school buildings, all in a **row**. The one I am seeking stands in the middle, a low building slightly set back from **the road**. Coopville Elementary School, a K-2 building, is nestled between the Coopville school district's second through fourth grade building and its preschool, called "The Little Happy House." Behind these four buildings are several playgrounds, **the** varsity football field, and beyond that, the grades 7/8 junior high and the 9th-12th **grade** high school. Every school building in the district stands on this central ground, **a community** of learning isolated within the community of living.

Coopville is a community small enough that it serves all of its students in a **series** of small buildings where they are grouped not by neighborhood, but by grade **levels**. While its already limited residential growth slowed significantly in the area **comprising** the Coopville School District the past three years due to economic hard **turns** in the state, Coopville is attractive for commercial and industrial development **because** of its proximity to the highway and its location near major population centers **such** as two state universities and the state capital.

The Coopville School District is located in the western portion of the fastest **growing** county in Michigan, indeed, one of the fastest growing counties in the United

States, which was the impetus for a branch store of Wal-Mart to start its business close by the highway in 2008. There is also news that the Honda car manufacturer will establish a factory in the town, which would be a boom to its economy. Mentioning these economic opportunities in a Pre-Interview, several of the teachers in my study note, that they need to get prepared for the influx of new immigrant children (e.g. from Japan) who will arrive in association with the local Japanese owned manufacturing company (See Pre-Interviews: Mr. JK, 09-06-07; Mr. MG, 08-30-07; Mrs. ML, 08-30-07; and Mr. LM, 08-30-07). These comments add context to the teachers' interest in forming TLC and in learning about their current ELL students from China.

The school complex serves the village of Coopville, but the school district actually includes several other, smaller townships and covers 116 square miles with a population of 15,000. Thus, the Coopville area remains rural and sparsely populated despite the growth in cities around it. On a typical day, the transportation department will transport 60% of the student population, and travel over 2,400 miles (School Report, 2008). I am curious about the centralized educational services and, after several conversations and interactions with people in the town, I wonder if the centralized school buildings represent the position of education in the minds of the families of Coopville and its environs; if school is the centralizing force that brings these villages and townships all together.

In informal conversations with citizens, I heard in various ways that many believe that education is the center of everything important in the community and its

future generations and that united efforts on behalf of children bring the best results for the benefit of the young. In this dissertation, I had the chance to pursue this speculation, to learn about how school brings people together in Coopville and also about how Coopville and its schools respond when a Chinese family arrives, not just for a quick road stop en route to another destinations, but to stay and make their life and their living in the town.

A No Longer Tranquil Small Town and Its Elementary School

Recently, two students arrived with their parents from China. They enrolled in the kindergarten and first grade classrooms at Coopville Elementary School. Their arrival was notable. Coopville Elementary, a K-2 building, has a very homogenous student body: 94.21% of the children are Caucasian; 2.11% (six female and six male students) are Hispanic or Latino; 1.05% (two females and four males) are Black or African American; 0.88% (three females and two males) are American Indian or Alaska Native; 0.88% (four males and one female) are Asian (2 Chinese speaking) or Asian Americans (three were adopted by American families). Thus, the immigrant children differed ethnically from most of the Coopville children.

They also differed from the rest of the school population in that they spoke Chinese as their first language and, along with their parents, were just beginning to learn English – 0.35% children in this building speak Spanish and another 0.35% student population speak Chinese/Cantonese -- while 94.21% of the children and

100% of the educators are monolingual English speakers with 99.3% students who have at least one parent has English as their home language. This pattern is illustrated in Table 1, which is adapted from the Zangle Analysis for School Report (Simon, 2008).

Table 1: Ethnic Distribution Of Student Population At Coopville Elementary School

		American Indian or Alaska Native		Asian American		Black or African American		Hispanic or Latino		White		Grand Total
grade	language	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	
0 – K	English	3	2		1		1	3	1	73	103	187
	Spanish								1			1
0 - K Total		3	2		1		1	3	2	73	103	188
1st Grade	<Unset>										1	1
	Chinese-Cantonese				1							1
	English	2	3		2	2	3	2	2	120	123	259
	Spanish							1				1
1st Grade Total		2	3		3	2	3	3	2	120	124	262
2nd Grade	<Unset>										1	1
	Chinese-Cantonese			1								1
	English								2	51	65	118
2nd Grade Total				1					2	51	66	120
Grand Total		5	5	1	4	2	4	6	6	244	293	570

Adapted from *Zangle Analysis* (Simon, 2008).

This homogeneity along with the park-like setting of the clustered school buildings lends an air of tranquility to Coopville Elementary School. I have come here at the invitation of a group of faculty, administrators, and staff, however, to help them think and learn about a situation that has complicated the apparent tranquil order of life in their school.

The school's tranquil surface was disturbed by the arrival of the two Chinese students (See the italicized numbers in Table 1) as a pre-schooler and a kindergartener. One year later, the ongoing challenge of teaching them English and the so far unsuccessful effort to integrate them and their parents into the school

community, caused one teacher to contact me. She was clearly anxious about the challenge of teaching these Chinese students and about what their presence implied for the need to make some changes in the school environment. She spoke quickly and with a sense of urgency, saying, “We have two Chinese immigrant students here. What should we do about it to ensure a quality education for them? How can we meet their social and academic needs? Would you like to come in to talk to them some time?”(Field Notes, 09-12-06). From her pouring forth of these important questions, it was apparent that the teachers working with the Chinese immigrant students felt a strong need for information on how to teach them effectively.

The term English Language Learners (ELLs) is a general term in education and encompasses two groups – those who were born in the U.S. and those who were born outside the U.S. – neither of the groups speak Standard English at home (Anstrom, 1996; Hopstock & Bucaro, 1993; & Waggoner, 1993). In this dissertation, I use the term ELLs to refer to the children who live in households where a language other than Standard English is spoken, including children who were born outside the U.S., like Rose and Mike whose parents only speak Chinese at home.

Compared with California and New York, Michigan has a small number of ELL backgrounds. In 2004-2005, California has 52.9% students from Black/African American, Hispanic or Asian backgrounds enrolled in schools (California Department of Education). New York has 46% enrolled in schools (New York Department of

Education). However, despite declining student enrollment in Michigan public schools, there is an increase in the number of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Michigan reflects the national trend. According to Colorado Alliance for Immigration Reform (CAIR, 2008), immigrant children take up to 96 percent of the future increase in the school-age population over the next 50 years. The student population in the U.S is becoming more diverse with more students who are unable to be engaged in academic activities. According to the report of Goldenberg (2008), who synthesized two ELL studies conducted by the National Literacy Panel (NLP) and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE), the predicted percentage for ELLs who are not able to fully participate in mainstream classes is 25% in 2018, which is five times higher than that in 1990. In 1990, according to the Bureau of the Census in 1993, there were 2,388,243 children with difficulty speaking English in the classrooms (cited in Anstrom, 1996; the U. S. 1990 Census).⁴ This means to 2018, children who have difficulties at school will be five times 2,388,243. This large, increasing number of non-native speakers of English in US classrooms increases the need for teacher education and instructional support in working with students coming to school as English Language Learners. The increase, combined with lack of prior knowledge or experience, makes mainstream teachers feel uncertain

⁴ In the article, Anstrom (1996) explained that “this estimate comes directly from summary tables of the 1990 Census based on data from the ‘long form,’ which was completed by a 1/6 sample of the overall U.S. population. It represents the number of children ages 5 to 17 in the U.S. who spoke a language other than English in the home and who were rated as speaking English less than “very well.”

in teaching children from linguistically diverse backgrounds or English Language Learners (ELLs).

I volunteered my assistance to the teacher who called me and inquired about her colleagues whom she mentioned would be interested in the issues of teaching Chinese immigrant children. The teacher learned about me through mutual friends and Mr. GC who informed her that I was experienced in arranging and leading cultural exchanges between US and Chinese teachers and students. Using cultural exchange as a way to think about teachers' learning about ELL's (an idea I will discuss further in this dissertation), I agreed to join the teachers in several capacities (which I will also discuss below) as they established a teacher learning community they ultimately called, the TLC.

The teachers were familiar with the idea of teacher study groups (Field Notes, 11-10-06). For them, the idea of creating a TLC was to situate their learning about Chinese students — their language, culture, and educational experiences-- in the space between home and school. They wanted to create a space where they could discuss the issues and problems they faced in teaching the Chinese children. It would be a place where teachers could focus on being learners to the advantage of their Chinese students (Field Notes, 03-05-07). To this end, they invited me to participate as a consultant on Chinese life and culture. Since I was also experienced in leading professional development groups, they sought my help in planning and executing an

agenda for TLC. It was my own idea additionally to join the group as a participant observer, researching teachers' participation in the group to learn more about what and how TLC might help them achieve their learning goals.

Negotiating Entry into the Building Culture: Identity Change

After parking in the front of the school building on my first visit, I prepare to go in. At the time, I realized that I am equipped with a variety of gear – a tape-recorder, a video-camera, tripod, a significant stack of papers, and Chinese books both for children and adults. The weight of this first pack rests heavily upon my left shoulder and I am certain that if one more thing is to be added my left arm would surely fall completely off my body. Bearing down on my right shoulder is the weight of an even bigger pack containing the most essential elements...various foods and the utensils with which to eat them. Inside this pack there are two bags, the first of which contains a box of crackers, two packages of cookies, a vegetable tray complete with dip, a large bunch of grapes, paper cups, paper plates, napkins, and of course, plastic silverware. The second bag weighs even more, as it contains 2-liter bottles of Coke, Diet Coke, Mountain Dew, and Pepsi, and a twelve pack of water. It is assured that I am packing in gear equal to at least half my total body weight. Together the two packs make for a burdensome, eclectic load of goods that would make a Sherpa guide smile knowingly as I passed by. However, I am not preparing to mount a conquest of the famed Mount Everest, determined to reach its summit. Instead I am preparing to enter

into the equally daunting world of the American elementary schoolhouse; my goal is to help create and research a Teacher Learning Community (TLC).

The tools of my adventure, the video camera, tape recorder, etc., are here to record the journey we embark upon for the sake of two young Chinese students. We hope our work will break new ground in education, and provide a framework for other schools to follow for the sake of their own culturally and linguistically diverse children. The food, while not as necessary for the survival of life as it is on a mountain ascent, is still considered by many to be the most critical supplementary component which makes a learning community successful. All are important to the effort we are about to make on behalf of the children. Thus I enter the building bent over by the weight of both packs and resembling the famed bell ringer of Notre Dame if he had been hunchbacked on both sides. At least for this initial meeting I will be the provider both of the refreshments and also of guidance to the learners. Over time, the burden will shift and be shared among the community of learners hope to become.

The first person I meet is Mrs. RS., the oldest, most experienced teacher in Teacher Learning Community. She is respected by everyone in the building not only because of her seniority, but also because of her care for the children and her hard work. Standing by the counter in the main office, she turns to me as I walk in to enter my name on the visitor Sign-in sheet. Interestingly she does not seem surprised to see my condition but instead expresses concern that the meeting is about to begin. She exclaims, "Is the meeting starting right away? I need to go!" As she quickly scribbles

something on a piece of paper and hands it to the secretary behind the counter, I try to calm her down by reassuring her that the meeting would not start until 4:00 p.m., almost twenty minutes from the current time. She lets out a huge sigh of relief, and I begin to worry that everyone will be this tense about starting our adventure.

She puts my mind at ease regarding how well I might be received, however, when I ask her where the conference room is located, and Mrs. RS says, "Do not ask. I will take you there." I fall in step with her straight away, plodding along under the weight of my load. She seems so determined to help me in my quest to locate the conference room that I have to chuckle to myself and don't bother to wonder why she fails to ask whether I need any help with the supplies. As we arrive at the conference room, she points to the door and tells me, "I need a little break," And without further explanation she leaves at a very fast pace, so close to running that I couldn't help but smile. "Sure," I reply, though she leaves so quickly that I am not even sure she hears me respond.

Struggling to open the door, I am slightly taken aback as the building secretary materializes without warning. Smiling, she offers an apology, opens the door and lets me into the room. I smile back to her and as I bend to set one pack on the table say, "That's fine. Not a problem at all. Thanks." But by the time I look back up she left already leaving me to wonder if everyone in this building moves in such a state of urgency. My first impression is that they are very pleasant people and I only hope that they would stay around long enough for me to get to know them better.

Sizing up the conference room it is immediately apparent that this room may not be big enough to accommodate all of the participants in our learning community as well as the supplies I packed in. It is a small squared room with two shelves against one of the longer walls, boxes against both shorter walls, and a meeting table in the middle with several chairs around it. I start to set up the video-camera and the tape-recorder. The audio recorder is placed in the center of the big conference table without any problem however it takes some time to find a good location to place the tri-pod with the video-camera. Finally I resign myself to the fact that the best I can hope for is the back of some participants' heads and folks moving in and out of the frame as they retrieve their snacks.

Ten minutes until meeting time and the teachers are still not arriving, and I am not ashamed to admit that for a brief moment I fear that all might have changed their minds about participating. Ironically, my first thought is not how this is going to affect my efforts to complete the research for my dissertation, but rather I begin to ponder what I am going to do with all that food! I start to put the fruit, vegetable tray, crackers, cookies, pop, water, napkins, plates, and cups on the shelf against the wall, which is close enough to the table to be within arm's length of the people sitting on that side of the room. Experience of being a research assistant for several years has taught me that my goal for the snacks is to place them as far from the microphone as possible so that the sound of taking the food would not be recorded. Many a meeting recording has been damaged by the sound of crackling paper, food chewing, and pop

slurping. Suddenly I realize that my choice of a vegetable tray containing crisp carrot sticks and rigid celery stalks is not a wise one. (Mental note to self, for future meetings, think “soft” food. (See TLC Meeting Notes: 9-13-2007).

Mr. RC is the first person to make an appearance. He comes in quietly and sits down at the chair closest to the door, a gesture which, unbeknownst to him, creates a little anxiety for me. Mr. RC has expressed curiosity about the two Chinese children and is interested in exploring some culture phenomena that have puzzled him for a long time.⁵ He has never had the chance to teach either of the Chinese children but his classroom is next door to Mrs. RS’s classroom and she had both of the children when they were kindergarteners. He mentions that he tried his best to talk to them but has never been successful in eliciting a response. Mr. RC, who previously taught several years at a school in another community where the majority of the students were either Caucasian Americans or African American, is now teaching in Coopville while working on his master’s degree in special education.

In his pre-interview he talked about the Chinese boy, who is now a first grader and has the Americanized name, “Mike.” Mr. RC told me in the interview that he believed that Mike “saw through him” when he attempted to greet Mike, meaning Mike thought his gesture was less than sincere (Pre-Interview Notes, 9-07-07). I am just beginning to work up a conversation with Mr. RC when he seems to notice that I

⁵ For this study, I undertook pre-interviews with each of the participants before the first meeting and that I describe and analyzing the data later in and through the text (See Appendix A and B for details).

am busy putting the food out signally that the meeting has not been ready to start so, much like the secretary and Mrs. RS before him, he jumps up and then runs out.

At the time the music teacher, Mr. MG, middle aged, who has been interested in foreign music and applying some foreign music in his teaching (Pre-Interview and Post-Interview: MG), came in, I am done with laying out the food spread. Mr. MG also has both of the Chinese children in his classes starting from their first grade. He's very curious and interested in teaching and watching them (Pre-Interview and Post-Interview: MG). I invite him to partake of the snacks laid out before him, and he willingly dives in, first sampling one of every variety before settling on several of his favorites.

As the other teachers gradually begin filing into the room, Mr. GC, the liaison person, and also my backup in the field, arrived as well. Being a liaison person, Mr. GC is an ex-assistant principal at Coopville High School and also a doctoral student from MSU in TE. Mr. GC has been a "*GOOGLE* functioning person" to me – whenever I have questions about American education, American schools or the Coopville Elementary School – I can successfully get answers from him. Also, with his information and help, two years ago I started the High School Student Exchange Program between a school in China and a school in Michigan. Both the teachers and the students from both ends learned enormously (Cultural Exchange,

2006).⁶ Having taken some courses together and developed a friendship, Mr. GC's presence made me more confident to know that if I had any questions related to deep American culture or the politics of American schooling that I could not fathom on my own, he would be the right person to consult. We both understood that filling in appropriately the gap between the theories and methods learned at the university and the authentic field knowledge and experiences of American K-12 school teachers would be the key to making this research project successful. Bereiter (1994) argues that these two kinds of knowledge are different: one is decontextualized theoretical knowledge and the other is contextualized local school knowledge. Good researchers bring these two kinds of knowledge into contact in ways that serve both theory and practice.

In this case particularly, local knowledge in Coopville will be especially important to learn. Coopville is not the sort of community generally theorized about or researched in studies of bilingual education. Rather, it is a town which is quite isolated from the issues generally associated with the diversity found in other larger communities. While Coopville is not immune to the same types of social phenomena found in larger communities—e.g. student “cliques” the “haves” and “have nots,” the “town” kids and the “country” kids, the “preppies” and the “Goth’s” -- the 94% Caucasians v.s 6% students from diverse backgrounds and 99% English speakers to

⁶ Student learning is demonstrated through their activities both in China and in the U.S as well as the commentary letters from the host families, the teachers and the students, <http://www.us-chinaedu.com>.

1% linguistic minority student ratio provides little in terms of language and cultural variation.

Over the five and half years I have lived in the U.S., and as a student and graduate assistant at the University, I have gained a great deal of American school experience and cultural knowledge about American society. However, I still feel vulnerable and have uncertainties about the new cultural situation in which I now find myself — both participant and observer beginning to explore the complexities of teachers' learning about language and cultural diversity.

Just as Sir Edmund Hillary⁷ was certain of his ability to climb any mountain, he most assuredly felt better having the expertise of the local guides to draw upon as he took up his quest. As an outsider of the town of Coopville, I appreciate Mr. GC's support and insights about the community and school cultures of Coopville Elementary. When I see him, I am excited and feel a little relaxed. My study of ethnography suggests that this is not unusual and that native guides are often helpful to anthropologists. However, these guides cannot provide the range and variety of "insiders'" cultural knowledge that will be gained from work with the members of the

⁷ Sir Edmund Hillary, born in 1919 and grew up in Auckland, New Zealand, reached the summit, 29,028 feet above sea level, the highest spot on earth at 11:30 in the morning of May 29, 1953 with Tenzing Norgay. He was a member of an expedition sponsored by the Joint Himalayan Committee of the Alpine Club of Great Britain and the Royal Geographic Society to make the assault on Everest in 1953.

Mt. Everest lies between Tibet and Nepal. "Between 1920 and 1952, seven major expeditions had failed to reach the summit. In 1924, the mountaineer George Leigh-Mallory perished in the attempt. From Beekeeper to World Explorer, <http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/hil0bio-1>, June 27, 2008.

TLC, the children, and the family.

When Mr. GC sees the food and water far away from the table, he suggests moving them to the middle. He announces that, “Now people can eat and talk, but hopefully not at the same time.” At the moment, my heart sank a little but I cannot say “No.” We move all the food, water, and utilities over from the shelf where I intentionally and carefully place them on the meeting table away from the microphone. A voice sounds in my head, “Well done, Mr. Nice Job! You ruined my plan! I need high quality taped voices, not the chewing of food and the rustling of plastic bags. Surprisingly, however, the silence in the room is broken down. Teachers have been silently, slowly coming into the room, and when they join in moving the food, they start to talk. They are chatting, laughing, and teasing one another. The room atmosphere suddenly changes from a polite tension to a friendly congenial mood. The teachers seem far more relaxed and naturally take the food from the bags or the tray and with that our first meeting begins. Once again I think to myself, “Well done, Mr. Nice Job.” Only this time there is no sarcasm to my thoughts. Well done indeed!

Ironically, just as the tension seems to lift from the teachers, my nerves become tight and my mind is spinning. I have never thought that one sentence, one gesture, one simple suggestion, could change the whole room atmosphere, could make people feel so friendly and bring them so close together. I ask myself “Why?” “Why is this?” “What’s going on here?” “Is this part of school culture?” (TLC Meeting Reflection, 9-13-07). Suddenly, I remember a sentence I read from a book, which

indicates that people negotiate and build their own culture and identity when they face different situations (Castor, 2005; Wenger, 2002). Is that what was going on here? If one right sentence could set everyone so at ease, would it be possible for one wrong sentence to change the mood again?

My mind continues spinning. I try to understand the “running away” and the “silence” before everyone had worked together moving the snacks. Now the images seem to be a little clearer. In seeing me as their consultant, instructor, their TLC meeting facilitator, this was probably the first time in their lives that they had ever experienced having a foreigner play this role. Maybe, the multiple roles I was playing made everyone feel something different inside. What was it? Nervous? Intense? Curious? Or Anxious? I guessed that might be something very strange to feel. Additionally the principal Mr. JK, and the facilitator, Mr. GC, are both about 6’2” and 300+ lbs. I wondered if they were ready for the person in charge of today’s activities (and refreshments!) to be 5’3” and 105 lbs.

Particularly intimidating to me was the presence of Mr. JK, a former football player at his college. He had been working in the building for many years and was viewed as the head of the school. Although he admired knowledge, wanting to get his own Ph.D. and wishing to change the relationship between the Chinese family and the school, he was the principal. As such, he had supervisory power over the staff. I had heard informally from others in graduate school that U.S. principals did not typically join informal teacher study groups and that they were usually viewed as somebody

who thought differently from teachers because of the differences in their roles and responsibilities. But Mr. JK has been an early, enthusiastic member of the group and, as we will see in this text, an enthusiastic participant and learner.

The way the community members looked at me when they first arrived made me feel strange-- it was almost as if they were concerned I might slip away from using English and run the meeting in my native Mandarin. But it seemed that once the food was placed in front of them they sensed that everything would be okay? Is this what Americans mean by the phrase "comfort food?" Mrs. SS, who is the classroom teacher of Mike this year, and Mrs. GT have been sitting on their chairs, quietly. In our pre-interview conversations, Mrs. S.S. confessed to being very nervous about teaching Mike, the younger of the two Chinese children. She wondered whether Mike would understand what was going on in her classroom. She also wondered whether he would be able to follow the others and the instruction in terms of his English language proficiency (See Pre-Interview: Mrs. SS). Further, she was puzzled by the fact that Mike never got close to her; nor did he answer any questions that she asked him in the class (See Pre-Interview: Mrs. SS; TLC Meeting: 9-13-07; Field Notes: 9-20-07; TLC Meeting: 9-27-07; TLC Meeting: 10-11-07; TLC Meeting: 10-25-07).

While Mrs. SS worried about her relationship with Mike, Mrs. GT, the media specialist, worried about whether these Chinese children had any books at home, who helped them with their home work, and who read to them. She also wondered how she could engage them in the library activities. She was excited by the

“Giggling and Wiggling” activity that she did with Rose’s class where Rose giggled so much that every other child felt so happy for her (See Pre-Interview, Post-interview: Mrs. GT and TLC Meeting Notes: 09-27-07).

The people who missed today’s meeting were Mrs. ML and Mr. LM. They both emailed me, apologetically saying that they had pre-arranged some activities a long time ago and that they could not be at the meeting. Mrs. ML, was next door to Mrs. SS, and paired with her to do some team-teaching on social studies. Mrs. ML’s daughter was studying German for her master’s degree in Germany. Mrs. ML was always amazed by the experiences and stories her daughter shared with her. She wondered about the two Chinese children – what kind of life experience did they have? How could the teachers help them to have good memories at Coopville Elementary School? This became the major reason for her participating in the group (See Pre-Interview and Post-Interview: ML).

In contrast, Mr. LM, the gym teacher, reported that he never knew these children were English language learners until we talked about them. He said in the Pre-Interview that he noticed that at each lesson, after he explained and demonstrated the lesson, Rose would stand up, walk to the wall and stand there against the wall, watching. Mr. LM thought she was just a child who was afraid of being hurt or injured during the sports. He never thought about figuring her actions out, then trying to engage her in the class activities (See Pre-Interview; Post-Interview: Mr. LM and TLC Meeting Notes: 11-01-07). At the final interview, Mr. LM told me that if in the future

there was a child doing the same thing, he would go forward to talk with the child and his/her classroom teacher, even talk with Mr. JK, the principal, in order to learn about the child (See Post-Interview: Mr. LM).

Considering the TLC members are Caucasians, are native English speakers, lacking much knowledge about China, and also lacking prior experience in teaching English Language Learners (ELLs), even their considerable years of experience teaching at this rural school is insufficient to assure them that they could teach the Chinese students effectively. Meanwhile, with the pressure of the opening of a Honda factory through which the school might get more foreign students, e.g. Japanese students, and the opening of a new business mall through which the school might have more students from diverse backgrounds, the teachers reported the urgency of learning how to engage these two Chinese children. Thus, it was not surprising that having sought information from tutors and several experts in foreign language teaching, the Coopville teachers felt frustrated as the children remained largely silent and disengaged and their access to the parents limited (Pre-Interviews: Mr. GC; Mr. JK; Mr. LM; Mr. MG; Mrs. GT; Mrs. SS).

And now they have me to deal with -- someone they have invited to help them create the TLC with them, unclear what agenda and relationships the TLC as an informal study group would eventually negotiate for themselves. What role would I play in their life, in their school and in their classrooms? Although I was invited, they might have had the same feeling as they did to the two Chinese children -- what should

we do with you?

They might have thought they knew I would help them, but in what ways?

The previous school year the district had hired an adult who volunteers at MSU for helping visiting scholars from China to come out and work with the Chinese children, but that person was another Caucasian. Mrs. RS also found some MSU students to translate her teaching and newsletter materials for her and both the children and their family, none of the group had never had chance to face the translators (See TLC Meeting Notes: 9-13-2007). They told me that they did not see much benefit from that

experience either for themselves or the children (See TLC Meeting Notes : 9-27-2007), but I have to wonder if they were at least a little more comfortable with someone who looked like them. Or maybe it was as Mr. GC jokingly said to me when I expressed my thoughts on this matter to him; He said, "Perhaps they are a little skeptical of me wondering if I might be another case of lead-based paint on a Chinese children's toy," referring to all of the children's toys made in China that had recently been recalled due to safety concerns.

People from different cultures need to understand one another but in which way? In the way that they can spend time together and they can accomplish things together. In the way that they can have an open environment to allow them to observe each other, to think about each other, to try the life the others live, then to negotiate their identities together. When I was doing my pre-interviews that was the first time

for me to see or talk with everyone face-to-face, and I could sense the nervousness of some of the teachers when they answered my questions. Sometimes, I could feel their nervousness affect my thinking, or simply to say, their nervousness led to my nervousness. They were vulnerable and so was I, facing the same situation at the same time, and not really sure how to settle ourselves.

Today, I showed up, not as an interviewer, but as the facilitator, instructor, consultant, and researcher, that may have been the reason that Mrs. RS and Mr. RC ran away from me, while Mr. MG had been quietly eating all the time. When my identity, or role, changes the teachers understand that their identities, or roles, change as well. But how could everyone get used to each other's new identity and the new role in the new situation? What would need to happen for everyone to accept their new roles? For whatever reason, the working together to move the location of the food seemed to help everyone negotiate their individual identity change but through a group participation.

With my newly negotiated and accepted identity, I worked with the teachers through the eight TLC meeting sessions. As the rest of this dissertation will describe, we learned Chinese language and culture together, we visited the Chinese family and their restaurant together, we observed a local school teacher who's experienced in teaching students from diverse backgrounds together, and watched video clips where the best strategies for teaching ELLs were explained and demonstrated. When we went through all the sessions, there was something "contagious" about the group's inquiries

and the discoveries they were yielding. As the teachers learned about language, culture, and communication in new ways they felt more hopeful and empowered to try new things. They reached out for possible community resources. They suggested the parents take advantage of the town public library for the broadening of the children's knowledge, the town after school child-center where the children could spend their time meaningfully, and after school sports activities. My dissertation will deal with these assertions in detail, telling stories and providing evidence for my interpretations.

A pattern of the teachers learning new things and bringing in their new thoughts emerged over several sessions. The pattern was noted in my field notes and in my careful listening and cataloguing of the meeting audiotapes. The pattern, which will be illustrated in multiple vignettes, differed from another, less engaged response I observed when the teachers took part in sessions where their local concerns and context were not at the forefront. These were the viewing of instructional videotapes of best practices in teaching ELL students and a pleasant but not highly engaging field trip to observe an experienced ESL teacher work with a very diverse urban class and de-brief the group about her teaching afterward. Instead the TLC activities generating the most discourse, extensions into the classroom and wider community, and member participation were those in which the members had a chance to explore the language, culture, family, and school lives of their Chinese students from new perspectives—and in a spirit of inquiry. Just as at the reflection sessions and during the post-interviews, the teachers reported that they were familiar with the things they saw either at the

school or on the videos (TLC Meeting Notes: 11-15-07). They further reported that they did not feel that they had learned from these activities. So deep analysis, and development of analytic vignettes of the “School-Visit Field-Trip” and “Watching the Videos” were not included in this dissertation.

This dissertation focuses on the activities and sessions where the teachers reported they had learned at the TLC and based on their reflections, they brought new ideas, thoughts, insights, and suggestions to the TLC. Meanwhile, based on the activities, the teachers brought in the desire of trying new things. Therefore, the vignettes of the first half of TLC session where we visited the Chinese family in their house and at their restaurant, where the teachers learned Chinese language and cultural and through which they learned about their Chinese children, as well as where the teachers themselves explored the issues and provided suggestions and feedbacks are included in this dissertation. These learning activities and vignettes answered my research question and its sub-questions. In the following section of this chapter, based on the materials included in this dissertation, I will describe how the dissertation is organized.

An Overview of the Dissertation

Based on the data analyses and the nature of the identities that the teachers endured through the eight TLC sessions, the dissertation is arranged in eight chapters. The first two chapters are the foundations of the dissertation, which conduct a brief

introduction of the dissertation, including research sites, questions, rationale, data collection process, data analysis as well as the theoretical foundation that the dissertation implies. Chapters Three through Seven form the body of the dissertation, each containing one or more vignettes as examples demonstrating what and how the TLC teachers learn through the on-going process of this project. On the one hand, these vignettes vividly document what and how the TLC teachers learn at the community. On the other hand, these vignettes are part of the data analyses, which serve the research question of this dissertation.

The last chapter looks across the vignette-centered chapters and summarizes them in terms of my research questions. It then proceeds to the generation of the grounded theory that is rooted from this dissertation, afterwards, draws implications from the dissertation about research, teacher education, and ELL. Now, I will preview each chapter in more detail.

In current chapter, the Introduction, I briefly describe the study settings, including the Town of Coopville, Coopville School District, Coopville Elementary School, the TLC teachers, and the Chinese children and their family. This chapter helps the reader to get a sense of the background and context of the dissertation research project.

Chapter 2 is the Methodology Chapter, in which I introduce the research questions, its sub-questions, and the rationale for these questions and the theoretical framework for both of the dissertation and the setting up of our TLC activities. When reading this chapter, the reader learns about what is the research question and why it is

important, how I collected the data, as well as how I analyzed the data. The theoretical foundations section reviews the literature about Vygotsky Space Theory, including the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) theory, the Cultural Exchange Approach I developed, and theories of Teacher Learning Community (Achinstein, 2002; Crespo, 2002; Grossman, et al., 2001; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Westheimer, 1999) on which I drew in analyzing the group's formation and interactions. .Based on the literature review, I provide the Coopville teacher learning activity themes and the theoretical basis for the TLC activities. This information provides readers the sense of what's going on in the dissertation and how its story unfolds.

Chapters 3 through 7 are the major five chapters of the dissertation. These chapters apply vignette examples as the descriptive and analytical tool to unpack what and how the TLC teachers' learning occurs. In Chapter 3, "Stepping into Their Chinese Students' Shoes," is anchored by the vignette of the Coopville teachers being given an instruction in Chinese. It illustrates the teachers' experience of the learning situation of the Chinese children and making more real to them the experience of their Chinese students who are in an educational situation where they do not share a common language with their teacher or classmates. I argue in this chapter that this is the activity in which the teachers open themselves up to the new, but challenging situation of needing to learn in order to teach those whose home language is not English.

Chapter 4, "Teachers as Learners" includes a vignette where the teachers

learned some basic features of the Chinese language. The demonstration illustrates to the teachers the reassuring idea that the Chinese children are able to learn the English language because they have already acquired Chinese -- a complete language system at least as complex as the English language. In addition to introducing the teachers to some of the features of the Chinese language system, the fact that the children speak it fluently and understand it gives evidence that the Chinese children are capable enough to learn English language. I argue in this chapter that the TLC teachers also learned that the Chinese students are not deficit and they have rich language and cultural resources. Similarly, this experience also helps the teachers better to understand children from a language background rather than English from a non-deficit perspective.

Chapter 5, "Questioning: the Way of Teacher Learning," details a vignette which reveals the multiple questions that the teachers raised and the rationale behind the questions. This vignette illustrates the TLC teachers' voicing of concerns about the students and their interests in learning about the students and their growing contexts as well as their living conditions in order to understand and teach them better. The teachers' questions, in one way, become the tools of the teachers' learning at the TLC; in another, they show the teachers' determinations to learn how to teach the Chinese children. As teacher inquiry begins to dominate talk in the TLC, I analyze the evidence for a shift in control in which they gradually assume power over the agenda and shape activities and ideas toward their own needs as educators and the needs of their students.

Chapter 6, “Teachers as Problem-Solvers,” is focused on describing and illustrating a vignette in which the teachers initiated suggestions to help the Chinese children promote both their school learning and their daily life. This chapter is a continuation of the first three vignettes where the teachers changed their identities to be learners after they experience learning in another language, where they learn passively as being given a Chinese language instruction, and where they learn actively after they raise questions from all different perspectives. After the TLC teachers’ suggestions, in the next chapter, I describe and analyze the teachers’ reflections on how and why they are changing their teaching-- why they do not approach their teaching practices now in the same as they did prior to TLC.

Chapter 7, “We just Take-It-for-Granted,” documents the vignette where the teachers reflect on and challenge the things they assume as it has been for a long time. While they brake down their old assumptions, the teachers express their reflections on their teaching and thinking of children who may experience differently from their own. This chapter demonstrates my analysis of ways that the teachers’ understanding of the Chinese children widens their understanding of children and adults from more diverse backgrounds, which provides the teachers a deeper level of understanding of others.

Chapter 8, “What and How the Coopville Teachers Learn at Our Learning Community – Coopville Teachers Become ‘Culture-Catchers’” is an analysis chapter, which summarizes and analyzes the five vignettes included in this dissertation with the integration of both the Pre-/Post-interview data analysis. This chapter documents

the findings of this dissertation in greater detail concerning what the teachers learn and how they learn. This chapter re-visits the overarching research question, attempting to answer it in terms of the specific vignettes and analyses contained in the dissertation. Furthermore, in this chapter I describe the grounded theory I developed during my research related to explaining what and how the teachers learned. This theory addressed both content (Figure 9) and process (the “Complex Expansion”), both of which are described in terms of their meaning and implications for further research as well as for practice in teacher education related to ELL.

The significance of this study rests at two levels: significance to practice and significance to a larger context at the theoretical level. At the practical level, after TLC activities, the teachers get more understandings of Chinese students’ home literacy resources/ experiences. Meanwhile, the teachers learn experiences in integrating Chinese children’s home literacy resources/experiences into school literacy instruction. At the theoretical level, the results of the study benefit our knowledge of how to assist teachers in learning to teach children from broader diverse backgrounds in general through sociocultural and sociolinguistic lenses. Further, the study itself benefits in understanding how teacher learning occurs in a community context. The study develops grounded theoretical descriptions of the development of teachers’ thinking about Chinese children’s home literacy resources/experiences as well as about the home resources/experiences of children from broader backgrounds and their reflections on how they change instruction to assure no children to be left behind.

The findings related to teacher changes in awareness, understanding, attitudes, and teaching strategies identify ways that teachers can learn and need to learn to teach ELL children effectively. The findings demonstrate one particular form of professional development, adding to a growing body of research on extended, peer-initiated teacher development and its relationship to teachers' thought and action in the classroom. Although this study involves a limited number of teachers and Chinese students, based on the post-interview reports from the teachers, the study findings also provide lessons and experiences to the field of teacher education. In thinking beyond this study, there is little doubt that the work informs the field of immigrant children's education and should also provide a foundation for future research.

In the next chapter I discuss the theoretical foundations for this study and the rationale for the establishment of the TLC and its activities, however, in this chapter I first illustrate the reasons for the establishment of our TLC, then I unfold my research question with the sub-research questions, along with the logical and interconnected relationships among these sub-questions. After these questions, I examine the three theories, which founded both of the dissertation and the TLC rationale as well as TLC activities give readers the sense of what the TLC teachers were to do and why.

Chapter 2

Learning Together: Theoretical Foundations for this Study and

Description of TLC and Its Purposes and Activities

Teacher-Initiated Professional Development in Coopville

The teachers of Coopville reported to me that they wanted to start a study group because the techniques they had already identified had not been effective in opening up educative communications with the Chinese children in their classes and school (Field Notes, 8-30-07: Mr. JK; TLC Meeting: 9-13-07; TLC Meeting: 11-15-07). Further, in Pre-Interviews, some reported feeling helpless, acknowledging how much they don't know about the children, their family lives, their home culture, and their mother tongue. For example, one teacher reported that she even didn't know the family had a restaurant in the town (See Pre-Interview: Mrs. SS). When I asked about where the children were in terms of their home language, all nine teachers were not clear about either Rose or Mike's home language – which language they used or what it sounds like (See Pre-interview Data Analysis; chapter 5; Pre-Interviews: All). Frustrated by these limitations and keenly feeling the pressure of district, state, and Federal mandates to teach all learners to high standards, they decide to form a study group in which they planned to “think for themselves” (Raphael et al, 2001) about how to understand and teach their students better.

The teachers of Coopville, in deciding to pool their questions, perspectives,

and goals for learning and initiate a process of professional development offered themselves and us an alternative view of education, what some researchers have called a community of learners approach to professional development. In setting a purpose and creating a setting for their own learning, the Coopville teachers emphasize “community,” which stresses collective activity rather than isolated individual action toward the valued goal (Achinstein, 2002; McLaughlin, 2001; Westheimer, 1999).

As my research reports, this created a shift in the teachers’ identity from consumers of expert technical information about instruction to inquirers into language, culture, and thought. Further, pursuing their inquiry as a collective which includes current and former classroom teachers of these young children, as well as, special area teachers (e.g. physical education, music), and the school administrator, is an acknowledgment that the unit of educational change might not be the isolated teacher working with the individual ELL child. This situation offered me a site as both a helper and a researcher. In the dissertation I focus on what I learned in my researcher role and therefore turn in the next section of this chapter to research questions.

Research Question

In my study of TLC as a site for professional development in the area of ELL, my overarching research question is the following: How and what do elementary mainstream teachers learn in Teacher Learning Community (TLC) about engaging Chinese immigrant children in their classroom activities? This focus has

four sub-questions:

- 1) Whether and how do these teachers become more *aware* of the differences/resources these Chinese children have in their literacy development;
- 2) What and how do teachers *understand* their Chinese students' differences in terms of their literacy development;
- 3) What *attitude changes* do the teachers make towards their Chinese children in literacy teaching; and
- 4) What modifications do the teachers apply in *their own teaching strategies* for their Chinese children and children from all backgrounds in general?

These four sub-questions cover the aspects of the changes of the teachers' awareness, understanding level, attitudes, and instruction strategies. See the following map of these processes and relationships (Figure 1: Relationships among the Four Sub-Questions). In this figure I connect these aspects of teacher learning. However, when I initially posed these questions, I was not certain whether or how they would relate. In the final chapter of the dissertation I re-visit these aspects of teacher learning in TLC in Figure 1B and Figure 8, explaining and demonstrating in both content and process that these relate to one another in a cyclic process of gradual transformation of new information into usable knowledge for practice.

In the presentation of Figure 1B and Figure 8 as well as my model of the learning process or, “Snow- Ball Effect,” I argue in the final chapter that Building on gained awareness, the teachers are able to understand their Chinese students better. Only when they understand their students better, can the teachers change their attitudes in evaluating and judging their students objectively and scientifically. Further, the objective and scientific evaluations or judgments are the foundation for the teachers to make decisions on applying certain teaching strategies, which leads to the modifications or the changes of their own teaching strategies.

In turn, the results of applying the modified or changed teaching strategies can provide the teachers the opportunities to reflect on their own decision-making, their own awareness and understanding of their Chinese children, as well as, the attitude changes towards their students. Similarly, the teachers’ attitudes are capable of affecting their understanding and awareness of the children, which may affect their modifications of teaching strategies.

I propose that these mutual effects are universal. They can be applied in any occasion when the teachers get better understanding of their students and modify their teaching based on their students’ needs, their students are able to achieve better in their school outcomes. This dissertation aims to report on the answers of the questions, therefore, to disclose the learning process and its results through vivid vignettes for other teacher educators or teachers to use as an example. Reporting both the learning process and its results is done to provide an authentic learning

environment for these people who are interested, in which to think, reflect and learn from the teachers who participated in this project.

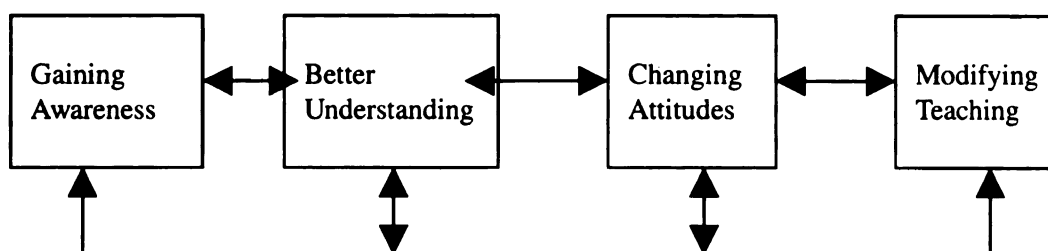


Figure 1: Relationships among the Four Sub-Questions

As the data analysis in the dissertation will show, this is a model descriptive of a process by which teachers interactions are connected to transformations in their awareness, understanding, and attitudes. Ultimately, these changes led to changes in the ways the teachers gradually began to envision and even implement changes in their teaching behaviors. These changes show evidence of opening up opportunities for more authentic communication among teachers, with children, with parents, and including other members of the school community. Although it was beyond the scope of this study to trace all of these extensions into practice, the analysis presented here will focus on the how, what, and why of the teacher changes — and the potential implications of those changes for the learning of ELLs.

Rationale for the Study

The Coopville teachers share one thing – the acknowledgment that they need help. Teachers worry about achieving the goals of NCLB; they feel ill-prepared or insufficiently supported to help their Chinese students succeed. This feeling is

intensified when teachers work with students who lack preparation for learning the standard curriculum at their grade level. There are many reasons why a student might arrive at the classroom door “already behind,” in the NCLB’s model of the classroom and instruction within it. Linguistic and cultural diversity are two (often co-occurring) characteristics of a child whom the teachers recognize as apt to be “left behind.” Thus lacking information about the child outside the purview of the school, and operating within a school organization which categorizes and stratifies, the teachers feel appropriately lacking in resources to teach these students and thus experience the frustration of failing to *teach all learners* (Document, 2002; Report, 2003; Shaul & Ganson, 2005).

Initially, the teachers explicitly expressed their needs for new knowledge of techniques from experts in second language learning to help them meet the educational needs of these children. This perspective, a logical and conventional one, presented the teachers’ basic intentions – to solve their immediate and current needs (Wenger, 2002) of engaging and teaching the Chinese immigrant children. But, as previously mentioned in Chapter One, despite their best efforts at gaining skills, the teachers and students in the Coopville Elementary School remained separated from one another by silence and misunderstanding. The teachers worried even more about the Chinese children and they kept searching available resources that might help.

Other experts had been consulted who sometimes taught the children at their home, trying to incorporate the Chinese culture and language in their instructions.

This was difficult. Like the children, the parents were quiet and seemed reticent to involve themselves in the community and in the children's school lives. They did not attend school functions such as the fall Open House. The mother had never once come into the school building, and the only occasions for the father to be around the school was to drop off the kids or pick them up when they missed the school bus or when they did not feel well at school, and the teachers lacked a clear vision of who they are, why they came to the community, what their language and cultural practices were, and why they seemed so uninvolved with their young children's schooling.

Knowing very little about the parents' lives—their own fluency in English, how and where they spent their time, and what their lives prior to coming to Coopville was like—they could only guess at why the parents did not meet their hopes and expectations, based on this they have been trying to figure out why the children were silent in the school. And, working in a small, homogeneous community where many people know one another and values are commonly shared, it is not common for teachers to have to leave the school to locate and learn about students' families.

Authors in the field of multicultural education argue that it is necessary for teachers and students to engage one another in, through, and across their differences and in a wide variety of activity settings which include oral and written language and content dealing with “stories of self, stories of culture, and stories of community” (see, for example, Au, 1993; Genishi & Dyson, 1984; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, Kehus, George, Hasty, & Highfield, 2001; Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001). In this view of

teaching ELLs, the teacher is trying to bridge wide gaps across different language codes, induct students into new school cultures, and build mutuality in the teaching/learning relationship.

A review of the literature on teaching, culturally responsive teaching, and multiculturalism teaches us that students bring their backgrounds with them into the classroom. This means that they bring various already shaped presuppositions with them into their classrooms, such as linguistically-/ culturally-shaped attitudes, abilities, development experiences, forms of communication, social backgrounds, assumptions, life circumstances, understandings of education and schooling (Au, 1993; Garcia, 2005; Street, 2000; 1995; 1987; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These are all perspectives that matter fundamentally to how students present themselves and how teachers perceive them. And teacher perceptions are influential in determining what strategies teachers apply, and how teachers conceive of their pupils, themselves as educators, and the responsibilities of their professional careers (Garcia, 2005; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). But how can we identify those perspectives in order to compare and contrast them, to assess them, or to change them. To do this we need to study communication through the theoretical frames of language, culture, activity, and thought. We also must contextualize such study in teacher groups, classrooms, and wider communities.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation draws on three major theories: Vygotsky Space Theory (Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001; Galucci, 2007; Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; Harre, 1984; McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005). Scaffolding-Release of Control (Vygotsky, 1978; Au, 1993)---a theory that I have applied to Cultural Exchange in working with TLC and analyzing TLC data, and the theory of Teacher Learning Community (Achinstein, 2002; Crespo, 2002; Grossman, et al., 2001; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Westheimer, 1999). I will describe each briefly below in relation to my research.

Vygotsky Space Theory

Vygotsky Space Theory is used mainly for the unpacking of how and why the TLC teachers gained such learning experiences as they demonstrated through the data analysis. The Cultural Exchange Approach (the ZPD/ Scaffolding-Release of Control) is the foundation theoretical framework for both of the dissertation and the formation and design of our TLC activities, while the Teacher Learning Community theory is the guideline for the dissertation and the setting of our TLC activities, which refers to the environment in which the teacher learning occurred during our TLC period.

For Harre and those who have applied his model in education (1984), the “Vygotsky Space” is an imaginary space, which illustrates learning both as it is initiated on the social plane and as it is internalized and transformed by the individual, ultimately to be expressed and transformed again as the individual makes his or her

knowledge public in various forms of communication and other activities in concert with others (also see McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005). The model of this imaginary space is intended to help us think about complexity of a process which is happening in a much more simultaneous, cycle way as we communicate, teach and learn, But to simplify it for the purpose of helping us think about complexity, the Vygotsky space is divided into and distinguished 1) between individual and collective learning spaces; 2) between the public and private learning spaces. And the relationships among these distinguishes can be understood as the four phases of a continuous learning process, Public Collective/Social Spaces, Public Individual Spaces, Private Collective Social, and Private Individual (See Figure 2A: The Associated Learning Relationships within Vygotsky's Space).

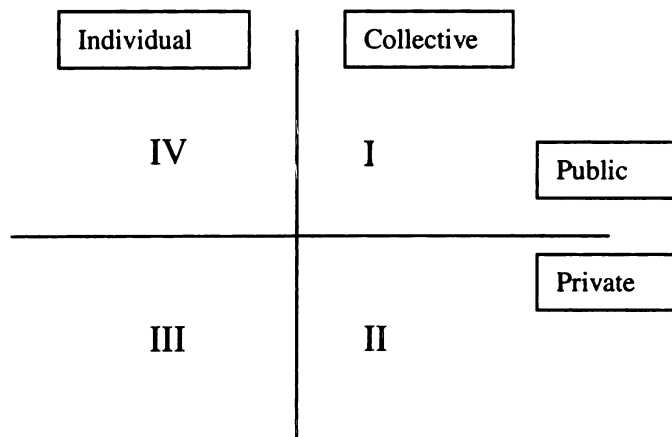


Figure 2A: The Associated Learning Relationships within Vygotsky's Space

(adapted from Gavelek & Raphael, 1996)

In this figure, the public spaces occupy the top half, while the bottom half is private. The collective or social spaces are indicated on the right hand side while the Individual Spaces are presented on the left hand side. Therefore, in the figure, Space I equals to Public Collective Space; Space II, the Private Collective Space; Space III, the Private Individual Space; and Space IV, the Public Individual Space. However, for the illustration purpose of this dissertation, I move the labels for the Public Spaces to the right hand of the figure while keep the Private on the left hand side. At the same time, I use the top spaces to refer to the Collective or Social Spaces while the bottom spaces to the individual spaces. The four dimensions of the space demonstrate a continuous and flexible learning process at both individual and collective level. That means learning can start and happen or continue at any dimension, then moves to any other dimensions of the space. For instance, learning can start at the Public Collective level where people learn from one another informally. Afterwards, the learned and newly generated knowledge, if any, can be brought to either one of the two Private dimensions of internalization and transformation. This keeps participants' learning continuing and developing when they are not within the social group, but when they may be having other experiences. They subsequently return to the group in a fourth "publication" dimension, where they make public to the group changes in their thinking or transformations in their activities. (See Figure 2B: Modified Associated Learning Relationships within Vygotsky's Space).

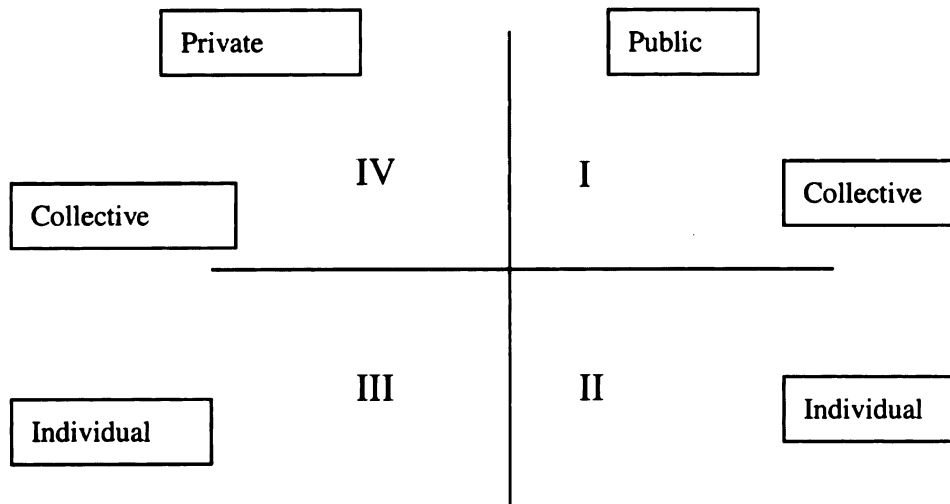


Figure 2B: The “Modified Associated Learning Relationships within Vygotsky’s Space” (adapted from Gavelek & Raphael, 1996)

Still following the basic theoretical foundation of Figure 2A, in Figure 2B, I label the four dimensions as I, II, III, and IV with the Public Collective Space as the TLC meetings where the teachers learn together. Outside the TLC meetings, the teachers bring what they learn, they share, or they think to their Public Individual Space or their Private Public or Individual Space.

Galucci (2007) similarly argues that through the dimensions of the space, cultural practices obtain their internalization by individuals, which further gained transformation based on individual needs and learning purposes, then shared by others in ways that is accepted. In applying this theory to teacher learning in Book Clubs, Gavelek & Raphael (1996) and Florio-Ruane with deTar (2001) argue the same. First, they all agree that learning begins and ends on the social plane (p. 126). Then they further hypothesize that after engaging in activities with others, either oral or written,

participating “teachers experience transformations in their thinking about culture, literacy, and autobiography” (p. 126). On the same page, they further argue that “they [the participating teachers] would express those transformations in subsequent cycles of communicative activity” (p. 126). Because of this individual and collective learning within the public and private cycles, this theory is used as a framework to guide the analysis of what happens and how as well as why it occurs during our TLC meeting period in order to disclose what and how teacher learn and teacher change with the assistance of this dissertation project. It will be illustrated with specific examples from my research data in chapter 7 (reflection on the vignette) and Chapter 8 (preparation for the grounded theory) later.

Cultural Exchange Approach

The cultural exchange approach refers to the actions with which people learn or get cultural knowledge from others who have it. Culture, based on ethnographers, refers to the norms, values and knowledge shared by a certain group of people (Cole, 1981). Here it refers to the ways of communication and the ways of behaving as well as the common knowledge shared by the two Chinese children and their family members. Generally, people need to gain this knowledge by authentic experiences within and about the culture they hope to understand better. This experience is described by Pires (2000, p. 40) as “experiential learning model,” which is defined in his article as an academically acceptable alternative ways of learning, problem solving and personal development occur in real-world contexts. The purpose of helping to

create TLC was to help teachers in their desire to be aware of, understand, integrate, and build on the linguistic resources/experiences that the Chinese children have. The purpose of researching this process was also to explore what the teachers learned, how they learned it, and how the experience of TLC might promote teachers' literacy instruction and ELL students' literacy outcomes. The study might also have implications for teaching a broader range of students and for teacher study groups as sites for learning about teaching linguistically diverse students.

The basic principles of the Cultural Exchange Approach agrees with the theoretical principle of Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where the less experienced learn from the more experienced (also e.g., Tharp & Gallimore, 1999). Based on Tharp and Gallimore's explanation of Vygotsky's ZPD theory, the less experienced participants' capacity development is divided into four stages. At the first stage when the less experienced capacity begins to develop, s/he needs assistance from more capable/experienced others, such as their parents, teachers, experts, peers, or coaches. At stage II, the less experienced starts to provide assistance by the self although s/he still needs the external help. But the amount of the help needed is reducing. After both Stage I and II, the less experienced/capacity gets developed. At the Stage III, the less experienced begins to internalize what s/he has learned and to utilize the knowledge and information freely. And at the Stage IV, after getting familiar with and utilizing the knowledge and information the less experienced/capable acquires, s/he starts to extend her/his knowledge to a new scope

and starts to learn more. It is believed that the less experienced cognitive capacity develops through those continuous recursive loops of interpersonal social interactions (Tharp & Gallimore, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978a, 1978b, 1987; Wertsch, 1979). Inside Vygotsky's ZPD developmental loop theory,

The ideas of ZPD is of a fundamentally social act between teaching and learning, beard in specific social and cultural context (Kozulin, 1998; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995). However, besides language, social interactions between the more experienced and the less experienced, such as among peers or between the resource person and the participants are critical to learning in such contexts, because "knowledge is constructed by interactions of individuals within society, and learning is the internalization of the social interaction" (Storch, 2002, p. 121). Therefore, in our TLC, the ZPD was demonstrated through the teachers learned from me during the first two sessions where they focused on gaining the sense of the Chinese children when they first entered the American schools and from the more experienced others, such as the Chinese parents and their peers who had the children before. The ZPD was also demonstrated through the teachers gained their control of their own learning through actively asking questions and offering suggestions in how to help the two Chinese children.

In this sense, this theory also agrees to the theory of Scaffolding-Release of Control where under the big theoretical framework of the Cultural Exchange Theory,

the participating teachers first learned through scaffolding from the more experienced (when they just arrived in a new foreign country, they learned from the local experienced). Later, when they acquired more local knowledge, they gradually took over the control of learning themselves while the local experts release controls of the scaffolding (Au, 1993).

Studies on Teacher Learning Community

Extensive research has been done on teacher learning in communities. Teacher Learning Communities (TLC) are defined in the research as places where teachers are able to work together on common themes or goals, share experiences and stories together, solve problems or work on difficult issues, obey common rules, learn from each other, and are able to continue their professional development collectively through sustained interaction (Beattie, 2002; Ben-Peretz & Silberstein, 2002; Crespo, 2002; Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001; Grossman et al., 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1994; Westheimer, 1999). Most of the studies focus on teachers working together in community settings on written materials or professional development curricula; the formation of a teacher community, to examine lessons, or to assess student work. For instance, the well-known community researcher Grossman and his colleagues (2001) worked on print materials on English and history in order to create an interdisciplinary curriculum. It was the finding results from this study leading to the invention of the “Model of the Formation of Teacher Professional Community” (Grossman, et al., 2001, p. 988), which demonstrates a developmental trajectory of teacher learning

community -- from beginning through evolving to mature Grossman, et al.'s findings not only gave me insights about teacher learning community, but also enlightened me when I was thinking about co-designing and studying the Coopville Teacher Learning Community. Also of relevance is McLaughlin and Talbert's (2001) study is focused on the relationship among the teachers in two different departments and how this relationship affects the work and learning of the teachers in each individual department. I also reviewed Crespo's (2002) study of a group of elementary teachers working on either general mathematics problems or on their students' work and how their study of each gets them to learn in the context of teacher learning community.

Numerous studies also focus on how to understand the learning process of as well as how to teach ELLs. Smith-Davis (2004) argues that cultural and linguistic minority students might have been devalued or misinterpreted in the classrooms, therefore, need more than just language learning. Storch (2002) researches the interaction patterns of the ELLs in paired-work conditions. Through a longitudinal classroom based research on the interaction patterns of 10 pairs over a semester, Storch argues that certain dyadic interaction patterns are more conducive in language learning than others. Storch's study looks at ELL learning from the instructional perspective. Further, Sneddon (2000) studies of three children in three different settings, family, community and school and argues that different literacy/language settings have different impact on these children's school literacy achievement. Sneddon's study extends research on ELL learning outside school settings. However,

none of the work has focused on teacher learning about how to teach ELLs in the contexts of either study groups or learning communities. Further, none of the study groups or teacher learning communities takes the students as the center of their learning.

Description of TLC and Its Activities

Because this teacher learning community provided opportunities for Coopville teachers to have the chance of professional development in terms of teaching their Chinese immigrant children effectively, thereafter, applying their knowledge and experiences of this learning to other children who have difficulties in studying at schools, at the very beginning the nature of this professional development program was different from the traditional ones. Traditionally, professional developers design professional development plans or learning curricular based on their understanding of what the problems are and what they think the participating teachers need. Unfortunately, this kind of professional development design represents the developer's view of the world, rather than the teachers' understanding of what the problem is and what they need to learn. Because of different perspectives leading to different understandings about the final goals, some professional development programs achieve goals that are divergent to its initial planning. And, while it can be effective in achieving some goals under some circumstances, it is not necessarily the activity setting of choice in teacher-initiated study groups or for the study of linguistic

and cultural diversity in context (Raphael et al, 2001).

As mentioned earlier, I came to TLC and to Coopville by invitation and playing multiple roles. In a facilitator role, I helped TLC design its activities; as a consultant, I helped by providing information about the students' (and my own) native language and culture, and as a researcher, I engaged in data collection and analysis of a variety of kinds (further described in this chapter).

While the group gradually negotiated a clear focus, it was not tied to fixed means of education, such as textbook, standards, or student assignments. Instead, the TLC activities and agenda were planned around the Chinese students to provide the participating teachers the opportunities to interact with them, to learn about them, then to teach them. Therefore, this planning indicates that the TLC activities were focused on the teachers' main, local, and personal concern (for more details, see Appendix C) -- the Chinese students and further their schooling. TLC activities were also designed in an open-ended way with activity categories as the framework for each session. To fill up this framework, the teachers had to think of what they wanted to learn and how to learn it. This gave the participating teachers opportunities for focusing on what they individually wanted to learn, therefore, they could initiate activities, share experiences, knowledge, and specialties, as well as contribute to the teaching and learning of the Chinese children and the group learning.

This process gradually fostered teachers' sensed their ownership of the learning activities and the ownership of the TLC itself. Evidence for this can be found

in Chapter 4 where the teachers proposed questions from various aspects and in Chapter 5 where the TLC members started to offer solutions of how to help the two Chinese children improve their school life and after school study conditions. Under such circumstances of both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, the teachers brought up many authentic questions in the exploration of the Chinese children's life, such as what language they used to communicate with their parents and others? How did they spend their after-school time? What did their life look like after school? What culture did they grow up? And what did their parents look/ behave like? These questions were all focused on the children and covered a big scope of the children's life, including their out-of-school life social life.

The TLC is a situation in which opportunities are created for research on teacher learning and conceptual change. The specialty of my study is that it documents both the activities and TLC teachers' actions and reactions to their learning activities regarding how to engage ELLs to participate in their classroom activities in the contexts of community of learners. From this perspective, this dissertation study combines the fields of teacher learning in group settings and studies of ELLs and how to teach ELLs together. This combination provides information gathered in an authentic setting about how the participating teachers think, internalize, and act upon their learning activities, which not only discloses how these teachers learn, but also how these teachers generate knowledge -- with the help from one another and within the context of learning together. This pattern establishes a model

that is different from the traditional authoritative model of professional development where the teachers are trained by experts. This new model reveals a pattern of dialogic learning and a new sense of teacher learning through taking the initiative. It is a site in which I was able to study these processes unfolding in ongoing participants' interactions. As I also research teachers' related experiences when they were not at the meetings I was also able to trace individual teachers' internalization and transformation of TLC experiences into their language and activities in other contexts (classrooms, school, and community).

The study group and the community surrounding it offered a rich environment for an ethnographic study of teacher learning. In designing this research I follow the rigors of ethnographic inquiry including the framing of working hypotheses or inferences about local meaning; testing these by means of triangulation of evidence from diverse data sources, and an iterative process called grounded theory development (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Research in TLC: Data Collection and Analysis

Data

The TLC started its activities in the Fall Semester of 2007 and its members met bi-weekly for one hour and half, following the pre-collaborated learning activities, including four activities and four reflection sessions after each activity, totally 8 meetings (The details about the activities and their reflection sessions are reported

later in this chapter). Collaboratively with the teachers, these activities were generated from the summaries and categories of the teachers' interests, along with the pre-interview data analysis. From the summary of the data analysis, I found that what teachers sought was a sophisticated and inquiry-based learning process. The traditional physically isolated, "one-shot" professional development design could not meet the learning needs of these teachers. They want to learn about these Chinese students' language, culture, and their family in order to teach them effectively. The themes of language, culture, teaching and teaching strategies were the major themes of the TLC activities. The thread that connects the four themes is the idea that learning is social, linguistic, and occurs in communities. Taking this seriously, I helped the Coopville teachers design the TLC activities in a series of authentic experiences of language, culture, and community as follows:

- (1) studying the basic features and evolution of the Chinese language as well as how Chinese language works and the fundamental differences between Chinese and English language;
- (2) investigating Chinese family life and culture;
- (3) observing a teacher experienced in integrating English Language Learners into her classroom in a local context; and
- (4) watching videotapes designed to help mainstream teachers learn to teach ELL students effectively.

As participants engaged in these activities, I gathered data in several forms—

interview, participant observation, and collection and analysis of documents and taped recordings of meeting discourse.

From the start of the project, despite my multiple roles, I always maintained the role of a researcher who carefully considers what teachers might learn in TLC, how they might learn it, and what TLC might teach our profession. My role is modeled on the participatory inquiry conducted by other ethnographers in teacher education study groups (e.g. Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001; Florio-Ruane and Raphael, 2005; Raphael, et al., 2001).

Teachers' learning in the TLC was dynamic and meaning focused, so the research is designed to gather information using multiple techniques including field notes, audio-taping, and both audio- and videotaping of the group's meeting conversations as well as written artifacts both from the classrooms and from the TLC meetings. In addition to collecting ethnographic and discourse data, each TLC teacher participated in a pre-and post interview focused on how he or she sees the problem of teaching ELL students in their classrooms.

The analysis of data in this study is both inductive and deductive. It is influenced by the data as I collect and review it, my entering research questions, and the theoretical frameworks and prior research related to my study. Thus I have some entering hunches and predictions but I remain open to change and reject or refine them as I gain more experience through my role as participant observer and ethnographic researcher. This is called the "discover of grounded theory" by Glaser

and Strauss (1967). It means that the assertions or theoretical claims I make are grounded in my work with people doing normal activities and making local meaning of them. For the reason, grounded theory development is continuously open to revision, refinement, and change in response to ongoing analysis, subsequent data collection, and checking out ideas with the participants. The research analysis applies the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), triangulation of evidence from diverse data sources, and the development of vignettes (Erickson, 1986; Freebody, 2003).

With the constant comparative method, two sets of data are involved – the TLC meeting data and the field data. I both audio- and video-tape every TLC meeting with a detailed field notes about the meeting session, listen/watch, transcribe, code, and categorize both tapes and the field data. The categories for coding the data were developed out of the study's theoretical stance, its questions, and analyses of the pre-interviews and preliminary field data. All four categories related to teachers' professional identity and how teacher learning as part are traced as a function of participation in TLC. The analytic categories are as follows:

- teachers' awareness (e.g. of the differences demonstrated by the children and their family),
- teachers' understanding (e.g. of how those differences “made a difference” in the lives of the Chinese children)

- teachers' attitude (e.g. toward the children and their involvement in school activities); and
- teachers' modifications of strategies (e.g. about their classroom practice and the ways it did or did not engage the Chinese children).

Figure 2A below describes my coding of data—first, it defines my categories for aspects of teacher knowledge. Second, it identifies for illustration one key example from the data set coded as an instance of a particular aspect of teacher learning. Third, it pulls from the analysis of that key example a description of the process by which that learning accrued. Finally, it identifies the location of the example in the data set and expands the analysis to include my ideas about how this learning is important for ELL teachers. The table illustrates the general approach I took to data reduction and analysis. This, in turn, led to the development of vignettes (defined elsewhere in this chapter) in which I both offer examples from the data and provide descriptive evidence for the claims I make about participants' understandings.

Table 2A: What and How the TLC Teachers Learned about How to Engage the Chinese Children in the Classroom Activities

Aspect of Teacher knowledge	Definition of this aspect of teacher knowledge	What Did the TLC Teachers Learn? (One Key Example)	How Did the TLC learn?	Where Is the Key Example Located?	Why Is This Learning Important to ELL Teaching?
Awareness	Gaining genuine insights into an event or about an individual (e.g. family history, personalities, background)	The teachers gained awareness of their Chinese children's experience in school might be like when the Coopville teachers in TLC were given instruction in Chinese. The teachers experienced three different instructional strategies – no scaffolding, some scaffolding and full scaffolding during a simulated lesson. These learning experiences made the learning situation of the Chinese children who were in an educational situation where they did not share a common language with their teacher or classmates more real to the teachers. This is the activity in which the teachers open themselves up to the new, but challenging situation of needing to learn in order to teach those whose home language is not English.	Being instructed; De-briefing the experience and at our TLC meeting and discussing insights about learners' experience and implications for their own teaching.		

Table 2A: Continued

Understanding	Internalize new information gained by means of experience (e.g. the Vygotsky Space Theory); we become aware of our understanding and demonstrate it by reflecting on and utilizing the new information.	One vignette is included where the teachers learned some basic features of the Chinese language. The demonstration illustrates to the teachers the reassuring idea that the Chinese children are able to learn the English language because they have already acquired Chinese -- a complete language system at least as complex as the English language. The TLC teachers also learned that the Chinese students are not deficient but have rich language and cultural resources.	Being instructed; Learning at TLC; shared with other TLC members;	
Attitude	Beliefs and values, often related to a person's assumptions and pre-dispositions	One vignette reveals teacher attitudes and how they are changing by analyzing the multiple questions that the teachers raised and the rationale behind the questions. This vignette illustrates the TLC teachers' concerns about the students and their growing interest in learning about the children's' learning and development in various contexts including their living conditions. The teachers' questions, in one way, become the tools of the teachers' learning at the TLC; in another, they show the teachers' determination to learn how to teach the Chinese children. As teacher	Teachers shared their beliefs, values, and uncertainties with other TLC members. This sharing was prompted by activities such as field-trips; conversations with family members, colleagues and others.	

Table 2A: Continued

		inquiry begins to dominate talk in the TLC, a shift in control of the agenda occurs. The teachers gradually assume control of the agenda and shape activities and ideas toward their own changing attitudes. Their needs as educators and the needs of their students.			
Modification of strategies	Moving away from habits and rituals of behaviors toward inquiry-based teaching	One vignette is included in which the teachers initiated suggestions to help the Chinese children improve and connect their school language learning and their learning of English and American culture in their daily life. This vignette is a continuation of the narrative in the first three vignettes in that it describes gradual changes in the TLC teachers thought and action. Taking on the role of problem solvers, they design new opportunities for the children to learn (e.g. restaurant learning center; pairing with American families; local library visits).	Learning at TLC; shared with other TLC members; self-reflection, field-trip; conversations with family members, colleagues and networking with others in the school and community outside TLC meetings; and through the questions or the suggestions offered by TLC members and others.		

To summarize, Table 2A both displays and describes the relationship between my four sub-research questions and what the data show about what and how the Coopville teachers learn in the TLC context as well as the relationships between the sub-research questions and the location of their answers. Specifically, my four sub-research questions represent four aspects of teacher knowledge – awareness, understanding, attitudes, and teaching modification – which are listed in the first column. Following the first column, based on the needs and usage of the terms in this dissertation, each aspect of the knowledge is defined and filled out in the second column. In column three, some specific examples are given to illustrate what a particular aspect of knowledge the Coopville teachers learned as well as how they learned it, which is illustrated in column four. In column five, the significance of the knowledge that the Coopville teachers learned to the teaching of the ELLs are explained. Because the last two columns belong to the data synthesis, I will come back to the table in Chapter 8. In this way, the summary chart not only demonstrates the abstract knowledge (definitions), but also demonstrates the contextualized examples of what and how the TLC teachers learned, which is able to guide readers through all the dissertation chapters.

After each field visit, I code and analyze the field data based on the four categories I use to analyze the TLC meeting data. Then I compare the two sets of data each time, from which I refer the results back to the pre-interview data to frame new hypotheses or inferences. I test these hypotheses or inferences during the next field

visit. In this context testing means checking out predictions or pursuing questions which would follow from these “working hypotheses” of hunches. This is an important part of the disciplining of interpretive research.

When the data I collect started to show patterns based on the analysis, I added triangulation of evidence from the multiple data sources to further test and also provide support for our hypotheses of teacher learning in the context of community, meanwhile I develop vignettes for descriptive illustrations of the patterns. Triangulation in this context means that I take my hypothesis and turn it into an assertion or a knowledge claim which I then consider in light of data collected by means of at least three sources — e.g. field notes, analysis of oral discourse at meetings, and participant interviews.

Eventually, the combination of the use of various data sources answer for the purposes of this study my research question about how and what these mainstream American teachers learn about teaching children from different language and cultural backgrounds. Out of the analysis I developed a series of analytic narratives of key events — what I have called, following Erickson (1986), “vignettes.” According to Erickson (1986), vignettes are important as both analytic tools and modes of reporting ethnographic research. Paraphrasing him, the task of the ethnographer is twofold—to describe and also to analyze. The ethnographer often uses the particular textual form of the “vignette,” or brief analytic narrative to accomplish both tasks. Erickson (1986) writes in regard:

The first task is didactic. The meaning of everyday life is contained in the particulars and to convey this to a reader the narrator must ground the more abstract analytic concepts of the study in concrete particulars—specific actions taken by specific people together. A richly descriptive narrative vignette, properly constructed, does this. The second task of the narrator is rhetorical, by providing adequate evidence that the author has made a valid analysis of what the happenings meant from the point of view of the actors in the event. The particular description contained in the analytic narrative both explains to the reader the author's analytic constructs by instantiation and convinces the reader that such an event could and did happen that way (p. 150).

The research in this dissertation is therefore reported largely in vignettes, which accompanying framing information and reflection. I chose to use the vignette as a tool for analysis and reporting because analytic narrative text describes the liveliness, flow, and local knowledge discussed in study group activities and negotiated in the dynamics of learning among peers in the TLC group. It also offers examples of individual teachers' experiences of the TLC and of particular activities or episodes in which teachers encounter or express new ways of making sense of culture, literacy education, and/or the nature of effective classroom teaching and learning.

Using Vygotsky Space Theory to illustrate what happened inside each TLC and what might have happened among TLC sessions and consistent with a "cultural exchange" metaphor I, as a leader of actual cultural exchanges, used to thinking about TLC, it is not surprising to me that these sessions are especially rich.

Significance of the Study

I wanted to combine new approaches and ideas in this research. This study may set up a new model in the field of teacher learning and research on it, especially in ELL. This is because this study has its particular characteristics, which meet several needs. First, this study is initiated by Coopville teachers themselves. These teachers feel they need to learn and they intrinsically want to learn about how to teach those children. This is different from the traditional top-down teacher professional developments. Second, this teacher-initiated inquiry-based professional development model is needed by current school reforms for teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Educational statistical evidence shows that today's school population is composed of more diversified student population than ever with more immigrant students enrolled in schools (e.g., Garcia, 2005; Regenspan, 2002; Villegas, & Lucas, 2002). This diversified student population requires new teacher knowledge, teaching strategies, and classroom management skills from teachers (Regenspan, 2002; Villegas, & Lucas, 2002).

The TLC teachers' experience might be able to inform others who are facing the same challenges of the Coopville teachers in the mainstream American school

settings. And last, the shift from “melting pot”⁸ to “salad dish”⁹ of the United States nurtures people wanting to know about and learn different cultures and languages. This tendency is also demonstrated by the fast-development of globalization. With this influence, schools seek ways to teach children from diverse backgrounds differently based on their special needs.

The format of a learning community was chosen by the teachers based on their having heard and learned about it from colleagues in other schools. It fit the needs of the teachers for an open space in which to explore a topic that was new and difficult for them. The teachers were all the having first encounters with Chinese children. They wanted the support from one another, therefore, they all wanted to learn at the same time, to go through the hardships and learn together. This is supported by Mrs. SS’ report in her Pre-Interview data when she was asked why she was interested in joining in this group, she answered that she wanted to understand Chinese culture and the Chinese children better in order to develop a better relationship with Mike. But she was not sure whether she could do it without her colleagues studying with her (See Pre-Interview: Mrs. SS). Also, Mr. LM mentioned

⁸ In the history, the United States has been entitled as the “melting pot” (2008). This term originated from a play by Israel Zangwill, an England writer, transferring the message that all immigrants are the same as those of the Americans, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/meltingpot/melt0222.htm>.

⁹ The salad bowl concept suggests people from different cultures, races, backgrounds, etc. keep their original language, culture, and characteristics that they used to have and live in. In this model, various American cultures exist at the same time, not merging together into one culture — like potatoes and green leaves in a salad bowl, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salad_bowl_%28cultural_idea%29.

that in his Pre-Interview he wanted to learn together with his colleagues to help students become better students or to help his school become a better school (See Pre-Interview: Mr. LM). Mr. MG also expressed the same feeling when he mentioned that he wanted to collaborate with other professionals that would help him to think of some creative ways to try to help ELLs (Pre-Interview: Mr. MG).

The Teacher Learning Community model provides the sense of being together, the opportunities to support and learn together. In addition to these, another reason for setting up the TLC was that these teachers had a history of learning new things together. They had years of experiences with Book Clubs, and after school collaborations on curricula. They were used to sharing experiences together, thinking together, learning together and solving problems together.

In the next chapter, *Stepping into Their Chinese Children's Shoes: Coopville Teachers Opening up to Learning in the Teacher Learning Community*, I offer a vignette describing an early meeting in which the teachers took part in an activity in which the instruction was exclusively Chinese. The activity took them through three different stages: instruction given in Chinese without scaffolding, with some scaffolding, and with full scaffolding. Through these three stages, the TLC teachers experienced being lost, being helpless, starting to make sense and getting engaged in the activity. This vignette is set as the beginning of all the five vignettes in this dissertation because it was the activity that the Coopville teachers reported as putting

them all at the same learning starting point (See TLC Notes 11-15-2007: Mrs. RS).

This vignette describes a situation where the teachers started to feel what the Chinese children felt when they just started their schooling in the U.S. as documented in this vignette. Based on the teachers' feedback on this activity, the model of "experiencing near" and "experiencing far" (Geertz, 1967), might be beneficial to other professional development programs where culturally and linguistically diverse students are involved.

Chapter 3

Stepping into Their Chinese Children's Shoes: Coopville Teachers Opening up to Learning in the Teacher Learning Community

Introduction

This is the first chapter of the five chapters in this dissertation where I employ vignettes as the main descriptive tool to illustrate how and what the TLC teachers gained in terms of awareness, understanding, and how their attitudes changed towards their Chinese students, whereby they started to reflect on and modify their own teaching strategies to engage their Chinese students in their classroom activities.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, in order to engage the Chinese children, the Coopville teachers had been trying different resources, which they thought might be able to help these children, such as tutors, translators, and ESL teachers. However, after all these efforts, the Coopville teachers were still puzzled that they were not able to communicate with, learn about, and interact with the children as the children sat silently through their classes. In teaching these children, the teachers felt insufficient in understanding these children, so how can the TLC help to construct a social setting where the teachers could collaboratively learn about what they needed? Within this setting, what content should the teachers learn in order to help their understanding of these children and children from countries other than the U.S. and China? What activities would help the teachers to learn about the children and the

situation they were in?

One way to do it was to situate the teachers in the settings similar to what the Chinese children experienced in American schools. Geertz's (1983; 1973) theory of "experiencing near" and "experiencing far" can be used to help to us think how the teachers could experience and learn from the things happening close to them and then shift the learning to the children's experience when the teachers "experience far". An idea important in anthropology is that when we attempt to understand difference by studying something far from our experience, we learn about it—but we also learn to look at and think about our own experience near knowledge in a new way.

Based on the essence of Geertz's theory, an activity of giving teachers some instruction during the first meeting in Chinese was designed and delivered to help teachers not only learn about the language of the students but also to think in new ways about English –the way they use it in their teaching and they way they teach it. It was also a simulation in what it felt like to be taught in a foreign language and lack the resources to obtain assistance or rely on strategies to figure it out.

Listening to and following the Chinese instruction was similar to the situation where the Chinese children listened to and followed the English instruction when they started their schooling: What did it feel like when the instructions were given in an unfamiliar language? What did the Chinese children feel at the very beginning when they attended American school? What did it feel like when the instructions were not supported or supplemented while delivered in an unfamiliar language? And what did it

feel when the same instruction was supported with actions, clues, and pictures. This awkward situation might help the teachers become more aware of the learning experiences of the Chinese children, or the other children who do not share the English language with the teachers, in American schools and more sensitive to their assumptions about what children need to know and how they can learn it in order to learn to speak, read, and write in English. This disquieting learning setting might also help the teachers gain a closer understanding of the hardship experienced by their young Chinese students when there are no any instructional aids, such as pictures, actions, or clues involved. These insights occasioned shifts in how the teachers understood not only the Chinese speaking children, but in how they understood themselves as their teachers.

This chapter focuses on the teachers' identity transformation, the ways that learning occasioned, and their role as learners when encountering children from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds through learning about their Chinese immigrant students. What did the Chinese language sound like and how was it constructed? The chapter also documents what happened in the teachers' perspectives regarding their students' experiences of school, their own assumptions about ELL students in general and these students in particular through a detailed vignette description. This vignette chronicles valuable experiences of those teachers who participated in this study. This misplacement also helped the teachers open themselves to the learning of how to teach these Chinese children. This chapter provides the

foundation of the following chapters, which document other learning activities in the TLC which together demonstrate the patterns and characteristics of the learning of Coopville teachers.

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I describe how, by experiencing the instruction in Chinese at one of the TLC meetings, the participants were able to stand in these Chinese children's shoes to do what they did, feel what they felt, and experience what they experienced when they just began attending American schools. Literature indicates that fulfillment of school achievement is mostly through language integration (Anagnostopoulos, 2006). The unfamiliarity with and the lack of fluency in school language leaves minority children unable to access the school literacy, and therefore, keeps them marginalized. This unfamiliarity with the structures of the language, and their lack of proficiency, further make linguistically diverse children's transitions from their home literacy to the school literacy difficult.

In this chapter, I attempt to disclose this difficulty and make the feeling of this difficulty accessible to the readers through an ethnographic case description. I build my point on Steins' (2000) argument, however, went beyond the argument Steins made. Steins argues that

Comprehension of another's perspective involves distancing oneself from one's own perceptions of situations and placing oneself in the perceptual perspective of another. One must draw on another person's point of view, physical standpoint, or background to make judgments about that person's view of a

particular setting. (p. 692)

Steins' argument was established on Piaget's (1926) work with children when she asked her participants to try to depart from their egocentric habitual mode of judgment and take someone else's perspective. The core of his argument is two-folded: 1) change a person's egocentric perspective to the perspective of somebody else; 2) apply somebody else's perspective, standpoint, or background to view the situation. Stein's argument provides us what we need and could do in order to understand the other's situations. However, Steins does not provide clues about how people could change their egocentric perspectives to think of other's situations. Therefore, building on Steins' theory, using thick case descriptions, we also attempt to demonstrate our own theory of what could we do to learn about other's situations in order to be able to understand and take their perspectives when we try to achieve a better understanding of the situation of others.

Beside Steins' theory, "Standing in somebody's shoes" is the key conceptual part of the theoretical foundation for this chapter. "Standing in somebody's shoes" means understanding somebody's situation through experiencing what the person experienced, just like trying somebody else's shoes on. Using the metaphor of "Standing in somebody's shoes," I refer to the situation in which the teachers experienced the awkward situation where their Chinese students had to endure in their real life, hence, to understand these children through the experience of their own. In

literature, Houston's (2000) use of this term gave a light on the meaning we try to convey in this article when he told his experience with Steven Spielberg, an influential American filmmaker. When Spielberg gave his featured speech at AASA's National Conference on Education in San Francisco as the recipient of the Galaxy Award, Houston shared what the moment felt like for Spielberg when he was standing on the stage with him.

[W]e could feel the energy of the audience and sense what that energy was. It was a moment of love, respect and gratitude that was palpable as the flow of energy from the audience coursed over, around and through us. (p. 54)

Later, Houston (2000) used the unusual feelings he gained with Spielberg on the stage to reflect on the feels of children attending American schools,

What would it have felt like to stand in shoes where anger and hatred were being directed? We know that every day there are children in our schools who experience those and other negative emotions from their classmates or from the adults they might randomly encounter. And those negative responses are based upon skin color or language or disability. How would that feel? (p. 54)

What would the Chinese children feel and how could the teachers feel what they feel? I believe that when the teachers know what these children feel, particularly, when the teachers feel what they feel, they would be able to better understand them and adjust their teaching pedagogy based on what they feel and what they understand about the Chinese children. When I developed this theoretical framework, I found that the

answer to this question solves the myths of teaching ELLs, in general.

It was into this theoretical, practical, political, and sociolinguistic stew that the Coopville teachers waded when they began their study group. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the data used to support this chapter were also collected in the Fall 2007 and the beginning of 2008 among the TLC meeting notes, the conversations among the teachers and the field notes outside the TLC session. This chapter is mainly built on a vignette illustration. This is because these vignettes, situated in the teachers' daily lives, provide the opportunity to ground an abstract concept in concrete particulars (Erickson). Also as Erickson argues, a narrative vignette provides adequate evidence, which I can disclose in both the narrative itself and in commentary, on what and how the teachers learned in their Chinese activity.

Learning from Misplacement: Coopville Teachers

Experiencing Instructions in Chinese

After everyone agreed on the activities and the dates, we went to the next page of our handouts.

3. Learning activity: Markers to accomplish a task

Activity

In this activity, each of you will get four colored pens. We are going to use the colored pens to accomplish some drawing activities. I will give you instruction on how you are going to use the pens and what work I expect you to do in Chinese.

Then we will do the work together. (Agenda 09/13/08)

Before I gave them the instructions for how to complete the exercise, I told the teachers in English that “After we get the activity work sheet and we get the activity tools, let’s suppose that you are all new students from the United States. You have just arrived in China and have been assigned to my classroom. You have been given some paper and some markers. I used my own worksheet for demonstration. Now, you are in my classroom and I am going to give you the instructions in Chinese.” I started to give them the instructions in Chinese:

“今天的 · · 是：我 · · · 人四支彩笔。我 · 要用 ·
些彩笔完成一些画画 · · 。首先， · 用你的彩笔在
你的 · · 上涂。在相 · 的位置 · 相 · 的 · 色。即我 ·
用不同的 · 色涂不同的地方。... (I intentionally left a
little time between my words and my demonstration of
the appropriate actions to allow the teachers to feel the
awkwardness when they tried to interpret what I said. I
wanted them to feel what their students who do not
speak English would feel in their classrooms.)

When I finished giving the instructions in Chinese I waited and watched to see how the teachers would react. In planning the activity, I purposely chose to use the exercise sheet on which there is a circle that was divided into four parts and marked by 1, 2, 3, and 4 (see Appendix), and the markers in Yellow, Green, Red, and Blue. This was because these were all tools that the teachers saw and used everyday. Everyone in

the group knew what they were. I knew that this actually provided them an advantage over their students from diverse language backgrounds but I wanted to leave some comfort in the activity in order to ensure that the teachers would engage with the project. This enabled the teachers to concentrate on interpreting what I asked them to do and on feeling what they felt when they could not understand the words from my mouth.

While giving them the instruction for the exercise in Chinese the first time, I did not use any gestures. I held the four markers that I had in one of my hands and the work sheet in the other without pointing to the exercise sheet or the marker. I assumed that everyone knew what the exercise sheets and the markers were just as sometimes teachers assume that all their students understand what they need to do in the class if the teacher reads the instructions. At the end of my instruction, I asked the teachers, “So what are we supposed to do?” The teachers looked at me, and then they looked at each other. They were sitting there, still. They looked at their worksheets again and then looked at the others’. After a while, Mr. RC looked at me and then at the group and said, “Use the yellow to do something.” The group burst out in laughter. Mrs. SS replied, “That’s nice.” Mrs. RS turned around to Mr. MG who was sitting beside her, teasingly, “We are supposed to use yellow. Is this one working?” Then she told the group that, “She had that one first. That was going to be her answer.” The teachers were still sitting there. From their facial expressions, they looked miserable and confused.

This is the feeling that ELLs who don’t understand English would all the time

have in similar situations. Sometimes, teachers just think the activities are easy enough for every student to accomplish. They forget that even with the simplest learning exercises, some students may not be able to follow the instruction. This is also the occasion when students might be criticized as misbehaving, like the conversation between Mrs. RS and Mr. MG. Were they not behaving? They were talking because the learning activity could not engage them. Who should be responsible for this? I think the instructor.

I guided them to the next step. I said to the group, “Ok, we all know markers, right?” All of the teachers nodded their heads in acknowledgment. I continued, “We all know the color and we all have the same chart.” I held the worksheet up to show to the group. The teachers nodded again. I continued my speech, “We all know that we are going to do something with these, but we do not know what?” Mr. RC looked at his sheet, sheepishly, and with a low voice said, “Color number One with Yellow.” I could feel the nervousness in his voice. Everyone in the group quietly sat there. Mr. RC lowered his head down like a primary school pupil facing a teacher who was checking his misbehavior. I laughed quickly and said to him, “That’s a good guess.” But they were far away from what exactly I wanted them to do. In order to assist the teachers to be out of this situation, I quickly said, “Ok, I will do this again, but in a different way. Let’s see.”

I was glad that as I planned, the teachers already felt inadequate. They already started to demonstrate their desire to learn. Like them, I wanted to encourage that desire

in students who did not share the language of instruction. This time, when I was giving the instruction in Chinese, the same instruction, I held up the work sheet. I used my finger to point to and draw a circle above the circle on the worksheet. The teachers focused their eyes on my actions. I bent down and picked a red marker from the table. “

▪ 是 ▪ 色。我 ▪ 用 ▪ 色涂一。” (Translation: This is the color Red. We use the red marker to color number One.) I used my left hand to hold the worksheet and right hand to show the teachers the red marker and the Number One. I was pleased to see all the teachers in the group followed my action. They picked up exactly the same color as the color in my hand and quickly put the marker aside. Then they looked up, all eyes focusing on me again. They were so focused and put the markers aside so fast that I guessed that they could use each of their eyes to do different things at the same time, and they must have done so – keeping one eye on the coloring they did and the other eye on me and my actions all the time.

I continued the explanation of the exercise. “▪ 是 ▪ 色。我 ▪ 用 ▪ 色涂二. ▪

是 ▪ 色。我 ▪ 用 ▪ 色涂三。” (Translation: This is green. We use green to color Number 2. This is blue. We use blue to color Number 4). I said these words and picked up the colors quickly. This time, the teachers had different reactions. They seemed to already figure out what they should do in this situation. They listened to me with their eyes on

my actions all the time. When I picked up the green marker, they looked, but sat still. After I talked about and bent to reach the blue marker, several of the teachers quickly took their green markers and put it beside their exercise sheet, then grabbed the blue markers. At the meeting I did notice their fast-speeded actions in picking up markers, but I did not notice that their eyes were on me all the time until later when I watched the video tape from the meeting. The way they did it seems like that they desperately wanted to separate their eyes. They were serious. No questions were raised. No discussions were carried out. Simply, nobody talked at all, except me.

This brought to mind one of the Chinese students, Mike's silence during my first observation day in his classroom. I made an appointment with Mrs. SS for the Pre-Interview and made plans to spend some time after that in her classroom. At the beginning of the Sharing Time, Mrs. SS said to the group that they would go over one-by-one to share the stories they would like to offer their classmates. The children seemed to get into their thinking right away but Mike was sitting, looking at his teacher. Maybe because I was there, Mrs. SS started the sharing from Mike. Mike held the microphone, still looking at his teacher. To coin an American phrase, "He looked like a deer caught in the headlights." He seemed not to know what he should do in this situation, much like the teachers looked when I gave the activity instructions in Chinese.

Then he started to look at the children on his left-hand side and then those on his right-hand side. He looked at Mrs. SS again with his eyebrow being raised, and then

his eyebrows being furrowed. He might have been seeking for clues of what he should say or do. All the children were sitting quietly. Probably, they did not know what he was doing because to them this might have been a simple task. I understood that his observation strategy had not worked here. Even with his eyebrow movement, Mike still was stuck and he knew that no one was coming to rescue him from the situation.

Mrs. SS looked at him and started to ask him questions though I believe she did this because she sensed him not knowing what to say, not because she realized he did not understand the activity. This was proved later at our TLC conversations (See TLC Meeting Notes:). Mrs. SS asked him, “Mike, did you do anything last night?”

Mike nodded his head, while saying “yes” into the microphone.

Mrs. SS waited for several seconds.

All the other kids were waiting.

Mrs. SS and the other children appeared to be waiting for him to say what he did – the description of his action last night. But being Chinese and growing up in China, I knew this would be a point where the cultures conflicted, though the conflict was subtle and invisible. In Chinese culture, when people ask “yes/no” questions, they would get the answer of either “Yes” or “No.” Further explanations are not expected. However, in the American culture, after “Yes” or “No,” detailed explanations or sentence extensions are often expected. Mike did what he was expected in Chinese culture. At the moment, I knew intuitively that Mike did not know he was expected to offer any details about what he did the previous night. He is too young. Understanding

the differences between the two cultures would be outside of his mind scope. Meanwhile, because the differences are so hidden, Mike would never get it unless he really had experiences within the culture in which Mrs. SS and the other children grew up.

Waiting for Mike to give details, which he did not know she expected, Mrs. SS asked another question, “Did you do anything with your sister yesterday?” Mike again answered “yes,” while nodding his head. His eyebrow raised as high as possible this time. I guessed that he was confused. From his decoding of Mrs. SS’ English sentence, his answer was correct. I ascertained from his body language that he thought he had done what he was supposed to do based on the language code he was familiar with in his native culture. However, he could not understand that the teacher’s expectations were culturally-loaded and that Mrs. SS’s questions were full of her assumptions within the American cultural context. Adding to this confusing scene, Mike hybridized his English language “yes” with Chinese custom of nodding. To him, this was a perfect answer based on his experiences with the cultures. The one thing Mike was not too young to understand was that Mrs. SS was not satisfied with his answer and so he continued to look at her puzzled. Mrs. SS looked at Mike disappointed.

I wanted to jump up from my chair and shout out to Mrs. SS, “Stop asking him more simple answer questions. He has been trying his best to answer your questions. He is too young to understand your sentences, which were full of American expectations.” I wanted to shout to Mike, “Mike, could you just go beyond the way you

were trained as good behaviors – just say a little more after your ‘Yes’? A little more words, you both will be over this embarrassing situation?” I couldn’t. Suddenly I realized that maybe I was the deer in the headlights knowing that I should take some action but unsure of what to do.

Eventually, Mrs. SS sighed. She shook her head, looked disappointed and told Mike with a calmer voice, “30 seconds more. Then we need to move on.” Mike looked at her, then looked at the children who were sitting across the circle. His face was full of blood. His eyes became watery. Probably, he was still confused about what he did wrong. Thirty seconds passed. Mrs. SS said to Mike, “Ok. Give the microphone to the next student.” He passed it, lowered his head. His little body shrank to a ball. He did not look at Mrs. SS. Nor did he look at any of his peers. He did not have any motions, except using his right hand to tightly squeeze his left hand, which was inside his right hand.

The microphone was passed on from one child to another. Their stories were shared. Mike lost his chance to share his story. After several children shared their stories, Mike’s little tightened body started to get relaxed. He looked up at the boy who was sharing a story about the basket-filling. Then he followed the microphone to several of the students. At the beginning Mike looked at the speakers. He did not talk with anybody else and appeared to be listening, but after half of the circle finished their sharing, Mike started to look around. He looked at almost all the other things around him, such as the ceilings, the shelves, but not the students who were sharing their

stories. Mike seemed bored.

At that moment, I knew that if Mike was given another chance after everyone shared, he would understand what he was expected to do and he would be able to tell his story. When it's Mrs. SS' turn, my hope raised again. I crossed my fingers for Mike to get another chance to share. Mike was sitting beside Mrs. SS. I really hoped Mrs. SS could turn around, look at him, and ask after he had listened to all the other stories, whether he understood what he was supposed to do and to ask him whether he would like to share in the class. But she did not. Fortunately, later in our daily conversations and in my classroom observations as well as in the Post-Interview with Mrs. SS, she reported that sometimes when Mike did not share a story, she would ask him to think and let her know if he's ready or she just came back to him after the other students shared. She greeted the children and the children greeted her. She shared with the children the story she read in a newspaper that morning. Then she started to prepare to read a story to all of them.

I was crying inside. Mrs. SS is a very nice lady in her fifties, a grandma. She cares about every child. She unfortunately has never been in any other countries where people use a language that is not English. From her demeanor it appears that she assumes that every child has the same culture as she does. Every child would do the same thing as she expects. I wonder what it is about American education that makes a teacher assume a student would share the language and culture s/he has. How many other children were excluded over the years from sharing because the teachers didn't

realize the differences among cultures and languages? Watching this interaction between Mrs. SS and Mike unfold before me felt like an “out of body” experience. Almost like standing on a hill and seeing two trains coming from opposite directions down the same track, unaware of the each other’s situation. I could see the collision about to occur but was helpless to stop it. I could feel inside me the awful gut-wrenching pain of seeing these two people unable to communicate their true expectations for one another.

It was at that moment, I extended my original plan for teaching the teachers some knowledge about Chinese language to include a second phase in which they would have the experience and the feeling of Mike or any child who does not speak English language nor share English culture, being lost, being hurt, being embarrassed, and being desperately in need of help. That was the premise for the learning activity we did in community today. I could help and I will help. I will provide the teachers the experiences of having no assistance in understanding, to having some assistance in understanding, and to have full scaffolding in understanding the whole activity.

The silence in the room also reminded me of my first interview with Mike, and his family. Mike was born in New York when his parents lived there, but when he was several months old, his grandparents took him back to raise him in China while his parents’ struggled with their thoughts of starting a new business. His sister, Rose, was one year older and sent back to their mother’s parents to take care of the year before Mike was born. Now it was his turn to be brought back to China, but with his father’s

parents. Fortunately, his two sets of grandparents live only about three miles away from each other, which gave the siblings chances to play together on the weekends. There was even about one month, when the father's parents re-entered the United States to visit their son and daughter-in-law, and the two children got a lot of days to be together. He did not come back to the United States until his parents' business got settled in this middle-western rural small town of Coopville three years ago.

When he was brought back, his sister was already in Coopville for about one year. Though miserable, she attended a close-by pre-school. "She was crying all the time," her mother said, "Whenever there was a chance, she would not go." After Mike was sent back, his parents enrolled him in the same pre-school, which made their pre-school experience much better. "Still, they were absent from school a lot," the mother offered (See Family Conversation Notes, Mother, 9-07-07). This is why the children have so many pieces missing from their cultural awareness.

At the end of the second instruction, the teachers started to look at each others' work in terms of the relationship between the worksheet and the marker. Mr. RC commented to Mrs. RS, "You did the same as I did." I asked the group, "Did you get it?" Several teachers in the group said, "We are closer. We are getting it." Mr. RC said, "We are wondering about green." Mrs. RS, firmly, said, "No. Color Number 1 in red or pink." Then she showed me on her sheet by pointing to the markers she put pointing to the chart, "green, blue, and yellow." She continued, "I had to do it as you showed. But I cannot remember which one to which one." The group was laughing, again. Mrs. SS

looked at me and asked with a less firm voice, “Is this what you said?” She showed me her chart. To encourage the teachers, I said, “Yes. Very good. Very good.” Mrs. SS scratched her hair with a big sign, “Ahhh.” It sounded like she was much relieved from this “torture.” The group was laughing once more.

I moved into my third demonstration with full scaffolding. “I thought we could do more.” I started to give the instruction in Chinese again. “我 ▪ 用 ▪ 色涂一.” (Translation: We use Red to color Number 1.) When I said so, I took off the cap of the Red marker and painted over Number 1 inside the circle. When I was saying that “用 ▪ 色涂二,” (Translation: Use Green to color Number 2.), I did the same thing as to No. 1, except I used color green. I continued, “用 ▪ 色涂 3” (Translation: Use Blue to color Number 三.). I watched the teachers. They followed my demonstrations and colored their sheet with the color correspondingly to the number. The last color I used was yellow. I said to the teachers, “用黄色涂四.” (Translation: Use the Yellow marker to color Number 4.). At the moment, the only sound I heard in the room was the sounds from taking the caps of markers off and putting the markers down on the table. The

teachers put all their efforts in doing this exercise. They devoted themselves so much that they just looked like elementary students. When I designed the activity, I worried whether the coloring activity was too simple for the teachers and would bore them, but seeing their enthusiasm I think I made a correct choice.

After my instruction, I sat down and watched the teachers busy with making their coloring perfect. They seemed much more comfortable and confident about what activities we accomplished. I explained the purpose of the activity was that even when our students understand the numbers and the colors, they might not be ready to do the task, just as we weren't sure what we were supposed to do with them at first. But if we could model or demonstrate our desired actions to the students, even if they did not understand our language they may be able to accomplish the task."

I also mentioned that in the interview, Mrs. GT and Mrs. RS mentioned that they noticed the two children observe their peers actions a lot, followed their actions and eventually they understood how to connect this teachers' learning experience with the experience of their own. The teachers were quietly listening. Mr. GC said to the group, "This is kind of what they feel while we were talking in English. A lot of words were lost there just like we lost all of your words." Mr. MG, "I didn't get engaged until I saw I could understand whatever from the demo." The teachers discussed how the two children might have felt when they just came to the Coopville Schools. More important, all the teachers mentioned that they understood the two children and their school situation better now. It turned out to be where I wanted the exercise to go.

When I started to give the teachers the instruction in Chinese, I listened and watched them being lost and confused but I knew I needed to hold their hands to demonstrate that the lost and confused feeling would turn into the feeling of success and achievement when they could do what I asked them to do in Chinese. I think I was right. When I held the worksheet up and held the markers in my hands to show them each color and what they needed to do with that particular color step by step they felt successful.

Transforming Teacher Identity to Teach All Learners

The previous vignette illustrates a phenomenon common in ethnographic field work—as the teachers learn about “experience distant” phenomena, they are called to re-examine what they have taken for granted in their own teaching, or the “experience near.” For the teacher of literacy, this is a transformative experience. The analysis shows how learning about the experience of the non-English speaking students from a perspective closer to the children’s was an exercise in trying to move from what Geertz has called experience near to experience distant concepts. The activity had a threefold impact on teachers’ understanding: (1) action assisted-English instruction - the teachers recognized the profound differences between the two language systems at work and the need for strategies to help students connect with English language via action; (2) challenging their own assumptions - the teachers realized that their assumptions of the Chinese children’s learning style in the classroom did not mirror the children’s

experience as learners. Bound together with this mismatch, the TLC members were not able to negotiate effective ways of teaching children from difference linguistic and cultural backgrounds, even with very simple and clear tasks as they experienced with the first writer; (3) the shifting of their presuppositions - the teachers experienced the isolation, vulnerability, and embarrassment of being unable to complete a simple task in the presence of others—and the frustration and isolation that comes with lack of resources to make one's own meaning known to another. The teachers also experienced increasing confidence as the group worked through the re-teachings, not only because the teacher provided more support, but because they grew in familiarity with the task, comfort with one another, and trust that they could attempt to complete the task. They also gained their confidence through communicating in other modes besides talk in order to make sense together.

This activity opened the door for the teachers to realize the awkwardness that the Chinese children and other ELLs could experience when they entered American schools. This activity helped the teachers shift from an instructional stance in which the phenomenon is unquestioned and directly taught as a building block of textual meaning, the teachers experienced apprehension. They started to realize and understand the hardships ELLs experienced in learning English language. They understood better the emotional and cognitive disturbances and experience disorientation when the ELLs move back and forth from an alphabetic to a pictographic language system. They also grasped for the first time that even such a subtle, taken-for-granted aspect of the

feelings of ELLs (e.g. how do they feel when they are instructed in English? How hard it is to learn in an unfamiliar language?) is profoundly cultural and deeply sediment in their own literate experience and sense of self. Yet this foundational bit of standing in their ELLs' shoes in order to learn about them for the purpose of teaching them is not universally shared.

Awareness of the learning experiences of Chinese students in American schools puts the teachers' assumptions about their knowledge as well as their practice in new relief. Not only must they teach English Language Learners, but they, too, must become learners of and about them in new and challenging ways in order to engage them effectively in the school activities. The opportunity to encounter a novel language instruction within the authentic context of working with the first author is a powerful learning experience for the teachers. It de-centers their images of themselves as people who are striving to implement a literacy program in which much is taken for granted. Like anthropologists in the field, the teachers cannot teach the two Chinese children or other children from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds without themselves being changed—as literate people and as practitioners of literacy instruction in English.

They negotiated their way into working together as the learning community members, learners, and cultural difference “catchers” What I mean by culture catchers is teachers who are alert to and aware of culture in their own and others' lives and will therefore “catch” it when it is expressed, especially when differences in cultural

knowledge or expectations make communication between two otherwise equal people difficult. Culture catchers are teachers who will consider a cultural explanation for a problem and attempts to address the problem in terms of the difficulties cultural difference can create.

The activity with the markers gave them a collective feeling of apprehension at the start and a collective feeling of accomplishment at the finish. The transition of their feelings and identities build a foundation for them to be interested and to learn more about the Chinese children, their family and the Chinese culture, which led to the way to the following several chapters. I will document their learning experiences one by one. In the following chapter, I report on the teachers learning Chinese language and how the learning experiences affected their thinking of teaching.

Chapter 4

COOPVILLE TEACHERS AS LEARNERS

When the Coopville Teachers Learned Chinese: Transforming Teacher

Perspectives to Teach All Learners

In Chapter 3, I presented a vignette which described how the TLC teachers experienced new knowledge about language as well as the emotions related to the inability to communicate in a new language. The vignette presented narrative analysis of the meeting highlighting how participants started to grow in awareness of how their Chinese immigrant children felt when they began to attend American schools. I showed how, following the Vygotsky Space theory (Harre, 1984; cited in Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001; Gavelek & Raphael, 1996; McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005), the experience and learning began in the social space of the TLC. This social space is where individuals act in public with others, while the personal space is the private space in which each member contemplates, applies, and reflects on the socially acquired knowledge in his or her private lives and interactions with others (e.g., students).

In this chapter, using another vignette, I analyze and illustrate how the teachers' perspectives on the experience of their Chinese students changed as they worked on another hands-on activity — learning about the Chinese language. In this vignette I continued to play a leader role because I brought my knowledge of the

Chinese language. However, as the vignette will show, this second meeting differs from the first in that the teachers took a more active role in the activity, de-briefing, and in voicing ways that learning more about Chinese helped them to see their learners differently and re-think some of their expectations and classroom activities. The vignette is intended both to illustrate these changes and also to provide evidence for my interpretation of the teachers' experience.

In this chapter I describe my efforts to respond to the TLC teachers' interest in learning more about the cultural background of the Chinese students by teaching them some of the basic features of the Chinese language system—its orthography, how it is taught to Chinese children in Chinese schools, its history and evolution, as well as how it is written and read as connected text. In developing the vignette I make evidence-based claims about how, engaging in this activity, they expressed insight into the significance of differences between the Chinese and English languages for their students and also for their teaching. I argue that they became more sensitive to their assumptions about what children need to know and do in order to learn to speak, read, and write in English. I further argue, with supporting evidence, that the TLC teachers gained a closer understanding of the hardship experienced by their young Chinese students when they spoke one language at home and another at school. These insights occasioned conversations in the TLC giving evidence of shifts that were taking place in how the teachers understand not only the Chinese speaking children, but also themselves as native speakers of English and as language educators.

Before beginning the vignette I will explain the data analysis I undertook to frame the narrative, provide its descriptive details, and compile them as evidence for my interpretation (see Chapter Two for details of my data set and analytic procedures as well as my guiding questions).

Data Analysis

Data Set

The data used for this chapter are drawn from the whole set of the data for the dissertation where I collected the following: (1) the bi-monthly TLC meeting data (both audio-taped, video-taped and a written meeting reflection as well as artifacts); (2) Pre-/Post-Interviews (audio-taped); (3) field notes (written classrooms, family, restaurant, other school occasions with artifacts); and (4) outside TLC artifacts (emails/ phone conversations). It is from these data and my analysis of them that I initially developed vignette drafts. However, writing the vignettes is also a part of the analysis process. As I developed the vignettes, I returned to data analysis to check claims, find supporting evidence, or modify claims based on further checking of the data. It is during this process that triangulation of evidence was especially important, as was clarifying my analytic categories so that they reflected both my researcher perspective and the perspectives of the participants as much as possible.

For this chapter, I only used the data where I found instances of talk. Documents or activity related to the following: (1) the issue of Chinese language; (2) learning about the Chinese language, and (3) learning about the children by means of

teachers' learning about the Chinese language. These instances occurred in (1) the first session of our TLC meeting; (2) the first TLC meeting reflection, (3) my analytic summaries of the Pre-Interview data, and the Post-Interview Data; (4) the first classroom field notes; (5) the Gym class field notes; (5) the Library field notes, and (6) field notes from interactions with the family at home and in the restaurant.

The selection of the data reflects my role as a participant observer who documented what happened in this learning community, what the teachers learned, and how they learned through various activities. In my role as an ethnographer, I was a documenter of the TLC and documented my contacts with Chinese family. This dual access offered me opportunities to follow the children in the classroom, school, home, and the family's restaurant. This permitted me to put teachers' words and actions regarding the children and parents into a wider context. In addition, I collected artifacts both within our TLC and outside our TLC to supplement my field notes. I made this decision after it became apparent that the TLC's participation was widening to include more school personnel as well as parents. I gained in-depth insight into the thoughts of the original TLC members from the data from each TLC member's pre-and post interview focused on how he or she thought about the Chinese children in general, and about teaching the Chinese students. Self-report of change could be checked against data from the meeting discussions as well as from field notes of TLC, family, community, and student activities.

Data Analysis

Built on the work that has been done for the analysis of the dissertation data set where I listened/ watched, transcribed, coded, and categorized both tapes and the field database, I followed the categories that were designed for coding the dissertation data developed out of the study's theoretical stance, its questions, and analyses of the pre-interviews and preliminary field data – a) teachers' awareness (e.g. of the differences demonstrated by the children and their family); b) teachers' understanding (e.g. of how those differences “made a difference” in the lives of the Chinese children); c) teachers' attitude (e.g. toward the children and their involvement in school activities); and d) teachers' thinking (e.g. about their classroom practice and the ways it did or did not engage the Chinese children). The data that are used for this chapter are part of the data analyzed based on the above analytical stance. However, the four categories are deliberately broad and, as mentioned above, they were refined as I wrote and revised vignettes and as I conducted ongoing data analysis so that they reflected both my ideas prior to the study and changes in my ideas as I gained a closer view of participants' experiences and perspectives.

I used mainly the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), triangulation of evidence from diverse data sources, and the development of vignettes (Erickson, 1986; Freebody, 2003) to analyze my data. In this chapter, using the constant comparative method, I used the first TLC meeting data with meeting reflections to compare the Pre-Interview Data Analysis for the purpose of illustration. Then focusing on the argument that this chapter makes (in the vignette and in my

expository writing) about teacher learning, I triangulated evidence from the multiple data sources to text, refine, and provide support for my claims. I developed vignette both to illustrate and to present evidence for my interpretations of where, how and what the teachers learned about the Chinese language and the Chinese children as well as how to engage them more effectively in the classroom.

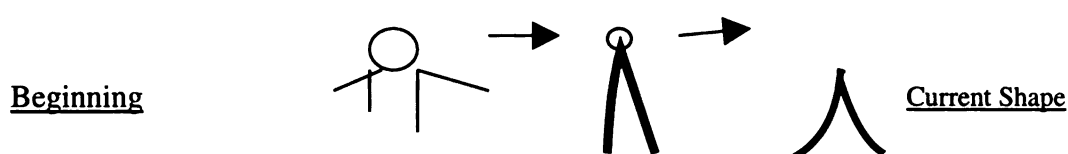
Coopville Teachers Learning Chinese: A Vignette

When I first handed out the sheets titled “Learning Chinese Language,” the teachers looked at the pages tentatively. Nobody was talking. Everyone’s eyes were on the handout (Video TLC-Meeting-9-13-07).¹⁰ I held up a worksheet in my hand and, pointing to the sheet, began explaining that the way of Chinese writing was based on pictures, symbols, or other phenomenon, making it more visual. I instructed the group to look at the first symbol 人 (the word for “person”) as an example, and then on the right hand I put the matching meaning in English for them to read in order to understand the words.

I asked the teachers, “Why did we put the person in the way it is?” While they were pondering their answers, I asked them to observe my shape as I stood up. I stood there with my feet slightly apart, my arms dropping down along the sides of my body. Then I used my hand to draw a line from my head down towards the right side

¹⁰ All descriptions of what I did and quotes of what I said as well as descriptions of what the teachers said and did are taken from two sources: the Field Notes from this meeting of TLC (TLC-Meeting: 9-13-07) and from my reviewing of the videotape of the meeting (TLC-Meeting: 9-13-07).

first, then another one towards the left. The teachers watched. The room was silent. “This is where our language” (the Chinese language) started, I explained, and I let them make the visual connection between my demonstration and the symbol for the word 人 (See Figure 4).



(Figure 4: Chinese Character “Person’s” Evolution Demonstration)

I explained that the beginnings of Chinese words were rooted in how things looked, rather than how they sounded. The teachers looked at the Chinese sheet quietly. I continued, “This is different from the English language system in which you would say the word, pronounce it and then you would spell it out. For Chinese you have to have three things together – the symbol, the original phenomenon, and the sound.

As I reviewed the meeting videotape later, I could see that at that moment, almost all the teachers looked up from their study sheet, focusing on me. When I continued to talk, they looked down at their sheet again, still not speaking. To give a clearer picture about the difference, I further explained that a Chinese symbol had a sound and the sound and the symbol were totally separate (Li, 1983). “Even when you

understand the oral language, you might not be able to read it at all,” I explained. I wanted to emphasize that different from English, Chinese language is not a sound-letter corresponding language. The teachers looked at me again. . “Oh, ok,” said Mrs. SS, eventually, whose voice broke the quietness of the room.

I continued. 大 “big,” which is pronounced “DA.” I turned to Mr. GC with whom I talked about the word prior to the meeting. To give the teachers a more vivid visual image, I asked him whether he could demonstrate why this symbol was written in the way it was to the group. Mr. GC stood up and prepared to demonstrate. This time all the eyes were on him.

Mr. GC: “They’re using a [writing] box, right?”

Rui: “Yeah.”

Mr. GC: “When they write a character, the character is inside a box.”

As he said this, Mr. GC stretched out his arms and legs as wide as possible. He seemed to be trying to make the point that they should envision him being inside of the box which added to the visual image of the symbol as being big.

While Mr. GC was demonstrating with illustrations, several teachers had different responses. Mrs. SS made a big sound of “Oh.” Mr. JK who just came in also made a sound of “Huh.” When Mrs. SS followed Mr. GC to make a long “Eh huh,” I noticed that Mrs. RS’ eyes become wider. Mr. RC watched the demonstration while continually nodding his head. It seemed that the teachers were beginning to gain

awareness of how the Chinese Language operates as a symbol-meaning language. Wanting to illustrate the relationship between the writing box and the symbol, I turned around, wishing that I could find a pen or paper so that I could draw a box and insert the symbol within it to show the teachers the relationship between the two. Unfortunately, I couldn't find what I needed.

To push the discussion further, I said to Mr. GC, "and then the SMALL." Mr. GC picked up on my intentions and said, "When my arms are down and together with my legs, I am taking less of the space. That symbolizes the SMALL." Mrs. RS looked up, then at me, and then nodding her head she said in a very soft voice, "Alright." Following up on my words regarding the separation between the sound and meaning of the Chinese language, Mrs. RS quickly asked me, "Say the word SMALL." It seemed that she wanted to verify the separation between the sound and the symbol. While Mr. GC returned to his seat, I looked at Mrs. RS and gave her the pronunciation as "HEEOW"¹¹ (小). Suddenly, the whole group tried pronouncing the sound that came out of my mouth. I hadn't expected that. Next, I gave them "DA" the pronunciation for the word, which in English means BIG, and Mrs. RS practiced "DA." The others practiced "DA" with her. It felt that the group had held themselves in for a long time and eventually a big burst of laughter filled the air because Mrs. RS pronounced "DA" as "DE."

¹¹ This is an English phonetic approximation of the sound of the word 小. The Chinese pronunciation is XIAO.

The laughter seemed to release tension, and it was followed by the telling of a small story by Mr. GC. This was a turning point because it was the first time a TLC participant other than me had taken an extended turn and noticed a pronunciation error Mrs. RS had made and turned it into a common experience and a humorous one. Here is the story he told:

Mr. GC shared a story with the group about a restaurant in Muskeville, near his hometown. It was called “DA HU.” He had never given the name much thought and had usually referred to the restaurant in a mocking tone. Instead of saying “DA HU” he would suggest that they go eat at that restaurant called “DUH,” as if the name of the restaurant was being spoken by someone with little intelligence. One day, after he had learned that “DA” meant big, he asked me about the name. I told him that “DA HU” means “BIG LAKE.” Suddenly, he laughed excitedly and said, “Of course, that’s Lake Michigan. The restaurant is only a few miles from the water.”

I inferred from his example that he and the others were beginning to understand that the point in learning a new language was not to use it perfectly, but to attempt to make meaning of and with it. This idea was also expressed by TLC participants later on when Mrs. ML suggested that the Chinese parents should spend some time taking their children to the MSU farms or nearby places to give the children some sense of American life in order to help their learning of language in authentic contexts (See Post-Interview: ML).

I remember several other TLC participants also tried to help the Chinese children to make meaning of and with the words they were learning. Here I take Mrs. SS as an example, drawing from my field notes, where I described that Mike could not

figure out what SCARECROW was, and how from there Mrs. SS started to send videos home for both Mike and Rose to help them understand the stories they talked about and they learned at school.

Field notes G1: 10-25-07

When Mrs. SS read the poem a second time, she asked the kids to read it together with her. Kids followed and read with her together. When it got to the line of "Crow, Crow, Crow," Mike read it very loudly with a smile on his face. Mike looked excited. After the class read three times, Mrs. SS asked the class to draw a picture out of the poem. She also told the class that if they wanted to paint it, they might do so. Children started to draw. Mike used a blue crayon and drew a curved circle. Some part of the circle came in, while some part stuck out with the rest of it around the line of a circle (See copy: Coopville-G1-Poem of Scarecrow, 10/25/07). I tried to see what it looked like. But I could not figure that out. Then Mike drew two circles together with a smaller one on the top. When he drew two wings for the two circles with one triangular on one of the circle, it looked like a crow. Then he drew another similar image on the other side of the unknown blue figure. Afterwards, he painted the crow-looking image with black crayon. Now they looked like a crow flying away.

Field notes, Parent-Teacher Conferences, G1: 11-08-07

Mrs. SS took several pages from a folder and showed them how well Mike has been doing... Mrs. SS explained that she noticed that sometimes, she would ask the class to draw pictures about what they read in the class. Sometimes, Mike's drawing did not make connections with what they were reading. She asked me to translate this to the parents. I did. Then she stated that she would continue to send videos home to help Mike make sense of the learning in her classroom. Later, when I interpreted to the parents, they showed their big smiles when they heard this news.

While the teachers were laughing at the story, I continued, "Here, the point is when they [the Chinese children] are at home, they only speak Chinese." I pointed to

the Chinese system on the worksheet [see Appendix TLC Agenda 9-13-07]; “They are using this language system.” There are two language boxes with words written in Chinese on the left hand side box and in English on the right hand one. On the bottom of the box containing Chinese words, I labeled the box *Home Language System*; while on the bottom of the other box, I wrote the label, *School Language System*.

The teachers looked at me with their eyes widened. Even Mr. JK who came in late appeared to understand the impact of this information. He asked, “Rose and Mike only use the Chinese language at home?” Mrs. SS sighed as well, “Oh.” “So school is the only place they pretty much hear English?” Mrs. SS asked, nervously.

Mr. GC added, “At the restaurant, too?”

“Wow.” Mrs. SS exclaimed.

The teachers’ surprise seems not surprising to me at all. Based on the data analysis from the Pre-Interviews, where three out of nine educators reported that they did not know what language/s either Mike or Rose used out-of-school, two ventured a guess, and two simply assumed the Chinese language. From not knowing or not knowing much to knowing that the Chinese language is so different from the English language, the teachers’ reactions and responses were quite predictable.

I continued and pointed to the box labeled, the *School Language System* I explained that there was a helper at the restaurant. Her name was Bridget, who, in her spare time at the restaurant, helped the Chinese family to communicate with the school and who communicated with the children if they have any homework questions. She

was the primary source of support for the parents with both the customers in the restaurant and the information that related to the children's school (See Restaurant Conversation: Father, 9-07-07; Restaurant Conversation: Bridget, 2007). I brought this information in our TLC because, in the Pre-Interview data summary, four of the nine did not know the level of the Chinese children's literacy development at all. Three others admitted that they were not really sure about it but had an idea, and none of the teachers mentioning any knowledge of the role of Bridget. Further, five of the nine teachers did not know the father, and seven reported that they had never seen the mother. Finally, all nine mentioned that they did not know anything about the Chinese parents' expectations for their children's schooling; and none of the nine have ever visited/or considered visiting the students' home. Especially, two of the teachers reported that they even did not know the family had a restaurant in the town. Now nobody talked so I had to continue. "Sometimes, Bridget talked with both of the children if she was not very busy, but nothing occurred outside school in English close to what happened inside school" (Restaurant Conversation: Bridget, 2007). The reason I mentioned this was also because I hoped that the teachers might want to know that the family had Bridget as a "language broker" between them and school tasks. This might also give the teachers hope that there were times when the children were not "silent" as they were at school, because they talked with Bridget out of school, although Bridget could not play the role of either a teacher or one of the parents in the children's life. I described her interactions as follows in field notes from my

observations in the family's restaurant:

Family Observation Field Notes 10-11-07

I noticed that Bridget was reading a library book to Rose. I took the book and explained to Bridget that the red-marked book was at the first grade level, the green-marked book at the beginning of the second grade level, and the blue-marked book at the middle of second grade level. Bridget looked at me and moved her head up, "OHHH." She told me that she did not know this before. Then she told me with a firm voice, "But that's the red-marked books Rose had problems with." Then Bridget told Rose. "This is the book you need to read." Rose looked at her. They started to read the book. ... Bridget encouraged them to come over to tell a story to me. She told them that they all knew the story and they just needed to tell me again. Rose came over told me a story in English of about 10 sentences in length.

Mr. GC jumped in. His words representing that the teachers were starting to gain insight and also make connections to their own teaching. Mr. GC said,

I am thinking of RC's pictures he uses to convey messages, directions, and new words to the children and how this kind of relates ... Will there be an issue of their size? If I am going to show the children a picture of dog, will they know that's a small dog or puppy? It's all based on BIG because the picture is big? (TLC Meeting: 9-13-07)

I was amazed by the connection Mr. GC made between what we had been discussing/learning and his instructional strategies. Later in the same session, I noticed that the TLC teachers made more such connections in their discussions.

I knew it was hard for English-speaking people to understand the way Chinese language has been set up. And that picture connected with sounds to make meaning. However, I had to explain that when they wanted to say a SMALL DOG, they put the symbol for SMALL before symbol for DOG. Changing the size of a symbol

does not change its meaning. All Chinese characters are expected to be the same size regardless of their meanings. This contrasted to the length of the English words, longer or shorter depending on how many syllables each word has.

Mr. GC continued that if we used the visual cues, we might want to make sure they understand it was a small dog, rather than a puppy. All the teachers looked up again with a deep sigh, “Ohhhh.” Different from the English language which has a way to reference both a young dog “puppy” and a small adult dog “small dog” which both look the same, the Chinese language only has one reference, “small dog.”

Apparently seeking to clarify the point Mr. GC was making Mrs. SS asked me “Do you have a word for PUPPY?”

“No,” I said, “just the SMALL DOG.” I used gestures to show it was a *small dog*. Everyone laughed.

Amidst the teachers’ laughing, I realized that from a linguistic perspective that Mrs. SS’ words connected what we discussed at the meeting about the size of the Chinese characters with her English teaching. This connection showed the evidence of her not only understanding some part about the Chinese language, but also she applied what she learned in her teaching.

I then turned to another aspect of Chinese that is different from English and would have implications for teachers and teaching—that of marking verb tense. “In our language, there’s also no verb tense difference. For instance, in English, you would say, WALK, WALKED, and WALKING (Li, 1983), right? To us, it’s just one word. So how

to distinguish the tense is based on the structure of the sentence, rather than based on the verb!" Mrs. SS exclaimed, "Ugh." She then asked, "Did they hear English when they were in China at all?" This was the second time she had thrown out this question for discussion. She must have been struggling with the differences of the two language systems and trying to figure out how much struggle the two Chinese children would have learning in American schools. The timing of the question was important because once again she linked both English and Chinese languages with the Chinese children.

In my role as an interpreter who shared knowledge between family and teachers, I said that I did not think they had any experiences with English when they were in China based on the conversations I had with the Chinese father and the mother. I had learned this in an interview with the children's father in which he reported that the children spent their formative years with grandparents in China who did not know English at all (Restaurant Conversation: Father 9-7-07).

Mrs. RS expanded, saying, "Their job was just to train them there." Mrs. SS shook her head, said "I just got impressed that, I do not know Rose, but Mike, Wow." Mr. JK jumped in "Rose might be further along." The teachers, who might have been thinking the children's English language development was slow, seemed, in the face of this new information, to realize that the two children might actually be advancing successfully and more quickly than they had thought given the barriers they had encountered before moving to Coopville.

Mrs. RS shook her head numerous times, "You cannot tell from Rose because

she's *toooo* within herself. 'I know what I know and that's ok. You do not have to know what I know.'" Everybody laughed again. The teachers moved further from their learning of Chinese language to English teaching, particularly, to the characteristics of their learners with the focus on Rose. But these impressions of the learners were mediated by language difference and lack of mutual cultural knowledge. So now they were open to review and discussion. And the children's behaviors were making sense in new ways. Rather than saying that "Mike just did not share during our Morning Sharing time" (See Field notes, G1: 09-06-07; Field notes, G1: 10-05-07; Family notes 10-11-07), Mrs. SS commented as mentioned above that actually both of the kids made quite a bit of progress compared with the language differences they experienced.

Mr. GC brought our conversation back to verb tense:

"So they are slow in picking up the tense. That's what you are saying. If I walked to the store they would not say that. They just say, 'I walk to the store.'

While we were talking about the tenses, Mr. RC lowered his head, reading the handout all the time. Suddenly, he looked up, picked up a piece from the vegetable tray and said, "I am ahead here. If I say 'clean up the bugs.' They would only clean up *one* bug.'" Then he laughed loudly, "Thirty more on the floor. They are not going to understand that." Mr. GC followed him and explained that, "They do not have plural forms."

Mr. GC was curious about whether having no verb changes was the reason for them not understanding English sometimes. He gave the example that, "If I say I

walked to the store, would they understand I did it already?" I explained my hunch that at the beginning they might not have been able to understand at all. Meanwhile, they might just have wondered why you said WALKED, rather than WALK.

Mrs. RS still looked serious and said, "Alright, I walked to the store yesterday. They had to understand *yesterday* had to be. "*Yesterday*, I walk to the store," Mrs. RS said. "So for them, you would need a time indicator." Mrs. RS' comment is another example of the gradual linking teachers were making during this meeting between the features of the Chinese language, their differences from English, and the implications that these might have for their understanding in the classroom and hence for the TLC members' teaching.

Mr. GC summarized our conversation that "if they did not get it, it might not be that they are stubborn." He thought aloud that, "This not getting it might be a culturally related language thing." Mr. GC reinforced his new sense making towards the two Chinese children's behaviors. I reinforced Mr. GC's words, "They might need more time, and they might need to observe how their peers use these verbs."

From this conversation, Mrs. RS raised concern about Rose's MEAP test in her next year. Everyone looked at the principal, Mr. JK. Mr. JK said to the group, "She will be ready, to be honest with you." Again, I had to think about the emphasis of the MEAP test. While the teachers may have privately reflected on what this meant for them in the classroom, the stated concern was related to the test – the concern between the NCLB requirement and the reality of teaching.

Mr. GC, “Really?”

Mr. JK looked at Mrs. SS, “Don’t you?”

Mrs. SS nervously, “I do not know Rose.”

Mrs. RS looked at Mr. JK, “Wait a minute. We had some special education kids get help. We’d better remember to get her some help,” she turned around, looking around the table, “to take that MEAP test. She needs some accommodation.” Mrs. RS mentioned that finding an interpreter might help. Mr. JK rebutted that he was not sure if that was allowed. Mr. GC firmly stated that he was pretty sure that teachers or interpreters could not read a test to a student, and that any accommodation would have to be detailed in a written plan for each student who gets the accommodation.

The group started a discussion on how some regulations were made for English language learners to take the MEAP tests and how some other people had appeals as well as what happened in the nearby local town where they had more diverse students. I just let their conversations go. Now they worked on digging out the available resources in the school for these Chinese children’s school outcomes. The conversation ended with Mr. RC joking (based on the fact that to be considered a sub group for the purposes of the MEAP there had to be at least 30 students from any given minority) that, “We do not have many international kids so if one goes down, the others should be fine.”

After that we returned to our no-plural topic again. I gave them some examples of how we express the plural in Chinese (Li, 1983), such as TWO BOOK. We

changed the numbers, rather than put –s after BOOK, however, we would put a linking word between the number and the BOOK. Mr. RC, “So do you have BOOK or two BOOKS?” I had to say it loudly, “Two BOOK, many BOOKS.” After I expressed myself clearly, I guided the teachers back to the two-language system business. I mentioned that at home they might always hear “Two BOOK,” but at school, they were expected to say Two BOOKS. The atmosphere became very heavy. Mr. GC announced that Americans liked to confuse their kids. He gave the example of FISH vs. FISH, DEER vs. DEER (non-changeable plural form). Everyone started to laugh. Mr. RC added, “Mouse, mice.” He looked at the ceiling, thinking. Mr. GC wrapped up this section again, “That’s another thing to keep in mind.”

We moved into our next point – the Functional Tones. I knew this part was the most difficult part for the group. Based on my experiences of teaching Chinese language, each of the tones would make my American students feel a headache coming on. I explained to the teachers that each tone represented a different word (Li, 1983).

Mrs. RS signed again. I started to read the words out, “mā (一), má (二), m (三), mà (四),” and “ma (五).” I explained to the group that each tone, which was represented by the small mark on the top of each sound of the word, represented one word. The sounds I just made represented “MOTHER, FLAX, HORSE, SCOLD, and A WORD TO FORM QUESTION SENTENCE, respectively. As soon as I finished the reading and

explaining, some of the teachers made the same sound together, “Huh.” Mrs. RS asked what we did with people who had speech problems. That was a good question. But based on my experience, there seemed to be fewer speech-problem kids in China than those in the U.S. (My experience was validated in research by Tzeng (1983) which I shared at one of the subsequent TLC meetings).

Mrs. RS continued to explain that she had some speech-problem students. I did not feel surprising at all because the TLC teachers made such connections throughout this session and the dissertation research period based on the teachers’ reports. In Post-Interview, Mr. RC reported that he already used what he learned and what we discussed in the TLC to his special education children.

Post-Interview, Mr. RC

Rui: “If you had Mike in the class, anything you would like to use for him?

RC: “I think the things I use already for the Special-Ed kids for speech and language kids, like visual schedules, the modeling, and using the microphone, and repeating directions are all things that I think you would start with to try to make him feel more comfortable. Then as time goes on adding in different lessons that might incorporate things that he’s accustomed to maybe pictures if your talking about healthy foods you would show him pictures of foods from China and then make it so he can relate if you are talking about the food pyramid and fruits and vegetables. Maybe bring in some stuff where they were born. Because (sic) like talking to him and showing him his dad’s menu or his dad’s gift certificates and I’ll, ‘Mike, guess where I am going today.’ I’m like, ‘Do you recognize this?’ And then he just started laughing. He didn’t say anything but you knew he was...so just trying to make connections with him. So that would be how I would handle it.” (Post-Interview: Mr. RC, 01-17-08)

I also remember at our first meeting in November, Mrs. SS talked in the group that she

would like to try sending notes home for Nick, an American boy, to share during the Morning Sharing time. She told the group that Nike like Mike before just did not talk during the activity. The teachers' reports represent the connection where they not only connected what they learned with how to teach the Chinese children, but also with how to engage other kids in the classroom as well.

Mrs. RS continued, "They would give me long sentences but I would never understand what they were saying. She claimed that among all the five sounds, she only picked up the sound for HORSE because it was much stronger than the others. All the others just sounded the same to her. I had to explain that in China, the schools were very serious, and teachers would make the kids practice the sounds until they got them. Mrs. RS gave a long sigh again. Mr. GC joked that he was afraid that when he talked about a horse with big teeth and strong shoulders the listener would think he was talking about their mother.

With the teachers' laughing, I made my point that the American teachers often changed their tone of voice in their teaching. Tone change can have meaning for American children, such as when speakers change tone of voice for emphasis. But change in tone has a totally different meaning to children from China who speak a tonal language—that is one in which changing of tone is associated not just with changing of meaning but also with the changing of words. I described to the group that when I was observing some classes, I noticed that teachers would say words, such as LANGUAGE in different tones, up, down or flat. These tones might show different meanings to

children who had a “tone-based” language system at home. These different tones might just get these children confused. Mrs. RS sighed again, “Oh, My Lord. I wonder how she could survive.” She continued that when she read stories, she liked to use different voices and emphasis. Mr. RC continued, “Boy, you won’t want to know what you did to her.” Mrs. RS’ reflection once again evidenced that the teachers were connecting what they learned with their teaching and reflect on their teaching.

After another big laugh, Mr. GC said this might be a tough one because most of the teachers were doing this. Mr. RC continued that even when the teachers gave directions, they sometimes used quiet voices and sometimes loud voices. “It’s really something.”

I then added, “So the problem is how we can help them to do the transition from their home language to their school language.” Quiet. The room was very quite at that moment. “So what do we think we can do to help them with this transition?” I asked. More quiet time. After a while, Mrs. SS said that the teachers needed to get more aware of it. Mr. RC agreed and said that he would be more conscious when he went to do his instructions and be more conscientious about his desires for their behaviors, as well as, watch his tone.

Before the end of the session, I taught the teachers several commonly used daily phrases for them to have a taste of how to speak Chinese. While I was handing out the Learning Chinese handout, I told the teachers that they might want to try to speak Chinese with the children when they saw them in the hallway. Mrs. RS jumped

in immediately, “Oh, sure.” She reacted so fast and with a tone of sarcasm that everyone in the group laughed again. This led to a relaxed start. Mr. GC said, “So next time, when you are in Beijing ...” Mr. RC jumped in, “Saying ‘Nihao!’” Mrs. RS continued, “Yeah, and then call them a *horse*, instead of *mother*.” Laughing again. Mr. RC eagerly shared his story about his cousin who could only speak one sentence in Chinese: “How much is the rice?” (translation: “米 • 多少 • ?”). But each time when he ordered food from a Chinese restaurant, he would always use that sentence. The teachers laughed again.

Amidst the laughing, I started the journey of teachers’ learning the Chinese language. I explained to the teachers that on that day, we were going to learn only five commonly used daily phrases, “HELLO, PLEASE, THANK YOU, MY PLEASURE,” and “GOODBYE.” (In Chinese, “NIHAO 你好, QING • , XIEXIE • • , BUKUQI 不客气,” and “ZAIJIAN 再 • .”) The reason to choose these five phrases was that these phrases are used very often in daily life. I hoped they could learn and use them in the future in order to give them a sense of accomplishment as well.

As soon as my voice saying the HELLO ended, Mr. RC said “Nihao,” already. He was fast. I responded immediately, “Yes!” Mrs. SS, Mr. JK, and Mrs. RS said at almost the same time in an admiring tone, “Ohhh, Yeeaahh!” like school children

teasing each other. Mr. RC repeated “Nihao” very clear this time. He was showing off. Mrs. SS asked him, “Did you already know that?” He looked down on his worksheet, “No,” he said firmly. Mrs. RS followed his word, “Nihao!” Her tone was good, but not quiet the same as what Mr. RC did, the group laughed again. I knew it was the time for me to teach. I said this word very slow and clearly, “Ni-Hao.” Mr. RC and Mr. RS imitated my sound right away. Mrs. SS wrote something on her worksheet with her pencil. She looked really like a school child who was carefully making learning notes. But I did not hear the other’s voices. When I repeated the sound of “Ni-Hao,” hoping the others could sound it out as well; Mr. JK suddenly said loudly, “She never responds to my Hello. So I am going to try that.” Mr. GC responded, “Try Nihao?” Mr. JK seriously nodded his head, “Huh.” Mr. JK continued, “For a year and half she has never said anything to me.” Mrs. RS commented that Rose never responded to Mike, either, while Mr. GC was telling the group that he was afraid of saying NiHao to Chinese people because he worried that the Chinese people would respond to him in Chinese, but Nihao was the only word he knew. He continued, “That would be interesting when you throw out Nihao to her and to see how she reacts.”

Mr. RC looked up from his worksheet, “How’s the Q sound? Kee, King, KKin?” Mr. JK looked at him seriously, “I do not know.” Mrs. RS commented on the sound, “There’s no U there, I cannot pronounce it.” At the same time, Mr. GC pronounced it as “Qing” (please). Mr. RC turned around to Mr. GC immediately, “Qing, like CH-?” Mr. GC agreed with him. At the moment, I observed that Mrs. SS,

Mr. JK, Mrs. RS and Mr. GM wrote the sound CH- on their worksheet just as Mr. RC was doing it. I sounded the pronunciation out. I could hear everyone imitated and practiced the sound again and again. Mr. RC was always the pioneer in this activity. When the others were making notes, he was trying the next word already. The sound he made was far away from the standard Chinese sound for the word THANK YOU. I pronounced it slowly, "XIEXIE." This sound was hard for the teachers to practice. Mr. GC reminded everyone of the movie "Rush Hour." "Have you ever watched "Rush Hour"? They said XIEXIE all the time." Mrs. SS and Mr. RC answered instantly, "Oh, Yeah." A connection was made between the Chinese language and the teachers' life experience. I wished that the teachers could see the importance of connecting the children's school learning with their life as well. Excitingly, I found the teachers made the connection between their learning about the two Chinese children and Chinese language with their life at the later TLC meetings and the Post-Interviews. For instance, at the beginning of one of our November meetings, Mrs. RS shared her experience of understanding the Chinese language through enjoying a Chinese concert.

TLC Meeting Notes: 11-15-07

Mrs. RS came over to sit down at the side of me. She brought a flyer of "Learning Chinese Culture through Music." When she unfolded the flyer, she said to me "I got to show you this. You would love it." Pointing to the flyer, she explained that three Chinese musicians came over to Detronapolis to give a performance. Her daughter thought she would love it and invited her over to the concert. Mrs. RS continued that she went to the performance, "I was thrilled." Mrs. RS must be very excited about her experience because I could hear the shaking in her voice. She added, "The tones in Chinese music are different. We have halves and you have quarters, like the tones in your language."

This is only one of multiple examples where the teachers made such connections between their own life and their learning about the Chinese language, Chinese children, and how to teach them. The following example is from the Post-Interview:

Post-Interview, MG

Well, I think I had the impression that the structure was different much like Spanish is different from English structure in certain ways where the parts of speech were just not there. It's a, so I think, I pretty much understood that how that works. It is interesting that I, when we talked about the characters and how some of them naturally look like the pictorial representations or the thing that they mean, and I, I just thought, and when you look at it, you look at it, it is so radically different from English that is written on paper. It's got to be, if a child has already begun learning to read some Chinese, it's got to be real drastic. I just think about I wouldn't do as well as a child. ... I just think that if I had to start to learn and to read Chinese at this point? That just made my head spin.

When the teachers were seriously practicing the word "XIEXIE," Mr. RC was making the sound in some Chinese martial arts movies, "Hongh Haa." Everyone was laughing again. Mr. GC's voice broke down the laughing, "How did you pronounce that one?" Mr. RC looked suddenly with a curious facial expression. I guessed he must really want to know "Which one – the one he had not tried first, yet?" The teachers continued their non-stop practice of the word "XIEXIE."

Mr. RC lowered his head, practicing a sound like "Ma Jiang." Mr. GC asked him, "What's that sound?" Mr. RC said, "I don't know. I'm just trying to figure out the next one." Mr. JK looked at the worksheet, suddenly burst out the sound, "BU KE QI" (translation: "My pleasure."). "Oh, very good," I gave him feedback immediately to

encourage the group. Everyone started to practice this sound. I had to raise my voice to cover theirs in order for them to hear me, “BU KE QI.” Various sounds came from them, “BU KA CHI,” “Boo KA CHEE,” etc. The teachers became real learners, I told myself. Mr. GC read the work sheet, “It also means you are welcome.” I confirmed his words, “If you helped somebody and he said THANK YOU, you say ‘BU KE QI.’” The teachers started to practice the word again. They made the pronunciations shorter or longer, softer or harder. Mrs. RS said to me, “Say it again?” I looked at her and said patiently, “BU KE QI,” while the others were doing their own practice attempts.

Soon Mr. RC started our last sound, “ZAI JIAN” (Goodbye). He pronounced it by himself – “zzigjan.” I had to shorten his sound to show the group the correct way to say it. “ZAI JIAN” I said in a firm and short tone. Mr. RC followed me said the same sound, and meanwhile, made some writing on his work sheet. I repeated the sound to the group. Everyone wrote down the sound they heard, at the same time, they practiced the sound. Mr. RC suddenly said very loudly, “ZIE JEIN?” He looked like a boy who was woken up from a dream and suddenly realized what’s going on around him. I repeated the sound for him. The others were practicing following me. I smiled to myself that if they were students, they would be very good learners – they were re-experiencing what learning was and how it felt. I found the major issue for this word was the tone. I reminded them if they said it in different tones, they might express something different. The teachers laughed again. Mr. JK said, “Oh, oh.” Mrs. RS and Mr. GC, “Haha.” Mrs. SS said, “Oh, Ok” pleasantly. She looked very happy. Mr. RC,

read all the words, from the first one to the last one, to the table. Everyone listened. “Good, Good.” Mr. GC and I commented on his practice. “Do you watch Pokemon or something?” Mr. GC joked, referring to the popular children’s cartoon from Japan. Everyone laughed again. Mr. RC said, “Just trying to keep up with the kids.”

Summary

In this chapter, I described how through studying the basic features of the Chinese language in the TLC, the teachers had an opportunity to experience and discuss the idea that children from diverse backgrounds are resourceful in terms of language, rather than “deficit” in language development (Cummins, 1991). All language systems are complex, and all children master the complexity of their first language as part of their cultural membership. Because of the complexity of the Chinese language system, we can assume that Mike and Rose have the ability to master yet another complex language system under suitable conditions.

Fundamental to my orientation to this research is the idea, founded on many studies conducted in the past two decades and cited in this dissertation, that ELLs are capable of learning English, whether as a second, third, or other language. Learning a second language, while the situation and contexts of its learning may differ greatly from learning a first language, it as part of normal human linguistic competence. However, for educators, families, and students, the challenge is to create the situations and contexts most supportive of this learning.

The TLC participants began to explore the idea of the ELL's competence and of the challenges that they and their students faced during the TLC session described in this vignette. We can see that they talked about language differences not as deficits, but as different ways of communicating meaning. Thus, they began to discuss how language differences could be rich resources for both teaching and learning. If the TLC's experience "de-bunked" the idea that difference was equivalent to deficiency, it did so on both sides of the teacher's desk—as the teachers discovered their Chinese students (and their parents) as thoughtful, creative people, they also re-discovered themselves as thoughtful, creative teachers. To do so, however, they had to confront the difficulties of engagement across difference; they had to risk not knowing and acknowledge their need to learn as well as to teach.

This vignette also attempts to portray the transition of the teachers' perspective. They shifted from being teachers of English to being learners of Chinese language conventions. They risked making mistakes, asking questions, trying out ideas for the sake of learning about teaching Chinese students.

On this transitional trajectory, the teachers experience topic and emotional alternations. When they receive the learning worksheet, the Coopville teachers look at the sheet tentatively and quietly (TLC Meeting Audiotape: 9-13-07). They listen and watch my explanations and demonstrations carefully. I know the teachers are trying to figure out what I am doing and what they are required to do based on many years of my own teaching experiences. More important, after several specific and authentic

examples both from Mr. GC and me, especially, Mr. GC's story of his "little intelligence" with the "DA HU" (大湖) (translation: "Big Lake"), a Chinese restaurant named after Lake Michigan, the group's thinking seems pushed to a higher learning level. The teachers begin connecting the learning activity with authentic life experience, therefore, feeling recognition and satisfaction as demonstrated in the vignette about the story told by Mr. GC and the expanded examples from our later TLC about Mrs. RS' sharing of her learning related to the Chinese music (TLC Meeting Reflection: 11-15-07) and from the Post-Interview about Mr. MG's reflection on his impression about the Chinese language and his understanding of the Chinese children (Post-Interview: MG).

Later, Mrs. SS pushed the group to an even higher learning level. Her question of whether the school is the only place the Chinese children hear English builds a bridge between the language learning of the teachers with the learning about the Chinese students – the learners. Her question opened the door for the others to go into the life of the Chinese children and get more opportunities to learn about them. This is a phenomenon of learning in dialogue with peers also identified by Florio-Ruane and deTar (2001), who called it "scaffolded dialogue" because the peers in a small discussion group appear to be advancing the complexity of the topic being discussed by their individual comments. This, in turn, raises the complexity of the responses of the others in the group. Together they explore a topic by sharing their

questions, insights, and ideas.

For TLC, the developing insights about the children's competence to learn a new language creates a new way for the teachers to link with the children and interpret their behaviors in a new and meaningful way. For instance, in this vignette, Mrs. RS shared the story of Rose being all in herself. Later in the Post-Interview, Mr. MG reported that "She [Rose] participated in non-verbal things ... She was laughing during the activity and very happy with her partner." In the Post-Interview, Mr. MG even told me that one day when they were doing some activities related to learning Ti Ti Ta, Ti Ti Ta, Rose came over to his ear. With a very soft sound, she whispered the rhythm to him. Mr. MG further reported that at the moment, he was clear that she knew it (Post-Interview, MG). .

The next move of the teachers is created by the fact that the teachers make connections between what they learn about Chinese words, such as the universal size of Chinese words or the structure of descriptive phrases in Chinese language with their own English language teaching. Based on this step, Mrs. SS makes another big jump. She asks the question of whether the Chinese children hear English at all when they were in China. Her question shows that she linked both English and Chinese language with the Chinese children. This movement pushes us toward the next step where Mrs. RS accelerate the group's interest from learning language in the personality of Rose. Knowing children is one of the critical components in teaching research (Shulman, 1987; Wiske, 1998).

According to educational research, knowing the learners is where teachers start the lesson plan and consider how to deliver the lesson, such as what kind of examples the teacher should use, and how deep and wide the topic should be extended. To the Coopville teachers, only when they know their Chinese students better, could they apply some teaching strategies that would fit the learning needs of their students, such as Rose.

Along the thread of learning the Chinese language, the teachers also alter their focuses from broad topics to a narrowed-down focus – learning about Rose. It seems that the teachers have already achieved great progress in their professional development. The teachers started from where they did not know much about the children, their parents, the Chinese language and progressed to where they knew that the children speak the Chinese language which is as rich and complex as English, the family has a restaurant in the town and they even met the Chinese parents (Summary of Pre-Interview Data). However, the teachers didn't stop. They continued their Chinese language learning and their contributions to the education of the two Chinese children. Mrs. RS is the first one who starts to give specific suggestions on how to help the Chinese children make sense of English language by shifting the position of YESTERDAY from the end of a sentence to the beginning to address the sense-making needs of the Chinese children based on what they learn about the Chinese sentence structure.

This shift is not a simple relocation of the adverb YESTERDAY. It conveys

the message that the teachers integrated their experience with what they learned to help these Chinese students with their learning. For instance, besides the story in this vignette, Mrs. GT found that Rose was very reluctant to participate in any classroom activities. After some sessions of our TLC, Mrs. GT started to encourage Rose to participate herself. See the following field notes on a scenario where Mrs. GT was asking the students to do an information collecting activity for writing biographies.

Field notes, Library G2, 10-11-07: GT

Mrs. GT came over. She sat at another chair, leaving Rose standing between GT and me. Mrs. GT looked at Rose's work sheet, which was blank, and asked a girl whether she had a horse at home. The girl said, "Yes." She called the girl over to write her name on the sheet. Then Mrs. GT asked Rose whether she was the oldest in her family. After Rose nodded, Mrs. GT asked Rose to sign her name on the girl's work sheet. Rose did. As soon as Rose finished her signature, Mrs. GT encouraged Rose to ask any of the other students to see if she could fill out the next line of her work sheet.

In the following, another section of field notes describe how Mr. LM naturally got Rose involved in his Gym class activities through passing her a ball without calling her attention.

Field notes, Gym G2, 11-02-07: LM

When he [Mr. LM] was announcing the rule, he picked up five balls from a basket and passed them out to the students. He stood along the edge of the carpet. Mr. LM passed the first ball to a girl standing close to Rose, but at the center of the carpet. Then he passed another ball to a boy who stood in the same line as Rose. He passed the third ball to Rose. Rose got the ball, looked, her face turned red. [*I wondered what she would do with it? Notes for myself*]. Then Mr. LM passed the last two balls to another two students standing close to Rose. Rose held her ball. When Mr. LM announced that the game started. Rose started to chase the other children with her

ball just as well as the other children did. These excerpts are the evidence that the teachers were getting a sense of which way they could structure their thinking in order to help these Chinese children better. Further, this also conveys the message that the TLC teachers care and are sensitive to their ELL children's needs.

Subsequently, in later conversations, the teachers started to think about what kind of help and resources they could get their hands on around the school for the Chinese children. For instance, at the beginning of November, Mrs. GT asked me if I knew whether the Chinese parents took the children to the local town library to borrow books and if they had not done that, she would like to bring them over to show them the borrowing process so that they could go by themselves:

Field notes, Personal, with GT: 11-08-07

She mentioned that she would like to show the parents how they could get a library card in the town's public library. She said in that way when the parents had time, they might be able to take their children to the town library and get the books they liked the children to read or the children would like to read, but different from the school. I thought that was a good idea. Then she asked me whether I would like to let the parents know that she would like to arrange a day after school to show them the library and take them to have their own library card. These conversations indicate a zooming-out activity of the teachers, from focusing on Rose specifically to broader topics of how to help the family by finding available resources for them. Also as mentioned in chapter 6, when Mrs. SS suggested setting up a study center at the Chinese restaurant, as well as, when the school secretary and Mrs. GT thought about pairing an American family with the Chinese family, the fact of offering these suggestions provides evidence the TLC teachers' were learning and

making connections between their learning with what these children need. The learning activities continue. When the group gets to where I explain that the Chinese language is a tonal language, Mrs. RS reflects on her own teaching style where she uses different tones and voices for emphasis to make her teaching vivid. She acknowledges how confusing this might have been and remarks on Rose's survival capability in her class. After the teachers question, discuss, and reflect on all the issues they care about the Chinese children and teaching these children, the Coopville teachers turn around and focused on their own learning activities seriously and tentatively. They themselves become learners.

Understanding ELLs' Language Capacity

by Learning about Their Language

In the previous chapter, I applied Geertz's (1983; 1973) "experience near and experience far" to explain the vignette phenomenon. Geertz's argument about learning and changing through experiencing different things can be used to analyze teacher learning in this chapter as well. As argued before, Geertz's theory of "experiencing near" and "experiencing far" can be used to help to think how the teachers could experience and learn from "experience far," therefore, rethink about the things happening close to them. In this particular vignette, learning Chinese language in an authentic language learning environment provides the teachers the evidence that Chinese language or another other language is complex with its own complete grammatical rules and word usage, which provides the teachers confidence in these

ELLs' language learning abilities. Through this language learning experience, the teachers for first time, as they report, realize how difficult it is to learn another language and how complicated and complex Chinese language is (See TLC Meeting Note: 9-13-2007; Post-Interview Data: MG). Because of this experience of "far," the teachers connect their experiences of "near" with the children and what might have happened to them as well as what they could do to them. For the teachers of literacy, this is a transformative experience.

The Coopville teachers' transformative experience also can be illustrated through their individual and collective learning activities within the TLC. In the process of sharing at their Public Social Space, the Coopville teachers bring in the information from their personal space to share and learn with others. With the input of the information to the TLC, it is feasible for the teachers to zoom in on the needs of the Chinese children and then zoom out on the resources and teaching changes they can provide to make these children's schooling easier. This zoom-in and zoom-out dynamic built the foundation for the teachers' perspective to shift from an instructional perspective in which the phoneme is unquestioned and directly taught as a building block of textual meaning, to the perspective of experiencing apprehension and to the perspective of being learners -- taking different perspectives indicating understanding things differently and taking actions differently (Class Notes TE994: 2007).

More important, from the shifts of their perspectives, the Coopville teachers start to realize and understand the hardships ELLs experience in American schools

through their learning experience of the Chinese language. The teachers understand the emotional and cognitive disturbances and experience disorientation when the ELLs move back and forth from an alphabetic to a pictographic language system better. They also grasp for the first time that even such a subtle, taken-for-granted aspect of language as the phoneme (e.g. how its minimal sound and idea units are formed and interpreted) is profoundly cultural and deeply sedimented in their own literate experience and sense of self. Yet this foundational bit of cultural knowledge is not universally shared. There are several places among the data set where the teachers reported their feelings about the language switching. For instance, Mrs. RS' exclamation at our TLC about Rose's American school experiences, "I wondered how she could survive?" after we learned that the Chinese language is a tonal language. Also, Mr. MG's comments on his impression about the structural differences between the Chinese language and the English language making his head spin is more evidence that the teachers better understood the hardship the Chinese children experienced.

Awareness of the acquisition of Chinese reading and writing puts the teachers' assumptions about their knowledge as well as their practice in new relief. For instance, in the examples in the vignette, several of our TLC members reported and acted upon the change of their teaching strategies in order to engage the Chinese children after we had such learning opportunities. Not only must they teach English Language Learners, but they, too, must become learners of and about language in new and challenging ways in order to do so. The opportunity to encounter a novel language

system within the authentic context of working with primary grade students learning to speak, read, and write in a new language is a powerful learning experience for the teachers. It de-centers English as a spoken and written language, or maybe, the only way of language formation —and in so doing; it de-centers their images of themselves as teachers who are striving to implement a literacy program.

Like anthropologists in the field, the teachers cannot enter Chinese literacy without themselves being changed—as literate people and as practitioners of reading and language instruction in English. The Coopville teachers obtain these achievements is because they themselves bring in knowledge individually and collectively into their TLC space. The evidence for this is the conversations they had while they were learning the Chinese language and the responses as well as the actions that happened during this session and the later on sessions where they thought how they could be helpful to the children and what they thought were the best for the children's learning. Among the examples was Mrs. SS sending video tapes home because she found that Mike could not make sense out of what they were reading in the class as well as sending reminder notes home because she tried to figure out a way to involve Mike to participate in their Sharing Time. The evidence also includes the moments with other teachers, such as Mr. LM the Gym teacher who engaged Rose without making it noticeable; Mrs. GT the librarian engaged Rose in an activity by modeling how to find a partner and information for her and then encouraged her to do the same thing herself.

Meanwhile, they gain knowledge within their Public Social Space and their

Private Social Space as well. The changes that were demonstrated through this vignette and after are not achieved by them all at one TLC meeting. Instead, the teachers' knowledge growth resulted from their openness at various TLC meetings where they brought in their personal understanding and personal knowledge about the children, their family, and how to teach them, and meanwhile, brought what we shared at our TLC out to their Personal Spaces where they internalized what happened at our TLC or where they shared what they learned with others who cared about the children and who were interested in teaching ELLs in their Private Public Spaces. These can be easily traced through the conversations among the members and beyond the members outside our TLC sessions. Also because these teachers continuously learn from others, construct new knowledge within the TLC and bring their internalized knowledge out to their private space, afterwards, back to their public social space, the Coopville teachers keep growing both individually and collectively.

Conversations which occur within Private and Public Spaces are building blocks for knowledge in TLC activities. These conversations can take many forms, however, ranging from free-flowing to highly-structured. In the next chapter, I will investigate the influence of a different type of conversation, one led by teacher questions: How does the unfolding process of scaffolded dialogue in the public, social space influence the learning that occurs within the TLC?

Chapter 5

Questioning: the Path of Teacher Learning

After the TLC activities of “Standing in Their Chinese Children’s Shoes” and the activities of “Learning Chinese,” the first two vignettes, the Coopville teachers opened up taking more initiative in our TLC learning activities. At the same time, they shifted their perspectives from teachers to learners. Being a facilitator, I was happy about the TLC teachers’ changes because these changes were goals of the TLC. With this sense of growth, I next helped the teachers be facilitating our planned Home-Visit Field Trip project. The first part of the project was our preparation, and during this activity I was impressed by the extent to which the teachers took greater ownership of their learning. In this chapter, focusing on one vignette, I explain why I claim that the teachers began to take over the responsibility of their own learning and they started to become what I have called, “culture-catchers.” The major thread in the vignette is the questions that the TLC teachers ask in preparation for our home/restaurant visit. Concluding this chapter, I return to Harre’s idea of the Vygotsky Space to analyze the underlying reasons of why this taking over of learning responsibility might have happened at this juncture in TLC’s activities.

Questioning is one way of inquiring. Questioning demonstrates the motivation of the learners. It also shows where the learners’ interests are located. The many questions bursting forth from the TLC teachers were about their concerns and

interests with the backgrounds of the Chinese family, the Chinese children, the Chinese culture, and the Chinese parents' view of their school. They were also genuinely interested and curious about the lives of the Chinese parents and children, their customs, beliefs, practices, and experiences. The questions that the teachers ask demonstrate that the teachers act as ethnographers – they want to learn/know the life story of the Chinese children and their family members as a way to get to know the children themselves.

After the Chinese family moved in and the Chinese children spent three years at the Coopville School District, the teachers change from knowing nothing to wanting to know everything about the children. This indicates that the Coopville teachers might have felt unsure about the unknown situation, but they needed a supportive environment or a social context where they could frame and seek answers to their questions. Thus, the process of questioning itself, as well as the quest for information, could have positive developmental effects on the teachers' learning, their contributions to their community's learning as a whole, and the education of their students.

Learning through Questioning:

Coopville Teachers Took over Learning Ownership – A Vignette

One question! It only takes one question and things can change. That is what I kept coming back to as I reflected on the first TLC meeting. Mr. GC had asked the one question that changed the tenor of the group and prompted the community members to

begin to work together. Following Mr. GC's question, everyone in the room seemed to shift their stances as an authentically collaborative Teacher Learning Community was forming. Today, our meeting went beyond one question. It was composed of multiple questions. Eventually our questions would take us beyond TLC and into the community at large.

At 3:55pm, the teachers started to show up. All the TLC members were at the table. The meeting started with reports of what had been happening since our last meeting. The teachers reported their experiences of speaking the Chinese phrases we learned last time. The teachers looked gloomy because none of them were really able to draw the attention of either the Chinese children with this single step in their direction. The conversation became dull and a one-dimensional teachers' report. However, when we got to the discussion about the Coopville Elementary School Open House day, the teachers started to show much more enthusiasm. Their questions just burst out, non-stop. The teachers seemed to want to know everything about the Chinese children, their parents, the restaurant, the cashier who assisted the children, and the Chinese culture. They really wanted to grasp every single aspect associated with the children [TLC Meeting Reflection: 9-27-2008].

Following my sharing of what happened on the Open House Day, on which the Chinese Mom and Bridget, the American cashier hired by the Chinese restaurant, visited the building for the first time, the group's questions began flowing like rain falling from the sky. The teachers discovered that Bridget was extremely vital to the

children's development and academic success as she was the person who helped both children with their homework after school. She was also the person who cared for them and read stories to them while they were spending their after school time at the restaurant (Restaurant Conversation with J. 9-12-2008).

Because the Chinese mom and Bridget were the persons who came on the Open House Day, the teachers' questions are started from them. They teachers want to know more about them and what they thought about the school on that day. Mrs. SS started the conversation. She asks "Is she [Bridget] recruited for that job or does she just work there and help out with the children?" When I am about to explain that Bridget was hired to work at the Chinese restaurant, but was a volunteer for the children's education, Mr. JK could not wait. He quickly asked, "What did the mom think?" We looked at him. I was not sure whether he was asking what the mom thought about the building, the teachers, the children in the building, or what happened on that day. I had to give a very general answer that she was impressed since it was the first time coming into the building. The teachers listened; no one talked. Then Mrs. GT enthusiastically commented with a louder voice, "That's the person I had never met, she looked overwhelmed and I asked if she liked her visit. That's the first time I had ever seen her in the building." Mr. JK followed the voice of Mrs. GT, "And she liked what she saw?" He was still at his first question. Mr. RC jumped in, "Did she walk around? Because I just saw her in the office." His eyes blinked, full of curiosity. Mr. JK, Mrs. GT and I answered at the same time with a "Yeah." Now slowly, Mrs. RS

stepped in the conversation. She said, “She was in my room. She was laughing. That’s the loudest I have ever heard Rose. ... Rose would not play the game that Mike was playing, he was not getting the right number quick enough, but she wanted him to get it.” By then, the atmosphere became warm. The teachers commented on what happened and they inserted their own experiences.

Mr. JK: Boy, she [Rose] was really loud.

Mrs. RS: I didn’t know that. It’s interesting.

Rui: She’s excited on that day. She was very happy on that day when she heard that her mom would come in. She was like “oh my mom, my mom!”

Mrs. SS: very cool.

Mr. MG: She spoke to me yesterday. We had an activity where we were playing tic-tac-toe and had to read rhythm patterns. She read at my ear, first time volunteered to speak to me. Without any coaxing. She just read to me.

Mr. MG got excited.

Mrs. RS: She volunteered?

Mr. GC: Did you have chance to meet the mom?

Mr. MG: Yeah. Briefly

Mrs. GT’s next question brought the group back to the mom and what happened on the Open House day again. She asked, “Did the mom speak any English at all?” But her question guided everyone into a deeper meaning of the children’s family life. For instance, whether the mom was able to speak English influenced what language/s the children were able to acquire and practice at home and what language/s they got used to hearing. Meanwhile, the mother’s English language proficiency also partially determined the differences between school literacy learning, which had effects on the children’s school outcomes as well as the children’s socialization.. Since this

question was critical, I gave Mrs. GT a full description of the mother's English language development. I explained that at the very beginning after the family moved to Coopville, the mother did not speak or understand English at all. However, when Bridget started to work at the restaurant, since the kids worked on their assignments after school at the restaurant as well, Bridget started to help the children with their home work. The mother started to pick up some words. Later, the mother and Bridget exchanged learning the languages. Bridget learned the Chinese language from the mom, while the mom learned English language from Bridget. Now the mother told me that she was able to answer some food ordering phone calls [See Restaurant Conversation, Mother].

I turned around to Mrs. RS and said, "The mom said 'Hi' to you, Mrs. RS." Mrs. RS responded that she did not hear it. However, she admitted that it's the first time for her to see the mom and she was thrilled. She further explained that "I had not met her mom. Hoped to have undivided time for her but I had many other parents and had to give attention to others as well, interesting." I further explained to the group that when the mother went to Mrs. RS' class, she was much more relaxed because that was the last class she had gone to. She was very nervous when she met and visited Mrs. GT's room, which was the first teacher and the first room she had ever entered in the United States. Mrs. GT looked on the wall of the meeting room, saying "She's so much like her daughter, the looks on their faces." Mrs. RS smiled with satisfaction. She said, "It's me, though. That's why she was so comfortable." Mr. GC joked back to her, "Oh

you just have the gift with people.”

After the joke, Mrs. SS commented on the mother. She said, “She’s very nice, very nervous. Of course I did not get time to chat with her.” Mr. GC turning to Mrs. SS asked, “Did Rose lead her around the room? Actually that would be Mike. Did he take her around the room at all?” Mr. GC was curious about what the mother and the children did in Mrs. SS’ room. Mrs. SS explained that she had a scavenger hunt list so there was a list of things to find. She said that she remembered the mother asked, maybe, something from the list. I added that Bridget was helping in the room. She told Mike what to do and what to find. Mr. GC got excited. He said, “They did not just show-up, they got involved as well.”

The teachers’ conversations continued. Mrs. GT raised another question, which led the group to the exploration of the history of the Chinese family. Meanwhile, the teachers started to weave in their own experiences with the family history. Mrs. GT asked me, “Did you know how the family ended up at Coopville?” Before, I got a chance to answer, Mr. RC said, “There was no Chinese restaurant.” Mr. GC followed, “That was pretty much it wasn’t it?” I explained to the group that based on my knowledge of the family the parents’ said that before they moved to Coopville, they opened a restaurant in New York City. When they got tired of the big city life, they started to search for a small town. I added that based on the words of the father, wherever they went, they went to the school first. When they saw this school, they liked it. I told the group that the father even said he saw some nice faces here [Restaurant

Notes: Father]. Mrs. RS caught my words, “Nice faces!” She exclaimed. I joked to her, “Maybe, it was you.” Everyone started laughing. Mr. RC made several laughing sounds then seriously asked the group, “But still, how do you pick Coopville out of all the towns in Michigan?” Mrs. GT echoed, “Yeah, that’s interesting.” Mrs. SS seemed to ignore Mr. RC’s question. She said, “Interesting, how long have they been in Coopville?” I said, “2004. A little more than three years.” Mr. JK tried to prove the time line. He said, “They were here I got here and I arrived in 2004.” Mr. GC also tied in his experience with the Chinese family and the restaurant, “I think they had just come here. The junior high was probably one of the first ones to order from their restaurant.” Mrs. RS pondered, “If the first year school experience is their first year, it’s been 3 years.” I grasped the opportunity for a wrap up and to push our learning further. I said to the group, “After they settled down here, Rose came first, then Mike. We will find more information when we do the Home-Visit.”

My words of “Home-Visit” stirred another group of questions from the teachers. Mrs. GT started again, “So we’re ... so we are all going to go to their home?” Mrs. RS corrected her, saying “Restaurant.” I had to input the correct information. “Both,” I said confidently. Mrs. GT looked at me and unconfidently said, “I do not know. So that’s ok? I do not know. This seems intimidating to me. But that’s ok. We’re going to do that?”

Even with my confirmation, the teachers seemed to still feel uncertain. Mr. JK asked carefully, “Are they nervous about that?” To ensure this was doable, I

answered without hesitation, “When I talked with the parents, no, I didn’t see that.” Mr. JK kept going, “Excited?” He needed an answer to feel good about this activity. I reaffirmed him, “Yeah, actually they are excited.” Unexpectedly, several teachers responded at the same time, “Good. That’s good.” When I heard these words, I released a long breath. I wondered why these teachers were so tense about going to the Chinese home and their restaurant. Later I learned that a Home-Visit was not a usual thing for the teachers from the Coopville School District to do. But these teachers did it. I was so glad that eventually, we moved beyond whether this activity was doable.

Expectedly, more questions flew onto our session table. Mrs. SS curiously asked, “Do they live right by the restaurant?” By that time, with all the questions from the teachers, I could not remember the exact name of the Chinese family’s address. I had to tell the teachers that the family lived across the highway bridge, down towards the south, about five-minute driving. Then the teachers started to spend time figuring out where specifically the family lived.

Mr. RC: so they are down by Debra Doogan then?

Mrs. RS: S Rd, not in Coopville.

Mr. RC: She said across the Bridge, so ...

Mr. GC: do they have a new home?

Rui: They do.

Mr. GC: I mean it’s pretty new ...

Eventually, Mr. JK figured out the answer for the riddle. He said, “The Van Beauty Street?” A little later, Mr. GC seemed suddenly woke up, “The Van Beauty Street.” Now with the sound, I was able to recall the street as well. Mr. GC provided further

direction of the street. He said, "It's just by the mall." Mr. JK echoed, "Yeah. It's down that road. Small yards, but big houses." When the teachers were enjoying their victory of figuring the riddle out, Mrs. RS suddenly looked up and asked seriously, "When Chinese people visit other Chinese people, do we [they] bring a gift? A greetings gift? A Thank You, a ... should we be coming with something?" She looked so serious that I did not answer her question right away. Mrs. RS continued,

to show our acceptance, or what we need to do? To make them feel more comfortable? Because I have the same feeling that GT has. Wahhh, Bang Bang Bang, goes car towards. Trot Trot Trot we all go into the house. Do we take our shoes off? Do we leave them on? Do, do, do we greet them? I mean, give us some clue, so we don't look ...

(Laughing).

I was moved by Mr. RS' sincerity. What I was able to say at the moment was "Good questions." Mr. GC took my words over and said to the teachers, "We'll talk about that when we talk about the [Home-Visit] protocol." Mrs. RS signed, "the protocol, that is a good word." However, before we got to our protocol, the teachers raised questions again. Mrs. GT asked first. She said, "So does that ... the mom doesn't drive. Is that correct or not?" I agreed with her that the Chinese mother did not drive. Mrs. GT explained her prediction, saying that she was thinking this was true because the Dad was the one that the teachers saw at school when he drove and dropped kids off. Mrs. GT agreed that now the Dad's appearance made sense to her.

In terms of the Mom not driving, the teachers were curious about whether it

was because of the Chinese culture or was it because of the Mom herself. Mr. RC asked “Is that cultural or?” Mrs. GT followed, “Yeah, I was just gonna ...” Then Mr. RC continued, “Like grandparents most of the time, like my grandpa really liked to drive my grandma so she never got to get her license. I do not know if that was something that they ...” I started to explain my impression of the Chinese family, which was quite traditional where the Dad took the responsibility outside the home, while the family would deal with the housework. However, I emphasized that besides the cultural influence, the mother’s personality seemed to be quiet and conservative as well. She herself did not like to go outside. I continued,

So from their family, I saw this kind of tradition. The father did everything with business, talking with people, although he did not talk much here. But he talked a lot with some other people. But the mom just stays at home, taking care of the kids. If the restaurant needs help, she would go. But she felt like hesitate.

Based on my words, the teachers started to join in again.

Mr. GC: of course, not that many people in China drive, right?

Rui: Oh, no.

Mr. GC: like in Beijing, hundreds of million, and hundreds of million people.

Mr. RC: Well they’ve got a ban right now because of the Olympics.

Mrs. ML: they got public transportation.

Rui: All ride bicycles.

Although the teachers tied the Chinese tradition and the transportation situation in China, they seemed not to like it. Mrs. GT changed our conversation topic and brought everyone back to the learning about the family and the children, again. She

asked,

How long did they come to New York before they came here? How long did they ... I mean when did they come over here? Were they married? I mean, oh, how long were they in New York? Do you know?

I shared with the group that the parents had been married for about fifteen years. Based on the conversation between the father and me, it was since 1989 [See Restaurant Conversation: Father]. Mrs. RS added that “Something GT does not know is that after they had the children, they sent them to the grandparents to raise them. And then at the certain age ... Kindergarten. They got them from the grandparents.” Mrs. GT was not at our session when we shared the information about the children’s growing up history. Mrs. GT opened her eyes wide, “Really? What... I did not know that.” This information seemed to be hard to believe. When the teachers were reflecting on the experiences of the two children, Mr. RC interrupted. He was curious about how the family had dealt with their New York Restaurant. He asked, “Did they sell the restaurant to another family member, then they moved? How did that work?” This was really a hard question. I never thought about asking the parents. I had to admit to the group that I did not know. But I encouraged the group to ask the question at our Home-Visit Trip. Mr. RC associated his question with his stereotype theory. He said, “That’s stereotypes, like the gas station by my house is owned by middle easterners and ... they sold it to a family member a couple of years ago, kind of passing it down.” At the moment, I wondered how I could explain the situation referring to this stereotype, Mrs.

ML asked whether the children were still taken care of by their grandparents if they were in China now?" I figured that the complications of the grandparents taking care of the grandchildren were not familiar to the teachers. I decided to introduce the so-called "4+2=1" family equation in China. "4+2=1" equation refers to the current typical family structure in China, where four grandparents helping the two parents raise the only child at home. I explained to the teachers that was why the grandparents of the two children would take care of them when they were very young and it was normal in China. Mr. RC followed my words and asked, "And they live in the same house, don't they?" This guided me to explain more about Chinese culture in terms of child-rearing and family structure, such as families in big cities and families in rural areas. The question of whether living together or not depended on whether the family had enough space for everyone and whether the family was in big cities where people were more likely to live separately. I further explained to the teachers, since this was hard for them to view, that in Chinese culture, we believe when older people help to take care of the small ones, they could grow better.

The teachers listened carefully. Mrs. RS commented that "If they want me to take one of my grandchildren, oh, no, thank you. I am not trying to be bad. I just want to stay with myself." Mr. RC inserted his world point of view, "But China is not the only culture that does it, so we are kind of the minority culture." At the time, when we were talking about the One-Family, One-Child Policy, Mr. JK cautiously asked, "So they kill the rest of them?" Then he further asked, "What happens? I have heard that

they actually do. Because they are only allowed to have boys so a lot of girls are killed.”

Mr. RC answered his question, “But there are a lot of orphanages, too, that are overcrowded.” Mr. GC gave further explanation,

In a rural community, if a daughter was born first, they were allowed to have the second to try to have boy work on the farm. ...But in the city, one-child law is effective. Right now, if you have the 2nd child, you can pay for the fine to cover for the 2nd child. But because so many people have the money to do that, it's still getting over crowded. So I was reading the other day they are actually thinking about raising the price for the 2nd child. To limit it even more.

Mrs. RS responded, “I am convinced that U.S. at least should create a test before you can become a parent.” The teachers started laughing. While I was laughing, I was so glad that the teachers totally took over the ownership of their learning. They initiated their questions, and afterwards, they discussed and tried to answer the questions themselves. If necessary, I would step in. However, after my explanations the teachers even had more questions. The teachers really wanted to learn everything about the children, the children, their parents, their grandparents, their language, their culture, and the general family policy of China.

The teachers questioning did not stop even later when we moved on to our next activity, in which I introduced the Chinese classroom and classroom cultures. In doing so, I showed the teachers some pictures that I downloaded from online about Chinese traditional classroom structures, arrangements, recess time, and how students learn in the classrooms. Since the classrooms seemed very crowded, Mr. JK asked,

“How many kids in the classroom?” When they learned that there were dozens of students, Mr. JK gave a follow-up question, “in one class?” Mrs. SS and Mrs. GT asked, “one teacher?” I explained to the teachers that similar to the secondary school education in the U.S., the teachers in elementary level in China were specialized as well. This determined that “only the subject matter teacher comes in and then after an hour another teacher comes in.”

The teachers carefully looked at the pictures I showed to them. Mrs. GT connected the pictures with Mike. She asked, “So Mike would be like in that room? That would be at his age level in these desks?” Mr. JK further asked, “I wondered about discipline.” When Mrs. GT learned that Mike would be in the rows of desks in the traditional Chinese classrooms, she exclaimed, “Boy, I cannot image such a little boy learning in that way.” Mrs. SS watched the recess pictures and signed, “Really regimented. Isn’t it?” Mrs. RS looked all of us though, saying “That’s why Rose...” Mrs. RS told the group the story about Rose walking back and forth on the playground. She never played. Mr. RC echoed that “I asked her whether she wanted to go swing. She shook her head, ‘No.’”

When Mrs. RS told her to go to play, she just walked back and forth by the wall. It seemed to be no way to engage her on the playground. Until one day, when Mrs. RS went to a missionary who did his mission in China and when the missionary asked Mrs. RS was there any child who asked Rose to play, did Mrs. RS understood that Rose needed to be asked to play with. Then she found three little girls and asked

their help to ask Rose to play and she has played since then. Mrs. RS was so excited when she told us the story that she exclaimed that it was really an enlightening moment. Mr. JK followed her words, “This is totally different. We believe in free play. That’s so different from what research said. Research says hands on with smaller classes.” He was shocked at the way education was structured in China and also understood how well Chinese children achieve academically in this setting. I listened to the teachers’ conversations without any intention to interrupt. The teachers were sharing and reflecting on one another’s experiences.

Even after such explorations about the children, the teachers were still interested in knowing more about the children. Mrs. RS raised more questions. She asked, “So had she had some training before she came here? No schooling, right? Just grandma/grandpa?” Then she realized the differences between Mike and Rose. Almost to herself, Mrs. RS responded to Mr. RC that he found the two children had different play styles on the playground. She commented that “They are different. They are boy and girl, too.” I added that “Rose speaks mandarin, Mike speaks local dialect. But I do not know why.” Mr. JK cut in. He reflected on what they did at the very beginning. He said, “When we looked at a tutor, we did not realize there were so many differences among dialects in China. We had to find mandarin.” Mrs. RS commented again, “Yes. I remember that history of finding a tutor.” Mrs. GT followed, “so if they speak different dialects, they cannot understand each other? It’s not like our southern dialect to northern?”

When I showed another picture about kindergarten children sitting on the chairs, I explained that Children are not allowed to sit on the floor in China in the traditional classrooms. Mr. LM pushed the question to a further level to reach the culture of China. He asked, "It's at home as well? You see the movies where they don't have chairs. Or is that a different story?" Then the members of the TLC discussed that she was probably thinking of the Japanese culture. The teachers laughed at Mr. LM.

In such a warm and friendly environment, Mr. GC made a very important point. He said, "It's just that, Rose and Mike don't have that experience. That's the experience the parents have, right?" I was surprised at how thoughtful Mr. GC was at that moment. That was exactly what I wanted to point out as well. I just added that it was the experiences that the children's parents had as well because the children lived with their parents, they might have had influence from their parents' perspective. Mr. GC continued. He turned to Mrs. RS, "Probably, for the two years when Rose was in your room, they did not have any idea of what's going on." Mrs. RS humorously responded that "sometimes, I do not have any idea, either." Everyone started a big laugh again.

Mr. GC started his question again, "Do they ever have recess together?" He was referring to both Rose and Mike. Mrs. RS answered determinately, "No." Mr. JK explained that the two children were on the different playgrounds. Mr. GC sighed that they were not really interacting with each other during the day time. Mrs. RS responded to him that the two children would pass in the hall. But Rose would not talk

with Mike.

The teachers posed more of their questions throughout the session. Even later when we talked about how we were going to do the Home-Visit Project, The teachers were still asking questions. Because of the time and also because I wanted the teachers to listen to what the parents would say, I suggested that we keep the questions for our Home-Visit. The teachers agreed. Probably, that was the only way to help the teachers keep their questions for the parents. Their questions briefly were as follows:

Mr. RC: Who will bring them home? How late do they stay at restaurant?

RC: Mom doesn't drive. Will Bridget and dad drive them home and come back to the restaurant?

RS: Who stays at the restaurant? Bridget?

SS: How late do they stay open during the week? Do you know?

RC: How many other people are working there?

Reflection

Vygotsky's Space Theory explains what happened in this vignette effectively. Vygotsky argues that people bring what they learn in their Public Space to their Personal Space and their Private Public Space, afterwards, they bring the increased knowledge back to their Public Space again. In this vignette, the teachers brought what they learned at our TLC to their Private Space and their Private Public Space, which were represented by the depth and the breadth of their questions. These questions were not all created and formed at our TLC. On the contrary, , some of the questions were the questions that the teachers had been pondering out of our TLC space for a long

time, such as when did the family move to Coopville, why the father rushed to drop the kids, etc. The teachers brought these questions and the resources represented by these questions to our TLC where they shared and learned about them. These actions of the teachers enriched what they learned at our TLC.

This vignette not only represents what the teachers learned, but also it illustrated how they learned at our TLC. The teachers used questioning to explore the children's background, their family, their social context, and Chinese education as well as Chinese culture. The teachers did not ask the questions from one dimension or one aspect about the children. On the contrary, they raised the questions from every single aspect, which weaved together to form a multi-dimensional ecology of the living condition of the Chinese children. If I could select a metaphor to explain, I would use the following figure to explain how and what the teachers learned during this session (See Figure 5: Cone-Shaped Learning Pattern: The Formation and Representation of the Teachers' Questions).

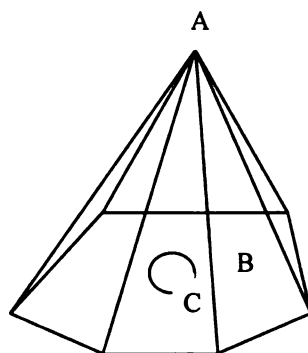


Figure 5: Cone-Shaped Learning Pattern: The Formation and Representation of the Teachers' Questions

On the above figure, A represents the two Chinese children, who became the center of all of the teachers' questions. A has a shadow on plane B and labeled as C. C represents the knowledge that the teachers learned about the two children. After the questioning, the knowledge about the children increased. Therefore, C has a bigger area than A. The plane B shows the social contexts that the two children live in, which were tackled and touched by the teachers' questions. The figure represents the teachers' questions arising from different angles, which are represented by the different facets that are joined at the top -- the two children. This figure illustrates that the teachers tried to understand the children by putting them in a complex ecological environment, rather than isolate them out of their contexts. Because of this move, the teachers were able to "catch the culture" of the children based on learning about their language experiences (at home, school, and the restaurant), their family experiences, their parents' backgrounds and expectations for their children's educations, and the ways they spent their time when they were in and out of school. From here, the TLC members took a next step: they started to make suggestions about and put their efforts into changing the children's lives in the service of their school learning and assimilation into life and culture in Coopville. However, what does it take to move from generating questions to moving towards action? How do the conversations and questions from the TLC manifest themselves into action? Do the actions occur in Private or Public Spaces and is this related to the where the questions were generated? I

document this process and the information related to these questions in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Coopville Teachers as Problem-Solvers: Moving towards

Changing the Life of the Chinese Students

From: Mrs. SS [Trust] [Block]
To: niurui@msu.edu
Date: 24 Oct 2007, 09:37:21 AM
Subject: Re: thoughts - Re: Reminder:
questions for Chinese family

Hi Rui,

I have been thinking about Mike and Rose a lot and I have some concerns. I'm not sure if anything can be done about them but I thought I would mention them to you.

First of all, I am concerned that they are there in the restaurant so many hours every evening. It didn't look like there was much for them to do and it wasn't a very comfortable environment. Could they have a corner with some beanbag chairs or a child size table and chair set that they could work at? Maybe a crate or small bookshelf with crayons, books or other activities? I would be willing to donate or lend them things from the classroom.

I wish they could have play dates with other children occasionally. (I'd like to take them home with me sometime but don't know if that could ever happen) They never see what an American home looks like. What about Halloween? Will they get to go Trick or Treating?

Thanks, Rui!

See you tomorrow.

SS

On the day before our second October meeting, I received the above email from Mrs. SS. From the instant I opened the email, I was moved. The email showed Mrs. SS' sincere care about both Rose and Mike. I wrote the following words with my excitement – "These are the teachers who care not only about their students' school learning, but also about the quality of their life." – [Fieldnotes, 10-24-08]

Initiating Ways of Changes: Taking over the Responsibility

After the TLC teachers went to the house where the Chinese family lives and the restaurant on which the family depends for a living, I did not get any email from the TLC teachers. Nor did anyone talk with me about the visit. Contrasted with all of the pre-home-visit emails and conversations regarding the questions the teachers were interested in asking, things seemed very quiet. However, this quietness was broken by one of the teachers' email. At the moment when I was reading her email, I could feel my eyes became wet and my breath became tightened. I was deeply moved by her sincere concerns about the life of the two children.

Mrs. SS sent this e-mail to me the day before our second monthly meeting in October. Being the facilitator of the TLC, my first reaction to the email was to request for Mrs. SS' permission to send out her email to every TLC member. At the moment, I just wanted everyone to share the concerns and suggestions that Mrs. SS had in order to have further discussions on educating the Chinese children. Meanwhile, instinctively, I felt that this would create new learning opportunities for the teachers to think and reflect on how to engage the Chinese children, even other ELLs, and children who do not share the common classroom culture in America into their classroom activities. Without any delay, I emailed Mrs. SS for permission. Also without any delay, she sent me another email, agreeing to share her email with the community members.

Rui,

I wouldn't mind at all if you emailed my letter to the group. Hopefully we can brainstorm some good ideas. (-:
Thanks!
SS

Once again, I was moved by her openness and the desire for helping the children with the whole group. I also appreciate Mrs. SS' idea of "Brainstorming." I thought, "I've got to find a way to have this publicized within our TLC." I sent both of her emails to the study group. I was ready to facilitate the group to have some conversations around Mrs. SS' ideas as part of the contents we would focus on the next day. Surprisingly, Mr. RC responded to my email right after I sent it to the group as well. It said,

From: Mr. RC [Trust] [Block]
To: "Rui Niu" <niurui@msu.edu>
Date: 24 Oct 2007, 12:59:11 PM
Subject: Re: Reminder: Chinese learning community on this Thursday

The Kents live close and are an awesome family! Alice and Kristina are 1st and 2nd graders and are smart, artistic, friendly. The parents are great!

Mr. RC's email was right after the email I sent to the TLC group. From his fast response, it seemed that he must have already compiled this information that would help the Chinese children and stored the information in his head. He was just waiting for when and how to bring out the information so it would be used for the maximum benefit. Both Mrs. SS and Mr. RC's thoughtfulness reminded me of interactions I had with them earlier in TLC. I remembered that it was before our second TLC meeting session, Mr. MG came over and sat beside me. He put two pages with lines and tables

on them on the desk in front of me. I curiously and puzzlingly watched him. He looked at me and then pointed to the lines and the tables, "These are my class schedules. You are welcome to visit my class for either of the children when you want." [See TLC Meeting Notes: 9-27-07]. I was shocked. I rephrased and repeated what he said, "I can go to your classroom any time I want to see how the Chinese children are doing there?" He smiled, "Absolutely!" I still remember that Mr. LM sat at the table, watching and listening to the conversation between Mr. MG and me. Now he jumped in with a big smile, "Sure, why not? Come into my classroom any time you want as well. But remember to bring your tennis shoes!" Mrs. ML smiled and said, "See, he will make you work there!" The conversations were carried out in so light and friendly a way.

In my memory, it was also still clear that the teachers had occasionally worked on or suggested more options in order to teach and reach these Chinese children informally throughout TLC, even though this had not been our explicit agenda. For instance, at one of our November meetings, Mrs. SS asked me whether I could ask the family if the children watched the videotape, Arthur, she sent home for Mike and if they had watched it, whether they could return it to her. It was a surprise (See TLC Meeting Notes, 11-15-07). She made some extra efforts herself without letting anybody know it. Also at the same meeting when we were about to start, Mrs. SS passed me one CD and a copy of lyrics. She told me that MG asked her to give the materials to me for the children's out-of-school practice. Everyone looked at us surprised. I explained to the group that MG had been teaching the children for a Christmas performance. It

seemed hard for Mike to understand and remember the Lyrics they were practicing. I guessed that MG made the CD for Mike to practice out of school and copied the lyrics for him to follow. My guess was confirmed by MG's words in the final interview (See Coopville-Post-Interview, MG, 1-17-08). The teachers agreed that it would be a good idea to help Mike to learn. (See TLC Meeting Notes: 11-15-07).

Although my theoretical research on the Vygotsky Space made visible the interior part of learning—that something happens to ideas after they are introduced and discussed on the social plane—I had not noticed until now that evidence of teachers' thinking and designing opportunities for the children's learning were going on between meetings and also within individual teachers' thoughts and plans. Until they began to accumulate and be share in the public space once again—in casual conversation, via e-mail, and finally within subsequent TCL meetings. I had not realized that the teachers were becoming were ready to help both the children and me by helping themselves in teaching. They were seeking opportunities to get the resources out of themselves. I wondered whether all the TLC teachers had been thinking about how to help Rose and Mike all the time? With the questions in my mind, I went to the next day TLC meeting.

The next day, before the TLC meeting, I met Mrs. GT who was excited when she saw me. She pulled me aside in the hallway and started to talk about the idea she and the school secretary discussed about how to help the two children [See Fieldnotes: 10-25-07]. I was pleased, but surprised. Evidently not only had the teachers been busy thinking about new ways to help the Chinese children learn English, but they had been

talking about these ideas with other members of the school community on their own and outside our meetings. They also were not waiting to run their ideas by the group or by me—instead, they were growing in their sense of efficacy to make things happen for and with the children. They were waiting for the moment for their ideas to blossom.

I was intrigued to find this and also to find that they were reaching out to others—for example, that the school secretary, Mrs. JS, who was not a member of our TLC, but one of the friends of Mrs. GT offered her idea of connecting the Chinese children to an American family to our learning community. Mrs. GT explained that she had been sharing what we had done at the TLC with her friends and they had talked about how to help. Mrs. GT explained that she never mentioned it to me or at our TLC because she did not know how. Since Mrs. JS came up with the idea of “pairing the Chinese family up with American families for their socialization,” Mrs. GT would like to carry her ideas of pairing up the Chinese children with American children to me and the wider group. . She was so excited that her voice was quivering. I was extremely excited at the moment. I was excited not only because of the wonderful ideas from Mrs. GT and Mrs. JS., but also, from a researcher perspective, I was discovering that teachers themselves were community brokers. They brought the ideas, thoughts, and insights from our TLC to other communities where they associated in one way or another. Then they brought back the new thoughts, ideas, and insights from other communities back to our TLC to maintain and push our TLC to move further and deeper in terms of our goal. Wenger (2001) describe this role as that of a “community

brokers.” He argues that a member of a community is able to bring resources from one community to another and share the resources with the members in that community. Afterwards, the broker brings more resources back to contribute to his/her original community to help the maintenance and development of the original community. In this brokerage process, Mrs. GT showed her leadership in influencing the others to think about the major issue in the local community – how to engage the Chinese children into classrooms. This seemed to be a different role for the teachers to play in their effort to teach ELL’s because it brought them across boundaries with their students and acknowledged that instruction, while important, was not all that children needed to learn a new language. Finally, it also showed that the teachers had influence not only on what happens to children inside their classrooms, but also beyond the walls of their classrooms and school.

To help teachers become community brokers has been a goal sought by many teacher learning communities or teacher professional development activities. In these studies, the teachers are expected to eventually start and facilitate their own teacher learning communities to pass on the content, the energy and the collaborative spirit, hence, to expand the learning opportunities to more people. They are also encouraged to bridge the contexts of school, family, and community—and to encourage others to do so. Mrs. GT demonstrated this expansion and encouraging involvement.¹²

¹² Mrs. GT’s expansion was also found in the Post-Interview with Mr. MG and Mr. ML. Mrs. RS also shared her son’s story and her son’s comments on the language demonstration I made put everyone at

Actually, I was not excited about the idea of a new member joining in because from the very beginning of the TLC, there were teachers who wanted like to join in, but we felt because of the limited physical space and the standard of learning quality we sought, we should restrict the member number to the current 10. What was making me so excited was that even when we restricted the number of TLC participants, there were people who cared about the children so much that they just did things for them without being in the group. And also the group reached out beyond its borders as well. I asked Mrs. GT whether she would like to share with the group what she and the school secretary had discussed, she agreed. .

At 3:50pm, the TLC teachers started to show up and sit around the table. When I was setting up the tape recorder and the video camera, with which the teachers seemed much more comfortable now, the teachers started to chat. The group started to share Mrs. SS' idea of building a study center at the restaurant with a table, a bookshelf, and some chairs (see email from Mrs. SS on Oct. 24, 2008). The teachers thought that was a great idea because the children could have a place of their own when they were at the restaurant. They followed Mrs. SS' idea that they could offer to send materials to the Chinese children's home. Mrs. SS asked me what the parents thought about the study center. I told the group that the father loved it and was going to buy the table, the shelf, and the chairs when he had time (See Fieldnotes-Family: 10-24-2008).

When I mentioned that Mr. RC had some ideas for finding American families

same spot [See TLC Notes: 11-15-07].

to help the two children with socialization, Mr. RC got excited. He explained why he thought the two families he found would be helpful to the growth of Rose and Mike. He mentioned that it was not only that the families lived close to the restaurant, but also they were good families. Apparently, Mr. RC had very good reasoning behind his words. The teachers at the TLC thought that spending time with an American family would help the two children learn a lot about English and also about American ways of life. Following the matching-family idea, Mrs. GT shared with the group the ideas that she talked with me before the meeting. She mentioned that Mrs. JS, the school secretary, also talked with her about matching the Chinese family with an American family to break down the isolated situation in the Chinese children's life. At the moment, none of the TLC members, including me, were able to foresee the effectiveness this paring-up initiative and the benefits the children would obtain from it.

Mrs. GT explained to the group that the building secretary was a good friend of a family whose daughter was the best friend of Rose last year when they were in the first grade. Further, the American family also had a little boy who was in the first grade now, the same as Mike. That he would be good for Mike to play with this boy. Mrs. GT explained that she shared with Mrs. JS about the Chinese children and about our TLC activities very often. When the secretary heard Mrs. GT mention that the TLC was preparing the Chinese children's socialization into the main U.S. context in order for them to get used to American schools and learn the content there, she called her friend

and the American family right away. When her friends heard about this, they showed their interests and willingness to take both children over to their house to play with their children. The teachers at the TLC listened tentatively and agreed that this would be good because this is non-threatening to Rose who has been shy and scared easily by strangers. The group also agreed that for the children's socialization, this American family was a good start for the growth of the two children.

The teachers were correct in their assessment that this relationship building opportunity was just the start of their actions to help the two Chinese children to get engaged in their school activities. From this date on, I was continuously surprised by the TLC members and the others who cared about the Chinese children. For instance, for the purpose of getting more community people know about this project, therefore, getting more volunteer families and getting more teachers work at Coopville school to learn from this project, Mr. JK contacted news media to come in to talk with the TLC members, with me and with Dr. Florio-Ruane. At the time, when the photographer and the journalist showed up, I was surprised by the Coopville Elementary School's outreach work. However, the first and the biggest surprise was from the school secretary and Mrs. GT.

After our second October TLC meeting, as usual, on the next day, I drove to the Coopville School to observe and help the two children in their classrooms. In the morning when I signed in for the day, I talked with Mrs. JS about Mrs. GT's shared idea of matching the Chinese and American family together. The secretary told me that

Mrs. GT talked with her about it the first thing in the morning. She further told me that she was going to contact the American family soon. I thanked her and left the Main Office of the school to head for Mrs. SS' classroom. Everything went exactly like before. I went to Mrs. SS' room, then Mrs. GM's room, etc., and after school, I went to the restaurant where I spent several hours with the family and helped the two children with their mathematics or reading. During this time, I would have dinner with the whole family. Usually, at the dinner, we talked about their family history, the children's history and American schools. Also as usual, before I went into the restaurant, I turned the volume of my cell phone to silent in order not to be disrupted. Everything happened just like before. However, when I left the restaurant and got into my car, I found there was a phone message in my cell phone. It was from the Coopville School phone number. I wondered what had happened? Why did they call me? To my curiosity, I listed to the message. It was a message from the school secretary. I was shocked and moved, again. Mrs. JS said [Field Notes: 10-26-07],

Hi Rui, this is JS at Rose & Mike's school 517-000-000. I talked with H's mom. And she will take H and A to the restaurant Monday after school so that all four children can play with each other. She will also be happy to take them "Trick or Treating" Wednesday night. Rose and Mike would need Halloween costumes. Mike would need a costume for the daytime for the school and that he can wear the same costumes to Trick or Treating that evening. B. (name) H's mom would like to pick the kids up from school Wednesday and take them to her house, and then feed them for dinner and take them Trick or Treating. Then she would return them to the restaurant between 8 o'clock and 9 o'clock. If that does not sound good either way, let me know. But H's mother is more than happy to do that. She is, [silent] would like to take kids bowling at some time with

their family, to a cider mill, and have the family over to dinner sometime. She will write down some other activities with possible dates and times when they would be planning to complete these activities so that she can get with Dad to make sure everything is ok. Thank you. Have a good weekend.

This was really a big surprise and thrilling to me. The big surprise was because I had just talked with Mrs. JS, the school secretary about their plan today and she just mentioned that she would contact the family. I was thrilled because she already had a full plan with the American family for the Chinese children. I was thrilled also because the teachers and those who were from the local community cared and wanted to help the Chinese children.

Research has been done on how teachers can help the English Language Learners by changing or modifying their instructional strategies (Al-Ansari, 2000; Au, 1993; Campey, 2002; Drucker, 2003; Eoyang, 2003; Gay, 2002; Lee & Luykx, 2005). Our TLC activities went beyond the instructional help, which is more linear and one dimensional. This study changed the orientation of “change instruction per se.” It waved the inter-/intra-personal complexities in it, which stirred the change of ecology at the local area, including not only the Coopville Elementary School, but also the local “village.” This demonstrated a multi-dimensional change of both teaching and learning, in which the teachers and people in the community constructed a multi-layer assistance to the learning and growth of the two children. These people thought about what the Chinese children needed in order to learn, not only in terms of how to change their instructional strategies to involve the children in their classrooms, but also how to help

the children and their parents get involved in the local cultural contexts. Mrs. ML commented on these as “For children, you have to involve the family; you have to involve everything goes with it. It’s education” (See TLC Meeting Notes: 10-25-07).

This was also the session where both of the parents joined us at our TLC meeting to de-brief our visits to the home and restaurant. When the parents came in, I introduced the mother briefly and just mentioned the father whom we all met and talked with before. The parents smiled and greeted the group. The teachers sat there seriously. They did not make jokes like all the other times. They all listened when the parents were talking. They seemed a little tense. The parents looked tense as well. I guessed that they, the TLC members and parents, were negotiating their own comfort zone with one another. This is also the beauty of cultural negotiation – each side has their own “cultural heritages.” These “cultural heritages” might be similar or different. But when it integrates the complicated personal backgrounds, world views, educational backgrounds, and personalities of the carriers, even the “cultural heritages” rooted from the same cultural context, they might show resistance to the carriers.

When it comes to the “cultural heritages” that are different from one another, deeper understanding of both of the carriers and the culture will be needed. On these occasions, “cultural reciprocity” might be a good way to reduce the tension. However, the strategy of “reciprocity” is a short-termed tool. This is because “reciprocity” cannot help people to dig into the culture to a meaningful level, therefore, reach real understandings of one another. When “reciprocity” dies off, the tension among people

comes back. At this TLC, meeting I hoped there would be “cultural reciprocity” among the members and between the parents and the teachers. But more, I wanted both the parents and the teachers to be able to sit together and make themselves exposed to others through actions, speeches, or questions. As a researcher I observed these dynamics carefully. Then from there, I hunched that the “cultural heritages” brought in by both of the parents and the teachers would rub each other, to reshape each other, and to make space for the growth of the other. When it’s time for the co-existing and co-growing, it’s the time the carriers of the two cultures can collaborate sincerely. But to get to this point, both of the parents and the teachers had to go through the so-called “negotiated entry” of the other’s world. The tenseness of the parents and the teachers indicated their willingness of “negotiation” and “collaboration.”

To help break down this tension between the parents and the teachers, I reminded the group that since the parents’ time was limited, probably, we could start with questions first. I suggested that since the mother was at the meeting for the first time, maybe we were all interested in listening to what the mother thought about education. Following my suggestions, the mother talked about her experiences with and opinions regarding education. I translated her words into English for the teachers. As the teachers listened they all got so tentative. While they were looking to me, I had to smile and make sure that they understood that I was only doing the job of translation. The mother asked a question about whether there were any problems with their children’s study at school? I translated and the teachers asked me to ask in which

aspect? The mother said, “Academic.”

It is Chinese tradition that both parents and the teachers in China most of the time view the academic success as the only success of children in education. I guessed that the mom did not know that in American schools, children’s socialization is a big part of students’ life as well. From socialization children learn the culture of the school and of the society as well as learn how to function in the real society in the future. Although we talked about Chinese cultural assumptions about education – especially how seriously the parents treat their children’s academic learning--, the teachers still had a hard time in narrowing their definition of education/schooling down to the academic aspect only. The father asked some more questions and the teachers asked the more questions still.

The TLC teachers’ questions were fully-surrounding the children’s life and school experience. Mr. GC asked the parents if the children were able to help out in the restaurant at all for some educational learning opportunities like counting money or arranging a drink cooler. The father seemed a little uneasy about this question and quickly replied, “They are too young.” Mr. GC might not know that in China, parents would view this kind of helping not as learning opportunities, but as the things they take their children’s time away from studying. I had to bridge the differences of understandings in the two cultures in terms of education. Mr. GC seemed to get the point. He switched his questions to if the parents had seen any change in the children’s willingness to complete their homework. The father smiled and said, “My son is lazy.”

This of course got a round of laughter from the group. He went on to explain that he often had to check Mike's backpack but not Rose's.

Mr. RC was curious about the children's off-school socialization. He asked, "I wonder if you were able to have them meet neighbor kids or are you still a little uncomfortable with that idea?" Mom and Dad responded, with a little interpretive help from me that they thought the idea was great but sometimes the children were not that comfortable with strangers. Mr. RC mentioned that he knew a family that lives right next door to the Chinese children. Following Mr. RC's suggestion, Mrs. GT asked if the parents remembered Rose's friend H. Apparently, they remembered the little girl quite well. The mother became very excited. Mrs. GT explained to them that our group had already thought about Rose's friend's family and that the family was willing to take both children to their house for activities. They wondered whether the parents would agree with the plan. I translated this to the parents. The parents smiled, and nodded. They totally agreed with it. The father talked more about his appreciation and he told the teachers that he was impressed with how all of them worked and were very busy, yet had the American people arranged their time to include child-rearing. The teachers started to offer their time arrangements and how they manage to get so many things done. The father listened and I translated to the mother so that she could get some sense of what we were talking about.

The father talked more about his thinking regarding the children's education and his concern that he did not have the time after school to help them. I reminded the

father that he might like to ask more questions such as whether his family could find after-school resources.

Based on this conversation, the TLC members started to talk about whether there were students from the high school who were National Honor Society members who could mentor the Chinese children for their community service hours. These high school students could help after school, at least, with their homework or socialization. The parents smiled, agreed, and thanked the teachers. From their appearance, I could tell that the parents were very happy about this.

Eventually, Mrs. SS brought the TLC conversation back to study or, at least, associated with the children's study. She asked whether the parents would agree with the study center, the parents both happily agreed with it. At 4:40pm, the teachers were still talking with the parents. I reminded them of their restaurant, because we planned for them to stay only half an hour and after 4:40pm, there would be more guests in their restaurant. The mother told me that they arranged for a friend to come over to take care of the restaurant so that they could both be out. They could stay longer. Then the conversation continued with the parents. The conversation with the parents lasted to 4:50pm. Eventually, for the arrangement and purpose of this TLC session, I had to mention that we were thankful for both of them coming. When the parents left, it was 4:55pm. The teachers started to talk more about how they could help.

The group continued to talk more about the resources they might suggest for the two Chinese children. I talked with Mr. GC about the possibility for him to find

some of these high school kids to act as mentors. The teachers mentioned that might be good for them to have different volunteers from this society. Then the group suggested that it might be the best to have two different ones each week or each time for each of them. Later, from reviews of the tapes of our TLC conversations and my field notes, I learned that even more thoughts were put in forth by the teachers and the community members.

Reflection

Vygotsky's Space Theory argues that in any social setting there is a Public Space and a Private Space. When people work in their Public Space, they bring in their private space experiences, while when they are in their private space, they are influenced by their public space experiences as well. This theory speaks to the experiences that our TLC teachers had during and after their meetings. The vignette in this chapter fully illustrates the experiences that the teachers had within their Public Space, which, as I mentioned before, is the TLC meeting sessions where the teachers sat together, shared and learned together influences their experiences outside the TLC sessions.

Specifically, in this vignette, Mrs. SS' email of suggesting the parents, with the help of the TLC members, set up a study-center for the children at the restaurant was rooted from her TLC meeting experience. However, she carried the information she gathered from our Home-Visit Field Trip to her private space where she came up with the thought of a Study-Center. When she emailed me her thought, and when I

forwarded her email to the other TLC members, it was in the Privately Public Space which was outside our TLC sessions, but informally public. Mrs. SS' suggestion guided the other TLC members to bring in more insights from their own Private Space to our TLC sessions. This input opened the door for the other TLC members to step in the zone of changing the life of the Chinese children and been trying to figure out how to help them engage in the learning activities (See Figure 6: Teacher Resource Flow).

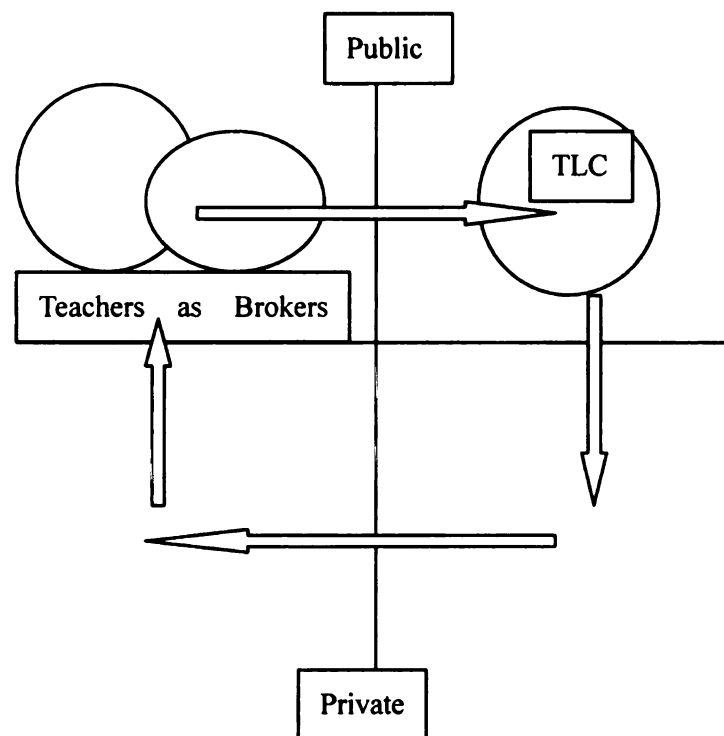


Figure 6: Teacher Resource Flow

Following Harre's Vygotsky Space Theory, I made the map of Teacher Resource Flow (above), which further explains that the teachers already had resources ready in terms of helping the two Chinese students, for instance, Mr. MG's and Mr. LM's offer of me visiting their classrooms to see how either of the children were doing. In the umbrella of the Space Theory, it seems that the teachers had resources and

thoughts of how to use the resources. When the teachers moved through the spaces, public and private, they also formed their own public social spaces, besides the TLC space. In these spaces, they had their own communities and acted as the community brokers to bring their private knowledge into our TLC. Therefore, the following questions seem important for the educators and community facilitators: how to build an environment for the teachers to express or speak out their idea, how to help the teachers bring in the resources they found within their private spaces, including their own social communities, and how to facilitate the TLC meetings to help the teachers fulfill their thoughts. I will come back to these questions in the chapter of Conclusion and Implications. However, in the next chapter, I will use another vignette to illustrate the importance of helping the teachers bring in their private resources into the TLC meeting to maintain and push its development.

The issue that is highlighted here is the number of times that we recognize the resources in our life and are able to utilize them when we need it. However, what should we do if we had the pre-assumption that would block our views of how we can break down the habit of taking things for granted and learn from our fresh eyes? This is because learning to recognize the impact that our pre-conceived notions or assumptions can have on our own teaching strategies, our personal relationships, and our understanding of others is vital to our continued evolution as educators. In the next chapter, I described a vignette that documents how the Coopville teachers started to break down their old assumptions and started to realize the benefits of being “culture-

catchers” for their students’ growth.

Chapter 7

“We Just Take it For Granted”: Coopville Teachers

Breaking Down Old Assumptions

False assumptions come in many shapes and sizes, and some assumptions come with innocuous consequences while others can have a dire outcome. For example, assuming that the expiration date on the milk carton is more of a suggestion than a guideline can lead to compelling consequences. But while not as common an occurrence, assuming that all minor details for holding a learning community meeting will work themselves out with little consequence to the overall effectiveness of the meeting, can certainly lead to the same sick feeling in one's stomach as drinking the sour milk.

An Old Story

Let me start with a story from a time when I was in China teaching American students the Chinese language and culture. It was an interesting process and journey into the lives of others. I learned many extraordinary stories from my American students about their life experiences in China. Here's one of them:

Fran got to Beijing one year ahead of Mia, although they two had been planning their trip together to China for almost two years. After Fran arrived in Beijing, she was assigned to my class for Chinese language acquisition. Fran had a good Chinese language foundation. She had been taking Chinese language and culture

courses from a local community where her family lives. When she got to me, she was able to communicate several simple sentences with me.

Mia, who was born in China but adopted by an American couple when she was only four months old, was the perfect picture of a little China doll. By twelve her body had matured into her final height of 5'3", very petite frame and shoulder length black hair, and looked no different from those who grew up in China. From the day her adoptive parents moved to the same street where Fran lived in California, a year after the adoption, Mia and Fran became instant best friends. The two girls spent so much time together, shared so many memories, not to mention clothes that many considered them twins in every way...except that Fran grew to 5'10" with flowing blond hair, and looked like what many would consider a typical California girl. Because of Mia's heritage, Fran and Mia had spent many nights talking about China, Mia trying to imagine the true story of her heritage in her homeland. The two dreamed of taking a trip to China and prepared for the time they could travel. Because of her family's economic situation, Fran had more chances to take some courses about Chinese language and culture, while Mia did not.

Fran came to my class one year ahead of Mia. She was a brilliant student. Because of her interests in Chinese language and culture, plus her experiences with the courses she took, she made progress everyday. She was active and outgoing. She did not miss any chance for talking and learning from local Chinese people. When Mia arrived one year later, Fran was already very fluent in her communication in Chinese.

The day when Mia arrived in Beijing, Fran went to the Capital Airport to meet Mia by herself. She wanted to “show-off” her Chinese skills. When Mia showed up from the arrival line, Fran met her and she decided to take Mia to a restaurant to show her the authentic Chinese food in Beijing. Though Mia suffered from some jet lag, Mia went with Fran for a dinner on her first day in China.

The girls stopped at a little restaurant a block from where Fran stayed and sat down with their menus. They were excited at seeing each other in this “totally new place.” Fran tried to explain the food experiences she had since she was in China, while they were looking at the restaurant menu. They kept talking and laughing. While they were enjoying their time together, the waiter walked over. He looked at the two girls. Then turned to Mia and began giving a long explanation of the specialties of the restaurant. Both of the girls looked at the man who was extremely friendly and very sincere in his desire to help the girls choose a satisfying dish. Knowing that Mia could not understand the man at all and to show respect, Fran started to translate in English to Mia what the man said to her. Mia listened attentively. The man found that Fran kept talking, while Mia did not say anything about what he had told her. He got a little upset and dismayed. He told Mia directly that if Mia could translate what he said to both of them, he would be able to answer Fran’s questions and he would appreciate it a lot. At that moment, Fran suddenly understood what happened – the man must have taken Mia as a local Chinese girl and herself as a stranger who did not understand Chinese at all. Fran looked at the man and apologetically said in Chinese that Mia grew up in the U.S.

and she did not understand Chinese at all. Also she explained that what she said in English just now was the translations of his words. The waiter stopped talking. Being shocked by Fran's words, he looked at Fran, then at Mia. His face turned white, then red. He apologized to Mia, explaining that he thought she was Chinese from her appearance so that he assumed that she was the one who could understand what he said. He had never thought Fran, a very typical looking American, would be able to speak Chinese in such a fluent way. While he apologized about the embarrassing situation that his assumption led to, the man offered a free dish to both of them, a special dish to welcome the very Chinese-looking Mia to China to learn Chinese.

Fran took Mia to see me the next day. While we were talking about Mia's trip, the two girls started laughing heartily. Under the cover of their laughing sound, I pondered the role of assumptions in our daily life. We are so quick to form assumptions based on what we know, what we see, and what we predict would happen. Very often, we jump to our conclusions or to our decisions based on our assumptions. For example, one researcher tells the story of two Chinese boys in an elementary class where the classroom teacher had a Chinese teaching assistant (TA). The two boys were sharing about the story they learned in the classroom and the Chinese TA tried to stop the boys talking because in the Chinese educational cultural, students are not expected to talk in such a situation. The Chinese TA's assumption was that the boys should not talk in that moment, either. The problem was compounded when the classroom teacher saw the TA stopping the boys and acted on her assumption that the boys must have misbehaved in

the class based on the reaction of the TA and punished the boys (Tsai, 2000).

“We Just Take It For Granted”: Coopville Teachers

Breaking down Old Assumptions

When I took out the Reading List on which it recorded the books that Rose and Mike read in October to show the teachers, the teachers were shocked. Adding on the “making the list” story where I modeled the activity for the children, but the two children later made it for and by themselves the teachers started to share their experiences with the problem-solving for the two children. Mr. RC mentioned that he found another family who lived in the same neighborhood as the Chinese family and would like to visit the restaurant and introduce themselves to the parents in order to have the children get familiar with them. Mrs. GT shared the beginning of the Family-Pair-Up activity and what the children had been doing with the American family. I added the things that the Chinese children did for the first in their life, such as their first experience of going to see a movie, having popcorn and pop at the movie theater, visiting a cider mill, and trying the western fast food restaurant (McDonald’s). I could see that all the eyes around the table were widening. I guessed that the teachers were surprised by the children’s first experiences.

I was right when Mr. JK commented that, “We just take that for granted.” The rest of the group agreed. He continued, “Because we just got so much.”

Mrs. RS, “Huh, so much that we do not go anywhere.”

The group laughed, again, at the same time.

Mrs. GT said, "But they went there for Thanksgiving, the whole family."

The teachers got excited again, "Did they?!"

I informed the group that they did.

Mrs. ML said with a long-tailed voice, "Oh, my Goodness."

Mrs. JK commented again, "She [Mrs. B, H's mom] is amazing, isn't she?"

Mrs. GT followed his voice, "Yeah." The others nodded their head.

Mrs. SS gladly said, "What experiences for her children, too."

Mrs. GT, "the older children there I am sure are gaining a lot from watching
the younger ones."

Several voices came together, "Yeah, Yeah."

While the teachers were warmly sharing their feelings about the volunteer family
having the children over, I found Mrs. RS ready to share as well. I turned to her and
signaled her to express what's in her mind. Mrs. RS started,

This is nothing to do with China. But I, I have to brag about my
son. He had adopted a Somalian couple who had spent the last ten years
in a refugee camp somewhere around there. He's adopting the whole
family and he had tried to explain to them such things as the
combination lock, you know we take for granted, or the, the circuit
breakers, where is the circuit breakers, the guy had no idea. They think
it's magic. My son went to the box and it was during the dark and
during the light." Mrs. RS moved her left arm up and down to
demonstrate the action of turning the circuit break.

Mr. JK, "OOhhh." The group was full of light again.

Mrs. RS continued her son's story,

And for water to come out in every house is a brand new thing for a

Somali. Especially, at the refugee camp, you carry the water back and forth. You know, the whole ... And winter, you have no idea what snow is. It's just, just amazing.

Mrs. ML exaggeratedly said, "Don't bother to explain." The teachers laughed again.

Mrs. RS continued, "and here is the word you cannot explain, kid does not understand it, HAD, H-A-D. 'Explain it,' said Mrs. RS.

Mrs. ML, "Oh, Yeah." The group became silent, the first silence from the beginning of the meeting.

Mrs. RS continued, "You HAVE it, and you HAD it."

Mr. JK looked at Mrs. RS. He took a piece of chicken from the food box, "See, I have it." He held the chicken piece and dipped it in the sweet & sour dipping box, and then put it into his mouth, chewing the piece, while he said, "now, I had it."

The group burst into a big laughing again.

Mrs. RS,

So Tim is sitting there with a lot of words that were just hard to explain, I am sure that was the same thing we just experienced. And I, I was sharing with Tim who's my son, what you [Rui] did with us. He went to ESL training so that he could be a better trainer and then train others in English as Second Language and he was hoping so much that they would do as you did with us as far as giving us instructions in Chinese. And we sat there going, 'What is she saying?' because he thoroughly said, to him that would have spoken a lot to him. That would put him on the right page. 'Oh, that's what it is to not understand directions.' You did a good job of that. So I expressed to Tim, he said 'oh, I wish she could have done what your instructor did, because we were just half listening' because they knew English language. But that would be a good demonstration for any kind of language. That just sounds like 'blurrrrrrrr.' When I talk to my dog, he thinks I'm blurrrrr.

Mrs. GT jumped in,

I am sure this has nothing to do with this and I am sure you know this.” She looked at Mr. JK. “Rose and Mike have the cutest clothes. I mean to talk about fitting right in. The little clothes Rose had on her, the cutest, little... with ruffles and darling. I do not know who does their shopping, but ...darling things. Very well dressed. Nicely dressed, no sweat shirts or sweat pants, or anything. Anyway, she just looked darling today.” Teachers were laughing.

Mrs. GT officially said that, “You know, clothes...make a big deal of fitting into.”

“It would have pointed them out as being different,” Mrs. RS interjected, “and their mom and dad didn’t want that.”

Mrs. ML reflected, “We have a lot and we just take it for granted.”

Mrs. GT, “drinking water anytime you want,” she said while she drank some water from her water bottle.

I shared, “Like me, I thought everyone drinks Coke, but Mrs. RS only drinks Pepsi.” Teachers laughed again. They knew I was joking.

Mrs. ML seriously said, “Everyone in Germany thinks everybody in America eats at McDonald’s, too. But that’s not true, either. Helen (her daughter) told me about that. But I do not like that stuff at all.” Her daughter kept asking her, “Have you been in McDonald’s? Have you been in McDonald’s?” She continued, “I think it was a cultural thing, too. They thought McDonald’s is American.”

Mr. JK commented, “It’s a kind of cultural thing. It’s like our culture.”

I added that McDonald's and KFC are very expensive in China, because people view them as American culture as well.

Mrs. ML continued sharing what her daughter shared with her about Germany, "Beef in Germany is very expensive, too. They have a lot of poverty, but they do not have a lot of space to raise cattle. So something like we go buy hamburger at a grocery store, ok, so there are a lot of things we have food wise.

Following the introspections from the teachers, I grasped the opportunity to ask, "After we realize that we have been taken many things for granted, how does this impact our teaching?"

Mrs. GT, "I think we have to make sure we have a lot of pictures when we talk about certain things."

Mrs. RS, "Modeling."

Mr. JK, "We cannot lose track of who we are educating. When we talked about the Home Visit, it puts in perspective for me, oh, my goodness, we want these kids everyday, to read write and become fluent children, but they are not all alike, they do not come from the same background." Several teachers agreed, "Oh, yeah." Mr. JK continued, "A lot of kids bring a lot baggage to school. Sometimes, I think we can kind of get blind to that because..."

Mrs. ML cut him off, "and that baggage really interrupts their learning."

Mr. JK, "Yes, it does. When I see what kids leave here to go home to, sometimes, it's amazing that they could function the way that they do. Thirty kids, we

treat them equally. Really, it's not necessarily equality. It should be equity." Equity and Equality are big issues in education. Numerous articles have been arguing the relationship between equity and equality (Chiu, & Khoo, 2005; Green, 1983; Louie, 2005; Thomas, & Brady, 2005). The final goal of these articles is one that is children should be treated equally, but accordingly and the teachers should not ignore or blind on the prior knowledge or background knowledge and the resources that the children bring into their classrooms. Mr. JK reached the critical point in teaching children from diverse backgrounds. He claimed that "They are not all alike;" they bring resources in and the teachers cannot be blind to this. Here Mr. JK reflected and connected our discussion about how to teach these Chinese children with a broader topic of equality and equity for all children. I felt very happy about this.

Actually the entire TLC meeting for this day had been a great success right from the beginning. At the start, when I came back to the library from printing out the Chinese-English reminder for Mike from Mrs. SS, I noticed that Mrs. ML was already sitting by our meeting table, enjoying the food. In the hallway, I met Mr. RC. He followed me into the meeting room as well. Soon, Mrs. GT came over to sit at the table with Mrs. RS coming over directly to sit down by the side of me. She brought a flyer of "Learning Chinese Culture through Music." She told me that I would love it, excitedly. Then she gave us the detailed information about three Chinese musicians coming to Indianapolis to give the performance. She went to the performance and she was thrilled. I was thrilled by her enthusiasm about this event, too. I had never thought that

she would go to a concert related to Chinese Culture and Music and bring me the flyer to share with me. Why had I never thought about that? Why couldn't they go to an event about Chinese music? Why did I assume that the teachers would not do it? I wondered. I did not stop trying to understand myself in the way I viewed these teachers until Mrs. SS came over. She was smiling. She looked very happy.

When I asked whether anybody wanted to share anything, Mrs. SS, Mrs. RS, and Mrs. ML raised their hands. Teachers raised their hands! This was cool, although again different from what I had assumed. Almost at the same time, like a little girl, Mrs. ML excitedly and repeatedly said, "Tell her, tell her, tell her about this, I heard at lunch." Everyone laughed. Mr. JK looked at Mrs. SS, "You said something?" Mrs. SS said loudly and proudly with her head up to the group, "I had Mike read to me today. I went back to have Mike read to me, and he read at the level 16, which is, I mean he does not have to be there yet; he's on the top scale for the year. It was a story about elves and giants and the elves had pockets of gold and all that, though he does not know about that this myth. American kids know that elves had gold and the stuff like that and he does not know that, so I gave him a little bit of background knowledge. You know, I got a little bit more from him than what I would have in another child. But he could tell me about the story, read it, he just had two or three errors. I was ... He started school, he came here a year ago..." She emotionally shook her head.

Mrs. SS also added that Mike started to raise his hand to go to the washroom. She was pleased. She gladly said that he had never done that before. She was so happy

about the progress he made and she said he must have felt very comfortable. Mrs. GT said quickly, “Yes. Yes. He did that today in my room. He came up to me and talked to me.” I can still clearly remember the excitement of the teachers. It seemed funny to me that when educators were concerned so much on ELLs’ English proficiency and their school outcomes, here these teachers were getting excited about Mike asking to use the washroom. Then Mrs. SS followed with a story that Mike peed in his pants a couple of times because, she said, “for whatever reason, he would not come up to me to ask to go to the bathroom.” Now she was thrilled about his change. “Now he felt comfortable and he would do that in the morning, usually in the afternoon, too,” Mrs. SS continued. I could feel the sense of achievement from Mrs. SS and the happiness from inside her for Mike. Maybe, getting any ELLs to freely express their daily needs should be the priority in engaging them in the school activities. Maybe, from the expressions like this, the ELLs would feel comfortably to ask or answer questions (participate in classroom activities). At the moment, I realized for ELLs that the milestones in their educational experience go beyond the learning in the classroom. Probably, the educational policy-makers should take this into their consideration when they are making new policies. While some of the American children may be too shy to ask, for Mike, based on Mrs. SS, he just did not feel comfortable enough to say it (see TLC Meeting-9-27-07, TLC-Home-Visit, 10-11-07), although there might also be the cultural influence – generally, in China, children do not ask to go to the washroom because schools designed certain time blocks for them to go. Probably, this is true for

some other children who do not share the common classroom culture with their teachers. Assuming that all children have the same understanding of school organization and structures as the classroom teacher has most likely lead to many situations where the student appears to be non-compliant. That could be one disastrous assumption!

Next the TLC moved into a new topic as Mrs. SS started to share about our School-Visit experience. “The school we visited there...,” she asked the group, “the teacher had half days during the first week, was it?”

Mrs. ML, “Only the kindergarten teachers.”

Mrs. SS continued, “The kindergarten teachers, they had half day school. In the afternoon, they went to visit the children’s homes in the afternoon.”

Mrs. RS, “So when little Johnny goes to sleep at the rest time, she just let him go to sleep because she knows his background. And he did. One of them slept for a long time. That’s kind of interesting.”

Mrs. SS, “the whole time when we were there.”

Mrs. ML, “You know, that’s even more telling than what the parents come in to tell you something at the conference time,” the others interrupted, “they may not tell you what you want to know. And you still don’t know the truth whereas if you went to the door...” I summarized this part of the conversation and said, “Sometimes, parents take something for granted as well. They might have thought everybody knew about their children. Or they might not know how much we care about their children.”

Mrs. SS, “Sometimes, parents forget that we have some twenty other children, too, besides their children.”

Mrs. ML asked the group, “The parents have been here for a long time. We know we take many things for granted. Did they say they noticed anything when they were here?”

I had to confess to the group that before the questions the teachers asked during our Home-Visit, the Chinese father hadn’t noticed that his children never went outside to play with other kids.

Reflection

Following the Vygotsky Space Theory, where the teachers have a common public space, which is our TLC, while they have their own private spaces, this vignette gives an example of how the teachers bring in the information they obtain from their private space and private public space to the common public space, and push their own thinking about both teaching and learning forward.

The events of this chapter provide a very vivid account of how this Space Theory works. Mrs. GT begins the process in her own Private Space where she reflects on the conversations and learning that has occurred within the TLC. Being the librarian, she is concerned to learn that the Chinese family is not aware of the existence or location of the Coopville Public Library, or that it could provide invaluable resources for the children’s academic growth. She begins to formulate a plan for

bringing the Chinese children, and whole family really, into a relationship with an American family from the community.

She took her concern from the Private Space and brought it into a Private Public Space when she approached the school secretary, Mrs. JS, about trying to find a family that would be a good match for the Chinese family. Together they talked about families that were open to becoming involved with others, that would be willing to interact even though there would be some barriers to communication, and who had children of a similar age to the Chinese children.

This interaction and conversation within a Private Public Space lead to Mrs. GT and Mrs. JS contacting the mother of an American girl who was the same age as Rose, and also had a son the same age as Mike. By reaching out to this parent, they took their Private Public Space conversation into a Public Space. This initial contact led to many Public Space interactions for the two Chinese children, many of which were described in this chapter.

Finally, as mentioned previously, Mrs. GT reported back on the developing relationship between the American family and the Chinese family in the Private Space of the TLC. It is this type of series of interactions and conversations that cycle through the various Private, Public, and Private Public Spaces that embodies the theory put forth by Vygotsky.

Also, because of the resourceful input from outside our TLC meetings, the Coopville teachers make several moves within this session. The teachers start from

Mrs. SS' report about Mike's reading and move to Mike feeling much more comfortable in the classroom now so that he would ask for using the bathroom and talk with the teachers. From the specific improvements, the teachers share together about the children's first-time experiences in the United States and the volunteer family contributions to the opening-up and the growth of the children. Eventually, Mr. JK reaches the reflections and understandings of equity and equality in terms of involving and educating all children.

More importantly, when the teachers move from general understanding of each child's needs to be educated accordingly the teachers automatically relate their experiences with the Little Johnny's story, which they experienced when they did the School-Visit Field Trip. This further illustrates that although the Coopville teachers report that they did not learn much from our School-Visit Trip (See TLC Meeting Notes: 11-15-2007), part of what they experienced during the trip still becomes part of their life stories. This fits the theory of "Cultural Exchange" that people learn from seeing, hearing and experiencing (Pires, 2000). In this sense, the teachers' internalization of what they see, hear and experience also can be explained by Geertz's (1983; 1973) theory of "experience near" and "experience far." Meaning when the Coopville teachers heard little Johnny's sleeping story, they experienced what little Johnny experienced, which was "far." However, at this session, when the TLC teachers share and discuss about teaching children accordingly, the Coopville teachers' experiences about Little Johnny become a tool in understanding how to teach all

children and in how to understanding student learning differently at a higher level of thinking. This tied-in message provides the teachers further opportunities to reflect on their daily communications and their conversations at Parent-Teacher Conferences. The Coopville teachers start to re-think, reflect and challenge how they should/could view and understand the information that is provided by the parents about their own children, because this information might be filtered by the parents through their “take-something-for-granted” composition.

What is represented by this vignette reminds me of the book written by Florio-Ruane with deTar (2001) *Teacher Education and the Cultural Imagination*. In the book, the writers explain Schieffelin & Ochs’ (1986) argument that youngsters’ socialization across cultures and languages is a process of “interactional display (covert or overt) to a novice of expected ways of thinking, feeling and acting” (p. 2; cited in Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001, p. 9). Building upon this understanding of youngster’s socialization and change, Florio-Ruane with deTar argue that

E(e)thnicity, like language, tends to be taken for granted, unless we are called upon to make it explicit for purposes of differentiating ourselves from others. This might happen when we travel or meet newcomers or perhaps when we have access to the history of our extended families. (Emphasis added).

Although the purpose of this dissertation is not to differentiate the teachers from the two Chinese children, I am impressed by the thoughts conveyed by the passage that only when we are facing new conditions, like through travel or meeting

newcomers, we start to look inward, rethink and challenge our own long-holding assumptions, thoughts and actions, which are rooted from these assumptions and thoughts.

The beauty of this vignette, extended upon the previous four vignettes, documents the process of the Coopville teachers beginning to realize that there are things they have been either taking for granted or held as their fixed assumptions which might not work in teaching all children, especially their ELLs. To the level of understanding their own teaching practice and their own interpretation of how children learn demonstrates the progress that the Coopville teachers made through this research project. Being a teacher educator, I am happy for the teachers.

The vignette in this chapter also demonstrates the developmental nature of interaction in the Vygotsky' Space. Not only are the TLC's interactions, separations, and subsequent interactions cyclic, but participants interact with the children and others when they are not together. Thus as they internalize, apply, modify, and transform ideas discussed in the TLC, they return to the subsequent meetings with new contributions to make. It is in this manner that the cycle becomes a process of further investigating and elaborating the problems of practice "on the table" for discussion. Florio-Ruane with deTar (2001) similarly describe this process in cyclic teacher autobiography book club discussions of culture and demonstrate how the concept of culture and ways to approach multicultural teaching are developed over time and interactions in their book club (Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001).

It is that the more information from the teachers' private and private public space gets input into their public space, e.g. our TLC sessions, the deeper and wider their learning would go, which leads directly to their critical reflection. These learning and reflection experiences help the teachers bring more information to their private and individual spaces, which further benefits the TLC sessions. In turn, the extended knowledge that the Coopville teachers bring into the TLC meetings helps everyone get a better understanding of children, their lives, and how to teach them, which benefits more people when the teachers leave for their individual space, meanwhile, absorb more input from either themselves or from others back into the TLC sessions. I name this continuous growing pattern as the "Snow-Ball Effect," which further serves as the grounded theory for this dissertation. I will elaborate it in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

What and How Did the TLC the Teachers Learn?

Summary and Conclusion

Introduction

When I reflect on the five vignettes that document what and how the Coopville teachers learned to engage these Chinese children, I realize that, as teachers' control of the agenda increased in TLC, the past and current lives and language learning of the Chinese students became the center of the group's activities and discussion. As this process took place, I found in the data and described in the vignettes gradual progress in Coopville teachers' interest in, knowledge of, and curiosity about how they could make changes in their teaching and also encourage changes in the children's home and community activities to support their learning of English.

What this means is that growing insight and confidence about teaching the children replaced teachers' lack of information and view of teaching ELL students as primarily centered on instructional technique. While learning instructional methods and curriculum planning are important to teaching all learners and to making adjustments to teach learners with diverse needs, these do not replace the importance of authentic communication between teachers and learners and among learners (Florio-Ruane with deTar, 2001). However, in stressful situations, such as those created by NCLB's focus on rapid, measurable change in ELL's knowledge of English with

insufficient professional development support (a problem cited in the rationale section of this dissertation), it is not surprising that teachers might turn to technical solutions rather than attempt to put themselves in the situation of learners.

TLC was started as an attempt to take on the latter approach—a contextualized, communication-based, and peer-initiated effort to learn about children in order to teach them well. In contrast to learning methods out of context, the children became the focus of learning although the learning's content dealt with language, culture, and family life. This is an important conceptual shift which I identified and have attempted to trace in the preceding chapters. In this chapter I will continue to explore the TLS teachers' putting relationships and authentic activities with the children at the center of teaching and learning. I will offer a summary in the form of a grounded conceptual model of the process as well as the content of teacher learning about this topic in TLC. It follows closely the shifts in the roles of TLC members, from teachers to learner regarding their students, and from dependent to independent learners and decision-makers across the lifespan of TLC.

A Grounded Conceptual Model of Process and Content

I used the following figure to indicate the importance of students becoming the center of any professional development programs by illustrating the relationship among the Teacher, Textbook, and Student Relationship (See Figure 3: Relationships among Teachers, Textbooks and Student):

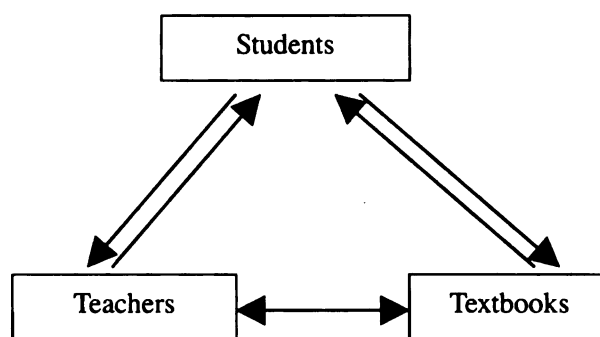


Figure 3: Relationships among Teachers, Textbooks and Student

In diagramming the relationships among students, teachers and textbooks within this triangular relationship, I emphasize the centered location (or the topic priority) of the students, which also represents the importance of students in the educational setting. Further, with the centered location of the students, the differences among/between the relationships of the components are described by the arrows. Both teachers and textbooks serve students' learning, where teachers directly work on textbooks, but the final purpose is, together with the texts, to serve the needs of students. This is my attempt schematically to show the lines of communication within a student-centered teaching process. This was not pre-designed into the TLC activities, but grew out of the ongoing work of the group. I was able to identify it in analysis of the TLC data, and the focus on the lives of the ELL's as a central aspect of teacher learning is a major finding of this dissertation.

As TLC evolved, it became increasingly student-centered. Its members not only constructed knowledge about the Chinese children and the children's history, but also about the children's family, its history and their living conditions. With this

knowledge becoming part of the teachers' life experiences, the increasingly discussed changes in context, activity, resources that might be helpful in teaching these children both during and outside school. The teachers did not stop their efforts with discussion. They took action by providing suggestions on how to help the children cope with the difficulties they confronted at school, on how to engage the children more effectively in the classroom activities, and on how to assist other children's learning who are in a similarly unengaged learning situation.

Also, with this student-centered teacher learning design, the journey the teachers went through demonstrated a progression in what and how they learned. This progression helped me to refine the four aspects of teacher learning identified in my initial research questions (see chapter 2) and also to find in analysis of the data a relationship among them in which growth in one aspect of teacher learning led to growth in another. Below I have re-sated my research questions highlighting in italics the four aspects of teacher learning about which I learned in the study--awareness, understanding, attitude change, and modification of practice:

- 1) Whether and how do these teachers become more *aware* of the differences/
resources these Chinese children have in their literacy development?
- 2) What and how do teachers *understand* their Chinese students' differences
in terms of their literacy development?
- 3) What *attitude* changes do the teachers make towards their Chinese children
in literacy teaching? and

4) What *modifications* do the teachers apply in their own teaching strategies for their Chinese children and children from all backgrounds in general?

To foreshadow the development of these aspects through the research, I originally summarized and included the data analysis results and the pattern in the in Chapter Two (Table 2B). I have re-printed the expanded version of the Table below and also describe in more detail (with reference to the intervening data analysis/vignette chapters) what the four categories mean to the teachers, to me as a researcher, and to the field.

Table 2B: What and How the TLC Teachers Learned about How to Engage the Chinese Children in the Classroom Activities

Aspect of Teacher knowledge	Definition of this aspect of teacher knowledge	What Did the TLC Teachers Learn? (One Key Example)	How Did the TLC learn?	Where Is the Key Example Located?	Why Is This Learning Important to ELL Teaching?
Awareness	Gaining genuine insights into an event or about an individual (e.g., family history, personalities, background)	The teachers gained awareness of their Chinese children's experience in school might be like when the Coopville teachers in TLC were given instruction in Chinese. The teachers experienced three different instructional strategies – no scaffolding, some scaffolding and full scaffolding during a simulated lesson. These learning experiences made the learning situation of the Chinese children who were in an educational situation where they did not share a common language with their teacher or classmates more real to the teachers. This is the activity in which the teachers open themselves up to the new, but challenging situation of needing to learn in order to teach those whose home language is not English.	Being instructed; De-briefing the experience at our TLC meeting and discussing insights about learners' experience and implications for their own teaching.	Chapter 4: Stepping Into Their Chinese Children's Shoes: Coopville Teachers Opening Up To Learning In The Teacher Learning Community	Teaching culturally diverse and ELL students requires not only practical knowledge but also rethinking by teachers of their own beliefs ("deficit" vs. "different" perspective), and looking inward, which is difficult, but needed (Guerra & Nelson, 2008; Florio-Ruane with deIar, 2001).

Table 2B: Continued

Understanding	<p>Internalize new information gained by means of experience (e.g. the Vygotsky Space Theory); we become aware of our understanding and demonstrate it by reflecting on and utilizing the new information.</p>	<p>One vignette is included where the teachers learned some basic features of the Chinese language. The demonstration illustrates to the teachers the reassuring idea that the Chinese children are able to learn the English language because they have already acquired Chinese -- a complete language system at least as complex as the English language. The TLC teachers also learned that the Chinese students are not deficient but have rich language and cultural resources.</p>	<p>Being instructed; Learning at TLC; shared with other TLC members;</p>	<p>Chapter 5: Coopville Teachers as Learners -- When the Coopville Teachers Learned Chinese: Transforming Teacher Identity to Teach All Learners</p>	<p>Understanding that all language systems are complex and that children learn to speak a complex first language helps teachers to realize the language competence of ELL's and avoid assuming that difference equals deficiency.</p>
Attitude	<p>Beliefs and values, often related to a person's assumptions and pre-dispositions</p>	<p>One vignette reveals teacher attitudes and how they are changing by analyzing the multiple questions that the teachers raised and the rationale behind the questions. This vignette illustrates the TLC teachers' concerns about the students and their growing interest in learning about the children's' learning and development in various contexts including their living conditions. The teachers' questions, in one way, become the tools of the</p>	<p>Teachers shared their beliefs, values, and uncertainties with other TLC members. This was sharing prompted by activities such as field-trips; conversations</p>	<p>Chapter 6: Questioning: The Path of Teacher Learning</p>	<p>It is common to say that knowledge about ELL children's cultures and their families is important to their school learning. However, this idea is complex and might need more attention from educators, because, as research indicates, teachers' attitudes</p>

Table 2B: Continued

		teachers' learning at the TLC; in another, they show the teachers' determination to learn how to teach the Chinese children. As teacher inquiry begins to dominate talk in the TLC, a shift in control of the agenda occurs. The teachers gradually assume control of the agenda and shape activities and ideas toward their own changing attitudes. Their needs as educators and the needs of their students.	with family members, colleagues and others.		influence what they think and do relevant to students' school outcomes. Only when the teachers gain awareness of what is happening in these children's life, and understand what the children are able to do and what they need to learn can the teachers' attitudes support ELL's learning at school.
Modification of strategies	Moving away from habits and rituals of behaviors toward inquiry-based teaching	One vignette is included in which the teachers initiated suggestions to help the Chinese children improve and connect their school language learning and their learning of English and American culture in their daily life. This vignette is a continuation of the narrative in the first three vignettes in that it describes gradual changes in the TLC teachers thought and action. Taking on the role of problem solvers, they design new opportunities for the children to learn (e.g. restaurant learning center; pairing with American families; local library visits).	Learning at TLC; shared with other TLC members; self-reflection, field-trip; conversations with family members, colleagues and others in the school community outside TLC meetings; and through the questions or the	Chapters 7: Coopville Teachers As Problem-Solvers – Moving Towards Changing The Life Of The Chinese Students	In teacher education, technique might help teachers' teach, but it is not the most important aspect of teacher education for working with ELL's. Teachers need to have ownership of their learning in order to transfer what they learn to what they teach. This includes take the responsibility for modifying instructional strategies and developing emotional connection with the students. This

Table 2B: Continued

			suggestions offered by TLC members and others.		also includes teachers' better accommodating their ELLs' needs in order to fully engage them to participate in classroom and community activities.
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Awareness: As demonstrated in this chart, my analysis of TLC teachers talk, activities, and self-report evidenced growing awareness of what their Chinese children's experience in school might be like (e.g. when the Coopville teachers in the TLC were given an activity instruction in Chinese. See Chapter 3).

Understanding: Similarly, I documented and the teachers reported understanding the children better after they learned about the basic features of Chinese language and the differences between the language they taught at school and the language that Rose and Mike used at home,. They also began to examine the ways a first language could be a resource for learning a second language and the importance of teachers' understanding when and how to capitalize on that.

Attitude Change: The teachers also expressed growing confidence that the Chinese children would be able to learn the English language because they have already acquired Chinese language– a complete language system at least as complex as the English language (See Chapter 4). After the Home-Visit Field Trip, when the teachers started to ask multiple questions about the children, the children's learning and development in various contexts, including their conditions, the TLC teachers' learning within the TLC was no longer passive.

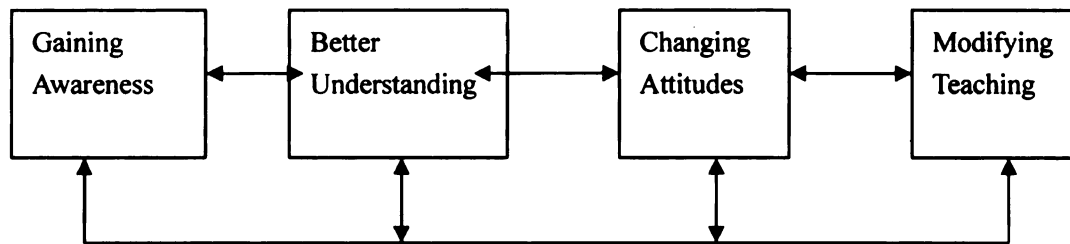
Modification of Practice: The teachers began to take over the ownership of their own

learning. They started to explore the answers to the questions that they were interested in or concerned about. It was evident that the teachers' attitude changed (See Chapter 5). Building on their own developed awareness, understanding, and changed attitudes, the

TLC teachers started to suggest actions to help the Chinese children improve and connect their school language learning and their learning of English and American culture in their daily life. For instance, when Mrs. SS sent video tapes home for Rose and Mike to learn about American culture, history and people, Mr. MG sent CD and lyrics home to help Mike to practice holiday songs, Mr. LM involving Rose naturally in his teaching, also Mrs. SS' suggestions of setting up a study center at the restaurant, as well as, Mrs. GT and Mrs. JS pairing them with American children, all demonstrated the proof of modifications in their teaching strategies were all given (See chapter 6).

Based on Table 2B, combining my four research sub-questions and the vignette descriptions in each chapter in this dissertation, I found a progressive learning pattern among what was learned within our TLC community contexts. More importantly, with this progressive process, the Coopville teachers, as indicated in the last vignette, started to look inward and began to challenge their assumptions and ideas for practice. These findings, on the one hand, expand my previous illustrations regarding the interrelationships among the four sub-research questions (See Chapter 2, Figure 1: Relationships among the Four Sub-Questions). On the other hand, they formalize a pattern that can be used to illustrate what the TLC teachers learned and how they learned it. This is illustrated in Figure 1A (also included in Chapter One), to which I now return for a more detailed description. In this figure I conjectured that the aspects of teacher learning would be connected and also cyclic. However, my model was relatively non-specific with regard to sequence (note the two-headed arrows) of relationships and nature of the cycle of learning (note the two-headed arrows in all cases). This model was developed prior to in-depth research on TLC in which I discovered that the process of learning resembled the cyclic process in Harre's model of the "Vygotsky Space." Additionally, the model was developed before I learned what these four aspects of knowledge looked and sounded like with, across, and between TLC meetings.

Figure 1A: Relationships among the Four Sub-Questions (Original Model)



Although there are interconnected relationships among the four sub-questions, the above figure seems to be too linear to illustrate what happened in our TLC. Based on the findings, what was learned in our TLC showed a tendency towards a one-dimensional spiraling and expanding pattern. Therefore, I modified the interrelationships among the four sub-research questions as the following in relation to what the teachers learned:

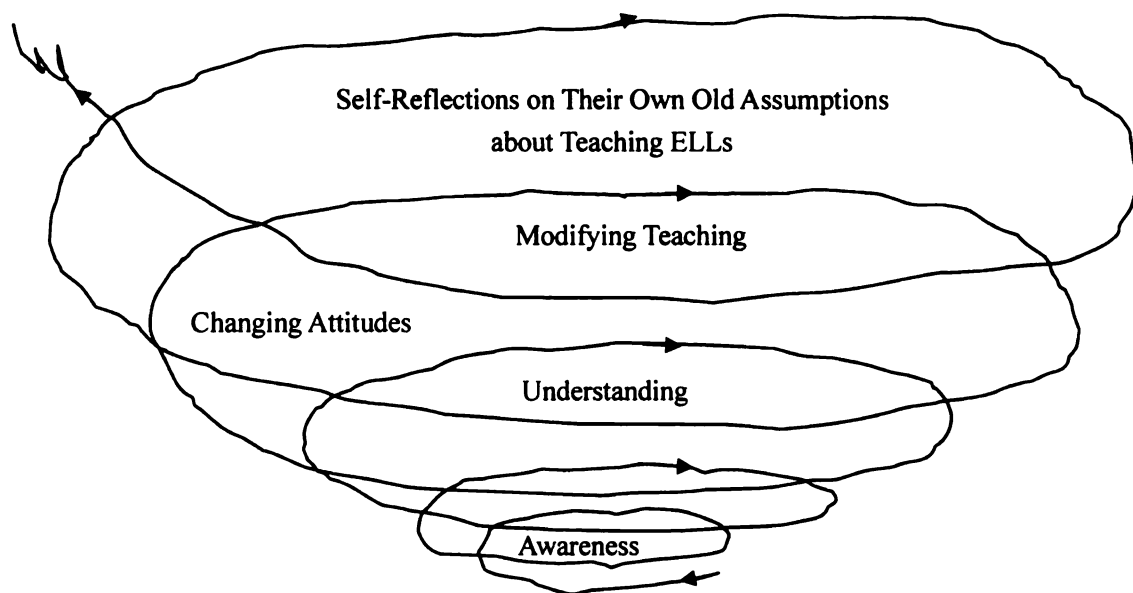


Figure 1B: Interconnected Relationships among the Four Sub-Questions

in Terms of Teacher Knowledge and the TLC Teachers' Learning Outcomes

The above figure illustrates that gaining awareness is the first outcome of learning, which leads to a better understanding of what is learned. Awareness is primary as the TLC teachers become learners—as they shift from experience near to experience distant. It is by studying what one has newly awakened to that awareness leads to understanding. This can be seen in the first two vignettes, where the teachers move from the strangeness of Chinese to understanding of it as a systematic language different from English, for example (note: Better understanding can, in turn, lead to more gained awareness). Further, the outcomes of both the awareness and the better understanding result in changed attitudes, which guide the selection of teaching strategies. This relationship is exemplified in the teachers' coming to a place of knowledgeable respect for the students—what they know, what they need help to learn, what they have the competence to learn if they are afforded opportunities. Similar understanding of the life worlds of the children and their parents changed the attitudes of teachers, school staff, and community members toward the family, resulting in changed practices and relationships. (As is the case with awareness and understanding, we can see re-cycling when attitude changes back to greater curiosity and increased awareness. Similarly, change in practice also cycles up back to new questions for exploration.). Working both with sequence and re-cycling, learning is self-generating, alternating from public, social space to personal spaces of internalization and

reflection and back to public spaces of application and further exploration with others. As a result, the inter-relationships among these four elements impact a cycle of what and how the teachers think, rethink, and modify their teaching behavior.

In the following section of this chapter, integrating the research data and Figure 1B, I provide detailed illustrations of this model by thinking across the vignettes. I do not aim at micro-analysis of the individual vignettes represented in each chapter. Instead, I focus on cross-vignette analyses to examine the patterns.

Gaining Awareness

The vignette in Chapter 3 *Stepping in Their Chinese Children's Shoes* documents a situation where the Coopville teachers experienced being lost, helpless, full of anxiety, and a tightness in the stomach, followed by then being helped and a better understanding of the Chinese children through an activity instructed in Chinese. This vignette documented very a basic foundation of what and how the Coopville teachers learned at the beginning. As Mrs. RS mentioned at a later TLC meeting, “[i]t was the instruction in Chinese that put everyone on the same page” (TLC 11-15-2007). The short and temporary experience in this unknown world helped the teachers start to realize what the Chinese children might have felt when they began their schooling in American schools after four years spent in China.

This vignette is set up as an example as how the Coopville teachers “gained their awareness.” But the achievement of “gaining awareness” did not only show in

this vignette. The teachers continued gaining awareness when they shared both inside and outside our TLC sessions, which can be found throughout all the five vignettes. This is because the teachers' actions of better understanding, or changed attitudes, or modified teaching strategies had an impact on their awareness level.

Better Understanding

After gaining this awareness, the teachers started to learn pieces of the Chinese language, which is documented in Chapter 4 *Coopville Teachers as Learners* and later in Chapter 5 *Questioning: the Path of Teacher Learning*. Both vignettes illustrate the eagerness of the teachers who wanted to know about the Chinese language, the children, their family and family history, as well as Chinese culture. However, the two vignettes represent two learning styles. In chapter 4, the TLC teachers learned some Chinese language wherein they learned the language tentatively without asking many questions.

The vignette shows a more teacher-centered learning style – being the facilitator, I played the role of teacher. This is because the teachers needed scaffolding at the very beginning in how to teach these children. As far as “gaining awareness,” the vignettes in Chapters 4 and 5 provide examples for how the Coopville teachers got a better understanding about the children, but the two vignettes are not exclusive for the evidence, as other examples surfaced throughout this paper because of the causal-effect relationships among the four aspects of teachers' knowledge.

Changing Attitudes

In Chapter 5, the teachers showed a breakthrough into a different kind of discourse and a different version of learning. Still focusing on knowing about the children, the Coopville teachers raised questions from all aspects that are associated with the Chinese children's life. The Coopville teachers became ethnographers – they wanted to learn everything about the life of the two children, including their inside school life and their home life (González & Moll, 2005) (see the metaphor of Cone-Shaped Learning Pattern in Chapter 5). Because of both the passive learning in Chapter 4 and the active learning in Chapter 5, the Coopville teachers obtained better understanding of the two Chinese children.

Also, because of this better understanding of the children, the teachers showed a switch in their attitudes towards learning about and learning how to teach the two children, which, in turn, promoted their further awareness and understanding of the children. In all the vignettes included in this dissertation, there is evidence for the teachers' attitudes' change as well in chapter 6 and 7. In particular, several of the TLC members were reluctant to join at first, but were enthusiastic about the experience at the end (Pre- and Post-Interview Notes: Mrs. RS and Mrs. GT).

Modifying Ideas and Strategies for Teaching

In Chapter 6 *Coopville Teachers as Problem-solvers*, the teachers had already experienced awareness, understanding, and a growing curiosity about the children.

These experiences fostered changing attitudes toward the students. Thus by the latter meetings of TLC, as described in Chapter 6, the teachers started to initiate the conversations by proffering their own suggestions and thoughts of how to involve the two Chinese children in authentic experiences of the English language as well as of American cultural life. They also started to modify their teaching strategies, such as Mrs. SS sending video tapes home to help both of the children learn about the culture, objects, history and people in the United States; Mr. MG sending CD's and lyrics home for Mike's Christmas performance; Mr. LM naturally involving Rose in the activities in his class rather than allow her to remain "outside." This experience of changing practice re-cycled almost immediately to changing attitudes toward the students—creating an upward spiral of increased ideas and expectations--a big jump in the attitude change of the Coopville teachers' and to their teaching strategy modification, which pertained to the last two of my sub-research questions. Chapter 6 is a typical example of the Coopville teachers' modification of their teaching strategies. However, there is continuing evidence of this modification of strategies and other examples of it can be found in chapters of 5 and 7.

Inter-connected Changes

Given the inter-connectedness among the four learning stages, the changes that the Coopville teachers demonstrated are inter-connected as well. After a period of negotiating a social context where everyone felt they wanted to learn more about the

children and how to engage them in the classroom activities, the TLC teachers started to have a better sense of what happened to the children in their schooling and why. Afterwards, they started to offer suggestions and put their suggestions into actions.

However, the most critical outcome for the Coopville teachers, in terms of their hopes and expectations when they initiated the idea of the study group, is that after going through these inter-connected learning stages, the Coopville teachers started to reflect on and break down their own long-existing assumptions and the things they took for granted which limited their perspectives on and resources for teaching the ELL students and also for connecting in educationally meaningful ways with their parents. This shift in perspective also appealed to the TLC teachers (as well as others peripherally involved with TLC as either colleagues or community members) because it was viewed as a shift in perspective which might continue to be useful as Coopville grows in diversity and also as teachers work with all children and their individual needs.

They reported, for example, that they would be more sensitive to what each child's needs (See TLC Meeting Notes: 10-25-2007, Mr. RC & 12-13-2007: Mr. GC) no matter their ethnic, cultural, or linguistic background. The Coopville teachers became, "Culture- Catchers," in terms of how to make sense of their ELLs' learning. Focusing on the two children and staying in the context of our TLC, the teachers brought in their own experiences, suggestions involving other community members, or

plans for the schooling of the two children. The teachers used the children's life changes to push their own thinking to a deeper level and enhanced their own learning by bringing in new experiences and new knowledge and sharing what they learned with others outside our TLC meetings. This result cannot be achieved without the combined efforts of the TLC teachers in gaining awareness, better understanding, changing their attitudes and modifying their teaching strategies.

The “Snowball Effect” & “The Flywheel Effect”

Throughout the TLC sessions, I was moved by the teachers' willingness and eagerness to bring our TLC information back and forth to their family members, their friends, their colleagues or those who cared about the two Chinese children's education. It is this “bringing-out” and “bringing-in” that extends the growth of the TLC, the growth of the two children, and the participation of their parents and others in the community in their schooling and school activities, which represents how the teachers learned.

I found the teachers' learning showed two patterns: 1) the pattern of the ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development, Vygotsky, 1978) or the Scaffolding-Release of Control Approach; and 2) the cycling learning of Vygotsky's Space Theory principles. Vygotsky (1978) argues that each learner has a *zone* between what s/he knows and what s/he is able to learn. It is because of this gap that learning becomes possible.

Therefore, when people interact with one another, the less experienced learn from the more experienced.

Gradually, however, in an educational context, the goal is for the less experienced person to grow in terms of what he or she knows and can do independently. In this learning process, the more experienced generally assist the less experienced through scaffolding at the beginning. Later, with the growth of knowledge, the less experienced take over the learning responsibility (Scaffolding - Release of Control Approach). Following Pearson, Au (1993) called this change in power and responsibility between the more and less expert members of a learning community the “balance of rights” hypothesis. Initially, the Coopville teachers invited me to help them learn about Chinese culture and life in order better to understand their students’ educational needs. At first, I had the majority of the rights and responsibilities of the TLC meetings. However, as the vignettes illustrate, the teachers gradually began to take up what we were learning in the meetings and develop their own agenda and ideas for how to help the children learn. This eventually expanded outside the borders of our meetings and also of our ten-person group to become a wider school and community effort. Vygotsky (1978) argues that any higher order reasoning begins in the form of conversation with more experienced people (expert) or through their “social speech.” However, as our TLC meetings proceeded, the Coopville teachers gradually switched from being lifted up through scaffolded learning, to becoming

equal participants and finally emerging as independent learners (Tharp & Gallimore, 1999).

Interestingly, when the Coopville teachers took over the ownership of their own learning, they started to bring in more resources to our TLC, which resulted in the teachers' generation of the new knowledge and teacher changes. Following Vygotsky's Space Theory, the teachers had TLC as their common Public Social Space (Space I as shown on the Figure 8: for the purpose of visual clarity, I moved the Private Spaces to the left hand, instead of keeping them in the lower part of the map. Please see detailed illustration in Chapter 2), while they had their own Public Individual Space (Space II in Figure 8), Private Individual Spaces (Space III in Figure 8), and the Private Public Space (Space IV in Figure 8), which are represented and described by the vignettes. Across the vignettes, the pattern evolved where the teachers brought in the information they obtained from their Space II and Space III as well as Space IV to our TLC sessions (Space I).

A case in point is that the teachers shared conversations they had with others regarding our TLC activities. For instance, from Mrs. RS and the stories she shared about her son who adopted a Somalia family and related his situation to that of our TLC. To Mrs. GT and her concerned conversations with Mrs. JS about helping find ways to socialize the two Chinese children through meaningful relationships with peers. Because of this input, deriving from conversations in both their private and

private public spaces, the teachers clearly demonstrated changes in their awareness, better understanding of the children, their attitude change and the modification in their teaching.

This progression is not achieved overnight. It is created by the collaborations of the teachers where they started from knowing little about the children and how to teach the children. For example, in the Pre-Interview data where three out of nine educators reported that they did not know what language/s either Mike or Rose used out-of-school two ventured a guess and two simply assumed the Chinese language. Also, four of the nine did not know the level of the Chinese children's literacy development at all, with three admitting they were not really sure about it but had an idea. Further, five of the nine teachers did not know the father, and seven reported that they had never seen the mother. Finally, all nine mentioned that they did not know anything about the Chinese parents' expectations for their children's schooling; and none of the nine have ever visited/or considered visiting the students' home.

Although they had bags of teaching tricks and strategies, the teachers reported in their Pre-interview that they were not able to engage the two Chinese children (See the Summary of Pre-Interview Data Set). Eventually with the flow of "bringing-out" and "bringing-in" experiences and conversations, the teachers begin to understand the changes the children obtained from their learning and how to engage them in the classroom.

The Coopville teachers' learning in the TLC demonstrates a continuously developmental pattern of Vygotsky's Space Theory. When the teachers brought our TLC information into both their private and public private spaces, they absorbed more information from themselves and others who they communicated with, while they were internalizing the information they obtained from both inside and outside our TLC. Meanwhile, the more information from the teachers' Spaces II, III and IV flowed into our TLC sessions, the deeper and wider their learning ran. After several sessions, the TLC teachers get to the point where there was frequent introspection of their own assumptions. These learning and retrospective experiences further helped the teachers to bring more information to their Space II, III and IV, which further benefited the TLC sessions, Space I.

I named this pattern as the "Snowball Effect" where the teachers' learning started small, but moved like a snow ball that starts from a core or a small ball and gradually gains mass and density as it is pushed along. For the "Snow-Ball Effect," after being rolled over on the snow (where they participated in the TLC learning activities and communicated in their Space II, III, and IV), they brought more knowledge back to their Space I, which makes their knowledge ball bigger and bigger (See Figure 8: The Snowball Effect Inside and Outside the TLC Sessions). In the following, I will illustrate this effect in more detail.

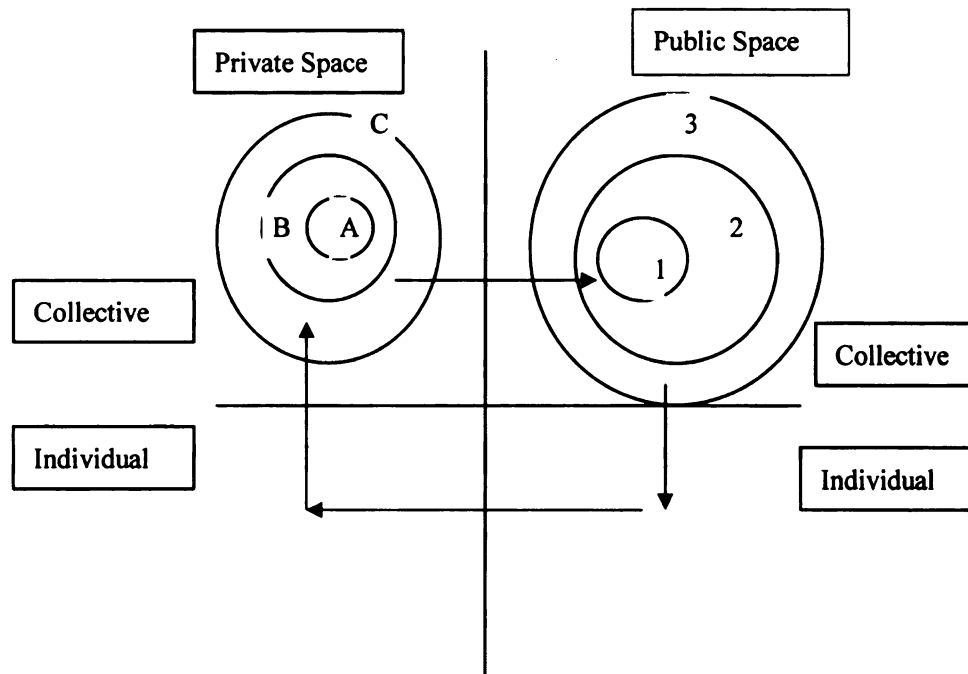


Figure 8: The “Snowball Effect” Inside and Outside the TLC Sessions

According to the “Snow-Ball Effect,” when the teachers met together at the beginning, they shared and learned at their Space I, which is our TLC meetings. After each TLC session, the Coopville teachers brought their TLC experiences into their Public Individual Space (II), Private Individual Space (III) and Private Collective Space (IV). As the teachers pushed their knowledge from the TLC Space I, through Spaces II, III and IV, the information gained through exchanges in their spaces outside Space I, enlarged the teachers knowledge “snow-ball” (bringing a greater amount from “A” to “B”) and it became more complicated knowledge, then returned back to our

TLC session where the knowledge correspondingly increased from amount “1” to amount “2”.

The Coopville teachers’ knowledge about the children and their family as well as how to adjust their teaching to accommodate the children continued to grow through the motion of the snowball effect. From those first “flakes” of inquiry at the beginning meetings, the teachers started to realize that something special was starting to form. They realized that as they became more aware of what was happening in the children’s lives inside and outside of school, they could start to see patterns of issues develop that were impeding the students’ school achievement. As they started to make connections and build one idea or realization upon another, they also brought the information back to their spaces II, III and further inputted it into their Space IV where they get “A” amount of information.

More specifically, we can see from the diagram that when “A” amount of information is made public to be shared in their Space I, it evolves into circle No. 2, which indicates that more information is generated and used in this space. When the information and knowledge in circle 2 goes through the teachers’ Space II and gets to their Space III, they obtain circle B, which is bigger than circle A, indicating that they have more knowledge and information. This can be understood as the point where the teachers became learners and learned more information in the TLC, and based on the four steps of the teachers’ growth, this could be where the teachers started to change

their attitudes. This motion or action further perpetuated an increase in Circle 3.

Eventually, the teachers started to modify their teaching strategies for the sake of the Chinese children's schooling. After more revolutions, as the snowball became much bigger, the teachers realized what they assume at the beginning might not be the case and they start to break down their old assumptions. For example, this is indicated when the Coopville teachers were prepared to change their "color-blindness" as mentioned by Mr. GC, to teach children accordingly. They realized that treating everyone the same does not produce equity in education. Then the continuation of the movements from one space to another leads to bigger and bigger circles as indicated in the diagram. This follows the same growing principles of the snowball.

The Complex Expansion – A Grounded Theory

Across the vignettes, the TLC teachers' knowledge presented a one-dimensional spiral expanding pattern. Within this pattern, what the teachers learned demonstrated an interconnected relationship in correspondence to my four sub-research questions. Meanwhile, in terms of how the TLC teachers learned, Vygotsky's Space Theory discloses the knowledge and information flow and expansion both inside and outside the TLC. In the figure below, I integrated the two previous figures to show the general pattern found throughout the dissertation:

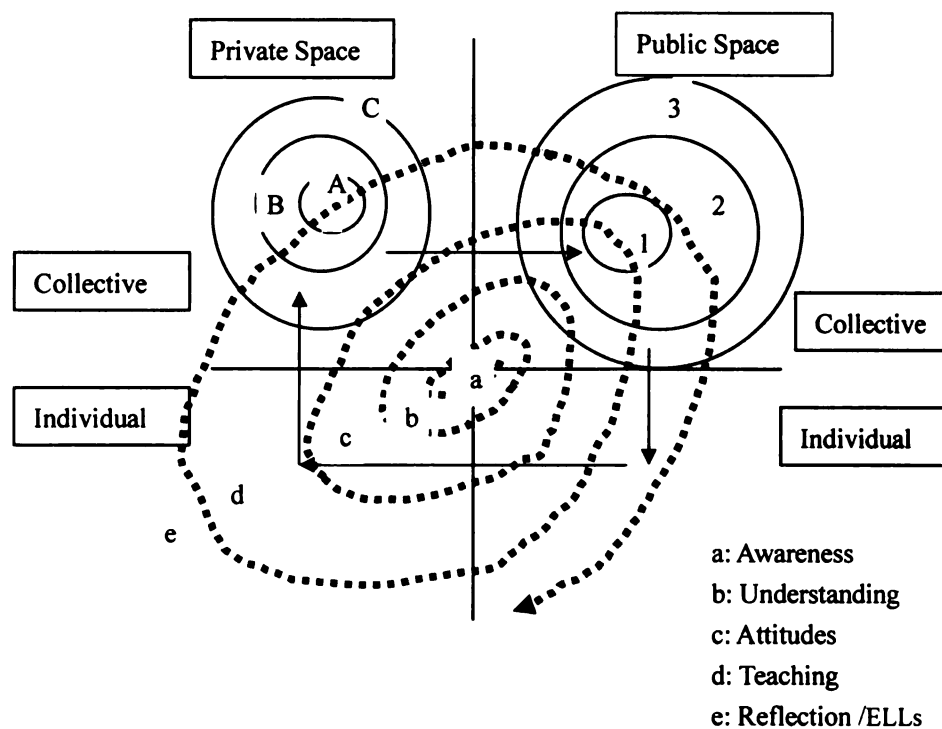


Figure 9: The Complex Expansion

Based on the argument set forth, I combined the two separate figures – Figure 8 and Figure 1B together to obtain the above figure (Figure 9: The Complex Expansion). In Figure 9, Vygotsky's Space Theory explains how information and knowledge flow and expand through the Coopville teachers' actions inside and outside our TLC (See the indication of A, B, and C and Numbers 1, 2, and 3). The one-dimensional spiral expanding pattern illustrates what the teachers learned and how what they learned expanded. In the Figure, the dotted lines show the information and knowledge expansion among the teachers (See lower-case a, b, c, d, and e). When

information and knowledge flow from Space I through IV, what the teachers learned obtained expands as well, from the teachers' awareness, to their better understanding, to their attitude changes, and eventually to application of what they learned to their teaching, not by imitation of a set practice, but by creation of practices appropriate to their circumstances and authored by the teachers themselves based on what they have learned thus far in the study group. The two expansions occur in a sequence, but the information flow and the knowledge expansion can happen at the same time. For instance, Mrs. GT, in her Private Space, has an idea spark in her mind while reflecting on the activities from our TLC. She then talks with Mrs. JS in her Private Public Space, where they came up with the concept of pairing the Chinese family with American families who have children in the same grades as Rose and Mike. This illustrates that when Mrs. GT brought the information outside our TLC meeting space and shared with Mrs. JS, they both became more aware of the Chinese children's situation, gained better understanding of the problem the children and the teachers were facing, then they changed their attitudes to finding solutions and they found the solution. This example shows the spiral expansion occurring within one of the Spaces.

On the other hand, the spiral knowledge expansion can happen across all the four spaces. I will take the chapter of *the Coopville Teachers Learned Chinese* as an example to illustrate my point. When the Coopville teachers learned part of the Chinese language, they started to realize that the Chinese children spoke a language at

home that is different from the English language that is used at school – two separate language systems. This information was brought out of our Public Space, which made more people aware of the differences. Combining this understanding with the prior knowledge of the children, the TLC teachers wanted to learn more about the children. Their learning desire was demonstrated by the questions the teachers asked at our TLC meetings. After the teachers' questions were answered, the Coopville teachers knew more about the children, such as specific information regarding their parents, their experiences in China, etc. This information did not stay within our TLC. As reported in the Post-Interview, Mr. MG and Mr. LM reported that they shared what they learned at our TLC with their family members each time when they got home (See Post-Interviews: MG and LM).

With the expansion of the awareness throughout the spaces, more people understood the children and the difficulties they have in an American school. With the better understanding of the children, more people pulled in their information and wisdom to help the children, such as the American volunteer family taking the children over to their house to help them learn socialization skills through interaction with their own children. Also, when the Chinese children's first experiences were shared at our TLC meeting, such as the first movie they had ever seen in an American cinema, their first experiences with pop and popcorn (See TLC Meeting: 11-15-07 and TLC Meeting: 12-13-07). These experiences provided the TLC teachers opportunities

to be aware of their old assumptions that “every child would have had such experiences” (See TLC Meeting: 11-15-07 – Mr. JK).

When this information went out to more people in the community, more American volunteer families were waiting to help the Chinese family, which led to even better understandings of the children and established a better context for the teachers, or others from the community, to offer suggestions in assisting the Chinese children’s learning and social growth. Therefore, when the information went through the four spaces, more knowledge was added by people from our TLC and from the community people. At the same time, the teachers’ knowledge grew following the spiral expansion pattern. This looks almost like the growth of a snowball. Start with a small ball of snow, and then as it is pushed around the yard the ball continues to pick up snow and growth.

In addition, we often think of what happens when a snowball rolls down a hill, expanding in size and gaining momentum, and we refer to this as the “snowball effect.” That is what happened in our TLC. One or more of the members would pick up a small ball of knowledge and then push it around through both their Public and Private Spaces expanding the knowledge of everyone involved. This is what the Complex Expansion figure illustrates. This pattern can be treated as one of the teachers’ professional development models, but it is not a unique concept. The “Flywheel Effect” (Collins (2002) explains the same principle from a slightly different

perspective.

The Flywheel Effect of Momentum

This circular flow of knowledge and information kept repeating creating the Complex Expansion or “snowball effect,” but then it began to feed off of its own energy which created momentum. In the book, *Good to Great*, author James Collins (2002) spends a chapter explaining the “flywheel” theory of improvement, wherein, the efforts for change and achievement circle around and pick up momentum. The basic premise of The Flywheel Effect could be summarized like this:

- 1) Each unit within the organization reinforces other units
- 2) The organization as a whole is more powerful than the sum of its parts
- 3) Once you get the flywheel going, it’s easier to keep it going

This is in direct support of the “snowball effect” that this chapter puts forth, whereby the efforts of a group increase in scope. When we examine these three critical concepts of the “flywheel effect” it is easy to see them in operation within our TLC and understand how the momentum for change came about. First, “each unit reinforces other units,” is a way to explain the powerful nature of our discourse in the TLC. On several occasions this dissertation has given examples, such as the email from Mrs. SS and how that action reinforced the thinking and efforts of the others, most notably in this case Mr. RC and Mrs. GT.

As Collins explains, the flywheel begins with small movements and the flywheel picks up momentum from every action thereafter, especially the small actions. So whether the action is large like Mrs. GT arranging for an American family to interact with the Chinese family or small like Mrs. RS attending the concert on Chinese music in Detroana, each action works to continue the momentum of the “flywheel” of our TLC goal. All of the small gestures, questions within our TLC and without in their private and private public spaces, added to our momentum and in many cases led to our larger actions, like the family pairing and assisting/encouraging the family to create a learning center in the restaurant.

The second feature of the flywheel effect is almost self-evident, and yet, also contradictory in educational terms. The idea that the “organization is more powerful than the sum of its parts” is the basis for virtually every school improvement effort. There are few, if any, school improvement efforts that are undertaken individually. Many state departments of education, including that in Michigan, have made continued collaborative school improvement a requirement for making “Annual Yearly Progress” in conjunction with the federal NCLB legislation. In this respect, concept two of “The Flywheel Effect” is self-evident. However, the tradition in education of the teacher as a solitary figure working hard in their own isolated classroom is as old as chalk and the blackboard. Many school improvement efforts have butted up against this antiquated ideal of educational change “one teacher at a time” and been doomed

to failure.

The idea of the “power of unity being greater than the sum of its parts” is clearly demonstrated in this TLC. From the very first activity with the markers and the Chinese language, the dissertation project demonstrates time and again that when the teachers put their questions, ideas, and efforts together the organization (TLC) is greater than the sum of the individuals. In terms of the “Snow-Ball Effect,” if each teacher pushed their own snowball you would be left with many smaller snowballs, neither enlarging the one snowball for the good of the group, nor increasing the mass of knowledge within. It is only when every teacher in the TLC helped to push the same snowball that the knowledge grew in mass and density.

Finally, the third concept of the “The Flywheel Effect” which states that, “once you get the flywheel going, it is easier to keep it moving,” is conceptualized in the frequent communications between meetings, with questions and ideas flowing from the TLC members throughout the days, not able to wait for the next official meeting. So often on the days that I arrived at Coopville Elementary to do a classroom observation, the teachers would be bursting with news of what had transpired, what new strategies or thinking they had employed in their instruction, or what new socialization gains the children had made. There was no need for a push anymore. The TLC was caught up in the momentum of the flywheel and perpetuated its motion through their actions, words, and thinking.

Project Outcomes: Tightened Social Relationships

The TLC teachers learned about the Chinese children, their family, their out-of-school life and the ways they could engage them in American schools. Teaching ELLs has been a big issue in American education. Based on the National Literacy Panel (NLP) and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE), Goldenberg (2008) sums up the findings of two major reports on ELL education conducted in 2006. Goldenberg reports that ELLs in the U.S. are composed of students from more than 400 different language backgrounds. Meanwhile, Goldenberg states that 76 percent of elementary and 56 percent of secondary-school ELLs were born in the U.S. He further reports that 80 percent of the ELLs' parents were not born inside the U.S. Most important, as indicated in Chapter 2, while the number of ELLs is increasing, Goldenberg argues that ELLs are not able to participate in the classroom activities. But Goldenberg also argues that since 1990, the number of ELLs who cannot fully participate in mainstream classes has gone up (in 1990: 1/20 to 1/9), and by 2018, the number will be 25%. Therefore, the learning model developed in TLC might be useful and significant in helping other mainstream teachers learn how to teach ELLs in order to engage more ELLs to their classroom activities.

The “Snow-Ball Effect” and “the Flywheel Effect” could not have been achieved without a meaningful social connection among the TLC participants and

their family members, as well as, some of their friends who are in the community where the Coopville Elementary is located. Similarly, the “Snow-Ball Effect” and the “Flywheel Effect” also tightened the relationship among the TLC members. Several of them commented that they had never had such a deep involvement in professional development with teachers across the curricular areas as they did on this one (See Post-Interview: MG, LM, GC, and GT). Consider that the TLC was formed by four core- curricular teachers, the PE teacher, the music teacher, the school librarian, the principal of the building, and another administrator from the district.

Sometimes the task at hand can seem daunting. When we are standing before that first snowball and think about the effort it will take to make it grow, we feel unable to meet the challenge. However, once we see that everyone is cooperating with their own push, and realize that the snowball is indeed beginning to grow, the task seems less challenging and the effort more doable. No longer will these TLC teachers approach an ELL student in awe of the task of educating culturally and/or linguistically diverse children, these little “snowballs” standing before them. They now know that a little “push” and some meaningful collaboration will make the task successful and rewarding.

The Coopville teachers were happy for the Chinese children, for their academic and social growth, but at the same time, they felt sad. They are happy for their change and progress in the quality of both of their lives and their schooling, but

they are sad because the children are going to leave for the next grades in another school building. Many members of the TLC have commented that it would be great to have another year to continue applying what they have learned this year at our TLC sessions for the sake of these two Chinese children. As noted in a conversation between Mrs. SS and myself:

...

Rui: So you are going to miss Mike when he switches to another building next year?

Mrs. SS: Oh, yeah. For sure, after all this, I will miss him.

(See TLC Meeting Notes: 11-15-2007)

And Mr. GC commented to me,

What I think the teachers will miss the most, is the feeling of accomplishment and the sense of community that was generated by this effort to help these two children. I wonder how many opportunities these teachers have had in their careers to make such a direct impact on the lives of their students. (See Post-Interview: Mr. GC)

Probably one of the most rewarding interactions with TLC members came about when they learned that another Chinese family – relatives of Mike and Rose – had just moved into Coopville. Unlike the beginning of the year when the teachers were so filled with apprehension that they reached out for help, this time they responded excitedly and seemed anxious to meet the new students, to begin utilizing the learning they had attained throughout this school year.

Implications of This Research

This dissertation has two major implications: (1) it's significance to research on Teacher Education/teacher learning communities, particularly, involving ELLs; and (2) it's benefit to the practice of engaging ELLs in mainstream classroom settings — general principles of how better to get to know and teach ELL's. I address them in order below.

1) Significance to Research on Teacher Education/ Teacher Learning Communities, particularly, involving ELLs

Based on the research literature, it is safe to say that linear, simplistic models or “one-shot” teacher education programs can cause frustrations and stress for both the teacher educators and the participating teachers (Darling- Hammond, et al., 1995 ; Ryan, 1987). When I reflect back on what and how/how much the Coopville teachers learned at our community, I think several characteristics of our community contributed to the gains in teacher learning:

Teacher Initiated

First, TLC was teacher-initiated, not externally imposed. The group of teachers who envisioned this program and invited me to participate courageously faced the change of the social attitudes toward immigrant children. They had the need for

looking at new instructional practices that would fit and help immigrant children to build on their home literacy experiences and resources. These teachers wanted to learn about these Chinese children's language and culture in order to fulfill their teaching dreams for these children. These teachers put their energy into their learning in our TLC, meanwhile, they pushed the information to flow out of and into our TLC. By creating the group, pursuing their own self-identified inquiry, seeking outside consultation, and openly sharing their learning with colleagues, the colleagues, and the field of research, they evidenced "ownership" of their own learning and asserted themselves as strong, committed professionals.

Centered on Teacher and Learner Needs

Second, this was a teacher-needs centered program and, ultimately, a program centered on learners being served by those teachers. I joined with the participating teachers to set up an activity agenda for TLC which addressed the teachers' expressed needs. According to these needs, our program was designed based on the following rationale: First, the core of the program is that the professional development followed the teachers' thoughts and thinking to provide opportunities for teachers to develop in the areas they deemed important. This philosophy matters because, based on their own developmental trajectory and their developmental needs, teachers have a clear idea of what they need to explore. Expressing it in dialogue with an invited consultant (my non-researcher role), the teachers did not relinquish their

ownership of TLC but rather used resources to help them answer or further clarify their questions.

Facilitator as Consultant

Third, as noted above, the facilitator served as a consultant. Rather than develop a well-defined curriculum, the facilitator provided the teachers help in refining the group's Professional Development focus and then became the consultant for the teachers' inquiries. Therefore, different from traditional externally-initiated professional development largely controlled by "experts," TLC resembles teacher learning communities (described in the review of related literature in Chapter 2) in that it offered its members opportunities to explore and construct their own knowledge with multiple forms of assistance—from the consultant, from one another, and from the wider community, the family, and the children. Because TLC teachers had motivation to learn and initiated the context and purpose for TLC, they gradually took over ownership of the TLC activities impacting their own learning and leadership in the school community on the topic of teaching ELL's.

Students as the Learning Agenda

Fourth, TLC set students as the center of the teachers' learning, as is argued in several places in the dissertation. Since the students were set up as the center, the teachers became ethnographers – they wanted to learn about the children and the things around them in order to learn about them;

Addressed Immediate Needs

Fifth, it addressed the immediate needs of their current situation of teaching ELL: this program meets several needs. TLC was needed by teachers as demonstrated by the fact that the teachers called out for help themselves. It is needed by the current U.S. school population which continues changing into an ever more diverse student body. Educational statistical evidence shows that today's school population is composed of more a diversified student population with more immigrant students enrolled in schools (Garcia, 2005; Goldenberg, 2008). This diversified student population sets up new requirements for teachers in order to ensure no child left behind. And also, this program provides for the trend in this country of people wanting to know and to learn different cultures and languages to meet the challenges of a global society.

Research Based

Sixth, TLC was research based: Founded on research-based evidence and guided by the legislation of NCLB, the program addressed most of the shortcomings summarized in the literature. As facilitator I made a conscientious effort to put forth current research in a subtle manner, often as part of an aside conversation, and then allowed the TLC members to ask the questions that would bring the research directly into our learning.

Active Parent Participation

And last, TLC involved parents' participation actively. Drawing on the cultural exchange approach, TLC members took the contributions of parents and students into account in their learning. This is because information from parents and children, combined with information teachers collected from visiting their home, listening to, observing, and reflecting on the their Chinese students' learning in the classroom, were extensive resources for teachers learning in the TLC. Their inquiry approach also made it possible for creating productive conversations between parents and teachers for the sake of the Chinese children's learning.

Thinking from TLC

Based on the characteristics of this program which were identified and analyzed in this dissertation, we might consider adopting some or all of these features in the creation of teacher education and professional development opportunities in ELL. Future teacher education programs, for example, might want to set the participating teachers' professional development needs as center as well, which addresses both the needs of the teachers and the needs of the social contexts, particularly when it involves teaching ELL students.

Additionally, facilitators might helpfully function as consultants, rather than "experts" Who design and deliver content. A facilitator would support teacher learning by providing the participating teachers access to the resources and learning environments they need but may not be able to access independently. Most important,

the approach of involving parents in our TLC helped the Coopville teachers learn about the children, which might be helpful in the future to other TLCs or teacher learning communities where the teachers learn how to teach ELLs.

2) Beneficial to the practice of engaging ELLs in mainstream classroom settings

This research has great significance in learning about, understanding and teaching ELLs in the mainstream classroom settings. From the efforts of this TLC there may be several transferable lessons for educating all ELLs. First, the research documented how, with the help of the TLC members and the community volunteers, the children were provided authentic opportunities to develop their literacy ability and how to use what they learned in appropriate situations, which helped both children grow academically. Mrs. SS reported in November 2007, Mike's reading was at level 16 already, which was the level a first grader would be expected to achieve at the end of the first grade. Rose's school achievement was among the top students as well.

The action of providing the children with exposure to authentic learning contexts has already been argued by scholars. For instance, Anderson and Pearson (1984) argue that the more a child knows about the world, the better and more one achieves in reading (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). This agrees with Brisk & Harrington's (2000) argument that English language learners need to learn how to use literacy in different contexts and for different purposes, besides how to encode and decode. Reflecting on Rose and Mike's school achievement progress through and after

this project, it could be argued that providing ELLs with authentic learning environments, such as pairing-them up with a local American family, taking them out for contextualized learning, etc. might be helpful in getting ELLs more engaged in the classroom setting. We know that only when they start to make sense of their background knowledge, and how it fits into the classroom environment, will they be able to get involved in the class.

Second, small teaching modifications might bring big benefits to ELLs' schooling. In this dissertation project, several of the TLC members modified their teaching strategies to accommodate the special needs of both Rose and Mike, and later some of the modified strategies also extended to other children in the class who needed it. From the dissertation report, these small modifications, such as sending video tapes home, sending CD and lyrics home or involving children naturally in activities all had big effects on both Chinese children's engagement in the classroom activities. Employing these strategies should prove beneficial with all ELLs as they demonstrated effectiveness even with the American students in the class. One suggestion would be that based on this project, further research on teaching ELLs should concentrate more on the effect of smaller modifications to teaching strategies. As demonstrated by the "Snowball Effect," these smaller modifications can easily grow into larger knowledge gains and also develop a momentum of their own for creating change. This makes more sense rather than focusing every study on searching

for big teacher changes.

Third, teaching ELLs means learning about them, about their culture, about their language, about their life inside and outside school, about their family, and about their family history. The most prominent outcome in this dissertation study was the tightened relationship among the teachers, the Chinese family, the teacher colleagues, and the community volunteers. It was because of the efforts from these different sources that the Chinese children were provided what they needed in their schooling and in their life transition. This cannot be accomplished unless the teachers know about the children and what's going on in their life. Only when the fundamental trust is set, will this tightened relationship be established around the children's growth.

Fourth, it is often stated but infrequently occurs that teachers need to recognize, understand, appreciate and respect their ELLs' home experiences and resources. In TLC, the teachers had opportunities to explore, familiarize, obtain, and utilize contextual information about the two Chinese children themselves, along with the design of how to deliver their lessons in order to respond to the special needs of the Chinese children or the children from a broader linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms. This might raise the question for future research, "What and how can teachers become aware of, understand, appreciate, and utilize the resources that children from diverse background have?"

And last, sincere communications with the parents, or ELLs' family

members, is vital to the success of the students. The success of this TLC was also due to the Chinese parents' participation, conversations, and discussion as well as their questions with teachers about their children, their children's schooling, their own experiences at home, and their thoughts about schooling. Communication between school and home as well as between teachers and parents is viewed as significant by researchers. Edward with colleagues (1999) synthesized literature on parental involvement in their children's schooling. They found that "parent involvement matters for any kind of school program success and for any individual child's school achievement" (p. 3). These ideas were supported by the findings in this research as well.

However, involving the parents as we did in TLC is quite new in professional development configurations. Based on the experiences of our TLC, visits with and debriefing of parents as knowledgeable informants on their (and their children's) experiences of and goals for education put parents in a more empowered and helpful role in dialogue with teachers. This shift in parent role and the nature of parent/teacher encounters could be a good way to engage parents in their children's schooling generally. Future research could focus on the significance of parental involvement in TLC settings and its impact on their children's school outcomes.

Weaknesses of the Research

It is important to note that because it was not the task of this study to monitor how and to what effect TLC teachers implemented what they learned in their classroom for this project, we did not try to fix the shortcomings of the following points based on the literature on traditional professional development programs (Ryan, 1987): a) inadequate needs assessment; b) the lack of follow-up in the classroom; c) little follow-through or follow-up evaluations; and d) no recognition of this kind of professional development programs as an aspect of personnel management. The reason we did not address these is not because these are not important, but because each professional development activity had its own focus, goal and objectives. The goal and objectives of both TLC and my qualitative research on teachers' learning within it made it possible for this dissertation to address a focused but limited set of important issues—what teachers learned by participation in this learning community. It is important in future research to take the next step and consider how this learning impacts classroom practice, and how changes in practice attributable to the learning in TLC impact the learning of ELL students.

Conclusion

“It takes a whole village to educate children,” Ms. Theil wrote in her article, *‘She is like a bridge’: Doctoral student unites Coopville school, Chinese children.*¹³ It

¹³ Ms. Theil is a journalist who was invited by Mr. JK to report the dissertation project, which Mr. JK was so excited about and proud of.

is true that from this study, the tightened relationships and community members' involvement became the foundation that led to the results of the teacher learning and the success of the research project. Some people called this project a "win-win" situation. However, facing the fact that in the field of education, we have been talking about educational questions or problems very frequently, why could we not conduct more studies where every participant is a winner of the project and where everyone learns and benefits? Why, being teacher educators, could we not set up an environment to encourage "a whole village" of potential teachers to volunteer for the purpose of educating our next generation? The idea of community in education need not be limited to the classroom or school. We have seen in Coopville that because of the snowball TLC set in motion, educating ELL's into English and life in an American community became the task of many people within and also outside the borders of TLC. To that end, not only did the children learn English, but the members of the community of Coopville had an opportunity to grow in awareness, understanding, attitude, and practice as they learned to live with others different from them in culture, language, and ethnic heritage. Since this is an essential problem not only for Coopville, but for our wider world, to end this dissertation, I borrow from Florio-Ruane with deTar's words "We need to be up to this task" (2001, p. 155).

Appendix A

Pre-Interview Questions for Teachers (IQT)

In this study, the following questions are designed for both pre-interview and the post-interview for teachers who participate in the Teacher Learning Community. The answers to these questions will be studied to track the changes teachers make through learning in the community.

[We are going to form a study group called the Teacher Learning Community (TLC), in which we will learn about the Chinese language, family life and culture of the Chinese children, and how you might integrate these children's home literacy resources/ experiences of into your literacy teaching. According to the purposes of this TLC, I will ask questions around four themes: 1) How much you know about your Chinese student in terms of Chinese language and their home culture; 2) What do you know and what do you need to learn; 3) How you integrate what you know about the Chinese children and their families into your own teaching; and 4) What do you hope to learn from this TLC.]

Interview Questions for Teachers

1) How much you know about your Chinese student in terms of Chinese language and their home culture

1. What language do you think the Chinese student use when they are out of school? What do you know about the Chinese language?
2. Do you know where your Chinese student is in terms of literacy development? (both in Chinese and in English)
3. What do you know about your Chinese student's parents (e.g. their home language and English proficiency)? What are your expectations for the parents in their children's schooling? What do you actually expect them to do at home? How often do you contact with the Chinese parents? What do you do when you are together?
4. Have you ever visited any/your Chinese children's home? (What impression do you have about your visit? Or what would be your impression of what their home looks like?)

2) What do you know and what do you need to learn

5. Excluding learning disabilities, have you ever had experience in teaching students from diverse backgrounds (such as children from different socio-economic backgrounds or from different culture or language), either teaching by yourself, or observing or learning in your professional development days?
What did you do with this experience in your own teaching?
6. Are you aware of any strategies that have been used in helping Chinese students improve their literacy outcomes?
7. Regarding literacy teaching, what do you think your Chinese children need to know in order to be able to succeed in your school? Are there particular strategies you have tried/or are planning to try to meet the needs of your Chinese student?
8. From your teaching and learning experiences, what do you think the role home resources/ experience plays in your students' school literacy learning?
Would that be the same if the parents speak another language?

3) How you integrate what you know about the Chinese children and their families into your own teaching

9. How do these children's home literacy influence how you would think about your teaching?

10. Have you ever done anything to combine students' home literacy resources with your teaching? Among these things, what do you think would be the most useful strategies in helping Chinese children succeed in their schooling?
11. What is the case you particularly remember in which you feel successful in teaching literacy to your Chinese student/ students from diverse backgrounds?

4) What do you hope to learn from this TLC

12. Why are you interested in this teacher learning community? What do you hope to learn by being a part of the group?

Appendix B

Post-Interview Questions for Teachers (IQT)

In this study, the following questions are designed for the post-interview for teachers who participate in the Teacher Learning Community. The answers to these questions will be studied to track the changes teachers make through learning in the community.

[We formed and participated in our Teacher Learning Community (TLC), in which we learned about the Chinese language, family life and culture of the Chinese children, and how you might integrate these children's home literacy resources/ experiences of into your teaching. According to the purposes of this TLC, I will ask questions around four themes, the same ones as for the pre-interview questions: 1] How much you know about your Chinese student in terms of Chinese language and their home culture; 2] What do you know and what do you need to learn; 3] How you integrate what you know about the Chinese children and their families into your own teaching; and 4] What do you hope to learn in the future.]

Interview Questions for Teachers

1) Understanding of the Chinese students and their parents

13. What language do you think the Chinese students use when they are out of school? And why? What do you know about the Chinese language, now?

14. Please explain where your Chinese student is in terms of literacy development?

15. What do you know about your Chinese student's parents (e.g. their home language and English proficiency)? Have you every met the Chinese parents before our TLC meeting?

16. What impression do you have about our home-visit activity? After our activity, in which aspects do you think you understand the parents better? What are your expectations for the parents in regards to their interaction with the school and the children's schooling? What do you expect them to do at home to support the children's education?

2) Learning and Practice

17. In which way do you think you understand the Chinese student/s better in your class? In which way do you think you engage the Chinese student/s differently in your class? Are there particular strategies you have tried/or are planning to try to more effectively meet the needs of your Chinese student?

18. When you are planning your lesson, are there special occasions in which you give additional consideration to your Chinese student/s' needs? Because of this, are there any changes you think you make in your lesson planning? If yes, please provide an example.

19. When you teach a lesson, is there any occasions in which you find your Chinese student/s involved more? If yes, please give an example.

20. Will this learning experience affect your view of students from a different background in the future?

3) Integration of Knowledge

21. From your teaching and learning experiences, what do you think the role home resources/ experiences play in your students' school literacy learning? Would that be the same if the parents spoke another language? Will diverse children's home literacy influence how you might think about your teaching?

22. Have you ever done anything to combine students' home literacy resources with your teaching? Among these things, what do you think would be the most useful strategies in helping Chinese children succeed in their schooling?

23. Is there a particular instance when you felt successful in teaching literacy to

your Chinese student/ students or other students from diverse backgrounds?

4) Experience with TLC

24. What were the most meaningful activities in the TLC? For example, how would you rate the different learning activities (Learning about Chinese language, The Home/Restaurant visit, Observing the Lansing schoolteacher's teaching, and the videos of model teaching)? Why?

25. If you have an opportunity to continue with this TLC, what would you like to do/ learn?

26. For the future, how do you see yourself continuing your own learning on teaching children from different backgrounds?

Appendix C

Coopville Teacher Learning Community Activity Agenda

The activities themselves and the sequence of the activities were designed according to the purpose of engaging the teachers in learning, reflection, and introspection of their classroom instruction in relation to the sociolinguistic theory and the principles of teacher learning communities. I describe them below.

First Meeting: Learning Basic Features and Structures of Chinese Language

The first meeting was led by me and comprised of two activities related to the Chinese language. The first activity was a simulation of the Chinese children's experience in American schools intended to sensitize the teachers' awareness of the awkward situation that ELLs experience when they were attending mainstream American schools. In doing this, I demonstrated three different teaching approaches, without scaffolding at all, with some scaffolding and with full scaffolding, for the purpose of unpacking ELLs' learning conditions in the US classrooms with language barriers and unpacking the power of visualizing in teaching.

The second activity was to learn the basic features and structures of the Chinese language, its orthography, its pictographic nature, its historical evolution and the relationships among its image, sound and symbol as well as its tones and the correspondence between tone and meaning, and between image and meaning.

Particularly, I focused on the differences between the Chinese and English writing systems, their ways of sense-making, the genres and social purposes for which the children read and hear at home and at school in China and how this affects the way children learn to help teachers conceptualize what they need to consider in their teaching. During this session, I also taught the teachers how to speak some commonly used daily phrases to have the teachers experience the Chinese Language. At this session, I also showed the teachers authentic Chinese children's books to demonstrate how Chinese children learn to read and write.

Second Meeting: Home-visit field-trip preparation.

At this session, the teachers reported, shared and reflected on what happened between the first meeting and this one in relation to Chinese language, the Chinese children and interacting as well as teaching these children. Then the group explored traditional Chinese educational culture through pictures and video-clips with the teachers' questions in the middle of the exploration and after it. As I will describe in the vignettes to follow, these questions showed interested in and led to deeper understandings of the children. As A researcher I focused on this meeting's richness of the teachers' stories and experiences, and reflections on how they had tried to teach and would teach these children. These questions also started our discussion on our home-visit agenda.

The teachers were excited about their learning experiences through the

questions they proposed, which included the Chinese children, their family, their family history, home resources, home literacy activities, and their parents and grandparents. There were so many good questions that we ran out of the time during the session and I had to give up the Home-Visit Protocol that I designed for the teachers' for reference when they were conducting their visit activity. As a result, I accepted the teachers' suggestion that they think of the questions they were interested in and email me in order to help them to prepare for their home visit and help while doing the home visit. The teachers also asked me to help them modify any questions that I thought would not be appropriate. This meeting shows teachers asserting their own needs, questions, and ideas throughout the meeting and contrasts with my necessarily taking the lead in the first meeting, when I responded to their interest by teaching them about Chinese.

Third Meeting: Home-visit field-trip.

This session aimed to help the teachers learn about the life and culture of the Chinese family, in which the TLC members could have opportunities to go into the real, non-school life of the two children. Since the family owns a Chinese restaurant where the children spend most of their after school time, the TLC group did two visits – they visited both the home and the restaurant. Also based on the teachers' proposal, the group had dinner at the restaurant as well in order to sense what the children feel when they were at the restaurant. There were surprises (such as the amount of family

time spent in the restaurant) and new experiences (such as the interior of the family's Chinese American home and their interaction with the parents) in this visit and debriefing it afterward.

As planned, the group did not have an inside school meeting. We all met at the parking lot of the school building and car-pooled to the restaurant where the Chinese father joined us and led the way to their house. On the way to the house and the way back, the teachers who sat in the same car with me asked a lot of questions about the family, the children and the house.

The group spent half the meeting time at the Chinese home, visited, watched, listened and asked questions to the father. Afterwards, the group car pooled back to the Chinese restaurant where the teachers ordered their food, chatted, and had their dinner. Also at the restaurant, the teachers met Bridget who had been helping the children with their home work, but was off work from the restaurant, preparing for the birth of her baby. She was a source of English language learning and use of whom the teachers had not been previously aware. More importantly, the teachers watched how the children played or spent their time after school at the restaurant. This was a contrast to their expectation that the children went home to more conventional, American-style homes after school. I was the interpreter between the family and the group whenever they needed my assistance.

Fourth Meeting: Home-visit field-trip reflection.

When we met the fourth time, we brought back and shared the information we collected from the Home-Visit Field-Trip. Both parents were invited and came over to sit down and talk with us. At the meeting, each one tied in what the others contributed. The parents asked their questions and shared views and opinions about both American and Chinese education. The TLC discussions went beyond the questions that the teachers asked and were interested in at the pervious session. The teachers pulled their Home-Visit Field-Trip experiences together, reflecting on what they learned and what they understood as well as what they planned to do with the two Chinese children. With the parents, the teachers also revealed their new concerns, insights, comments, and questions on how to teach the Chinese children and children from more broad backgrounds. In turn, the parents input their opinions about the resources and experiences to help the teachers think further.

Originally, about 30 minutes of the session was reserved for the discussion of the guiding observation questions for the next local –School-Visit, which was during our next TLC meeting. With this 30 minute time block, the TLC teachers were able to modify any questions that I prepared for them. I designed these questions to a) help the teachers to get familiar with the classroom observation; b) help the teachers to pull their minds together to have a focus when they were doing their classroom observation; and c) get a more effective group discussion for our next session. However, the teachers were so excited about seeing and talking as well as sharing with

the parents that we did not have time to talk over the observation guiding questions. As before, the teachers suggested that they would read the question and think of what they wanted to see themselves. But they emphasized that we would do the classroom observation together.

Fifth Meeting: School-visit Field-Trip.

This School-Visit Field-Trip provided the teachers a vivid first-hand experience of how another teacher in a neighborhood school educates children of diverse backgrounds. This local elementary class was selected because a) the teacher was teaching children of multiple language backgrounds with multiple educational needs, such as ELLs, speech-therapy children, and Special Education children; b) the visiting time allows everyone to present in a read context where children had multi-educational needs; c) the teaching was viewed effective and recommended by educational experts at MSU; d) the teacher was willingly to open the classroom door for other teachers to observe and debrief with our group. This School-Visit Field-Trip was more likely to provide the teachers vivid experiences of how other teachers educate children from diverse backgrounds in the local context, which created an environment where the teachers could think deeper and further about how to teach children from China and other linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

At this activity, all TLC teachers, except the school principal, did the observation in two separate sessions and debriefed with the classroom teacher twice.

The visit lasted three hours, within which the TLC teachers also participated in students' group work and talked with the ELLs in the class.

Sixth Meeting: School-visit Field-Trip Reflection..

If we followed what had been planned for the meeting, the teachers would have reported their school visit and the reflections on the school-visit, especially on what they would/could do for their Chinese children. However, from the beginning of the session, the teachers already started to share the progress they observed that the Chinese children had made. From this topic, the teachers shared the ideas that they thought would be helpful to the Chinese children (many of the teachers' ideas were put forth after the meeting). This was also the session where the teachers started to do some retrospective reflections and where the teachers started to challenge their own assumptions in the teaching and in their daily life. For instance, Mrs. RS told the group a story about her son who works with refugees. One of the refugees did not understand the electricity switch at all. Her son showed him the switch and explained the function of it. As soon as Mrs. RS stopped the story, Mrs. ML exclaimed that "We just take these things for granted!" Following Mrs. ML, the TLC members examined more cases where they just assumed things would happen in the way they thought, but in reality, they did not (See TLC Notes: 11-15-2007).

When the group had to share their experiences because the principal who could not visit the school brought the question up, the teachers shared and discussed

what they observed and what they learned while at the school. But they further reported that the trip did not help much and they changed their topic to talking about the Chinese children and the Chinese family. As reported earlier in this dissertation, they seemed not to have much interest in the school-visit field trip.

Seventh Meeting: Watching model teaching from videotapes.

“Maximizing Second Language Learners’ Literacy Outcomes” describes a model of instruction in teaching children from diverse backgrounds. Three videotapes were made for workshops where teachers learned how to maximize their students’ literacy learning outcomes. Along with the videotapes, a set of questions and reading materials are designed in a way, which will help participating teachers to better understand what they see on the tapes and how they can use the knowledge from the tapes to reflect on their own teaching. The first clip I chose was a first grade teacher who used multi-strategies to engage ELLs in his classroom and the second clip was about the misunderstandings people made between ELLs and Special Education students. However, the video-clips we watched did not make any good impression to the teachers because they all thought that they have been doing what the model teachers did every day. Meanwhile, they thought the separation between ELLs and Special Education students should be the responsibility of the principal. I did not have chance to talk with them about the reasoning behind some of the teaching strategies due to the fact that the whole group was not interested in it.

The teachers' resistance was echoed by their being silent when I handed out two academic chapters about language, language families and language learning. My intuition led me to think that academic papers might be too "academic" and far away from these teachers' lives. This might have been a kind of learning they were not prepared to undertake at that time.

However, when we talked about the two Chinese children's situation, the teachers became excited again. They offered explanations and suggestions from various perspectives to help themselves and other understand the children and learn about how to teach them.

Eighth Meeting: Reviewing and summary.

This was the last session for the Fall semester, and meanwhile, also the last session for my dissertation data collection. At the session, the Chinese father came and joined us. The school secretary, the volunteer American mother, and my dissertation advisor, Dr. Susan Florio-Ruane, were all invited and present at the meeting. A journalist came to join us as well who was doing a report on the Coopville Teacher Learning Community. Together with the Chinese father, I explained the video clips about Chinese education that the teachers watched. Along with the father's words, the TLC members and its extended members, the school secretary and the volunteer mother, shared what they did for and with the Chinese family and what progress they saw about the Chinese children. The volunteer American mother, Mrs. K also showed

all the teachers a scrapbook, which she compiled with the help from her own children along with Rose and Mike. The scrapbook documented the activities the two families – the American and the Chinese – did together or the activities the children did together under her supervision. At the meeting, the extended member, Mrs. JS also shared her thoughts about why and how she shared and talked with other people from the community about how to help the two Chinese children and their family to get involved in the children's schooling as well as the community activities. Combining what they learned and what they heard and saw at this meeting, the TLC members shared their thoughts and experiences and pushed their thinking further. Mrs. RS and Mrs. SS tried to imagine what schooling would look like for the Chinese parents when they were in China through comparing school activities in the U.S. and on the video and how their schooling experiences in China could affect their way of nurturing both Rose and Mike in the U.S. In understanding this process, the TLC teachers asked the questions to the Chinese father, such as what his schooling experiences were, whether his school was in the countryside or in the city, etc. The Chinese father sincerely explained to the teachers that he did not have music class while he was in elementary school because his school was too poor to hire any music teacher. The father further explained that he was very happy about the Coopville Elementary School because it was a good school, much better than his own school. He explained that although he understood that there was a time difference between his schooling and his children's

schooling, he thought his children got a very good school and he appreciates what the teachers had been doing for the sake of his children's education. At the meeting, I was impressed by the growing trust among the TLC members, the Chinese father, and the extended TLC members. I was also amazed at the multi-directional communications among participants – everyone without hesitation sharing their different expertise to help the others to learn, to understand, and to think about educating Rose and Mike. However, with Mr. GC's comments on "he's no longer 'color-blind'" and Mr. JK's words of his understanding of equity and equality, both of them pushed everyone's thoughts to a higher level – how to teach ELLs or all children? Since I do not have permission to use the data from the extended TLC members, I did not include this vignette in my dissertation, except I will come back to Mr. GC's and Mr. JK's words in later chapters.

As a conclusion, Dr. Florio-Ruane shared her experience with the teachers at her book club. She donated her book of "Book Club Plus" to the library of Coopville Elementary School.

We mapped out our thoughts and went beyond our focus of "how to teach Chinese immigrant children" and reflect on the bigger picture in terms of leaving no child behind. Before the end of the session, I handed out a resource package, which contained materials about the Chinese language, culture, music and the materials about ELLS to each of the teacher. Teachers were every excited when they were

reading the package, which indicated a successful ending of our TLC.

Focusing on what and how the TLC teachers learned about how to teach their Chinese students, this dissertation focused on the activities occurring in the first four sessions and the ideas and thoughts generated after the TLC meeting sessions, but about the Chinese students and their family. In the following chapters, through vignettes that materialized from this experience, I documented how the TLC teachers opened to learning about these children, how they became learners, and how they learned what they had come to know. These chapters also documented the TLC teachers' determination in educating their Chinese students and the children from other language and cultural backgrounds.

Appendix D

Samples of Qualitative Data

Section A: TLC Agenda

Teacher Learning Community for Promoting Chinese Students' School Learning

Agenda

9/13/07

1. Introduction
 - a. Introduction of Project Coordinator
 - b. Description of the project
 - c. Characteristics of this Teacher Learning Community
2. Negotiation of Teacher Learning Community activities
 - a. Outline of bi-weekly meetings
 - b. General expectations for each meeting
3. Learning activity: Language barrier and peer modeling
 - a. Using Markers to accomplish a task
 - b. Comparisons to English language
4. Learning Chinese

**Teacher Learning Community for
Promoting Chinese Students' School Learning**

Agenda

9/27/07

3. Review last session and reflections

4. Change of Teacher Learning Community dates:
 - a. Change Nov. 8 to Nov. 15
 - b. Negotiation time about School-visit session

3. Talk about Open House: thoughts, feelings, or questions about Chinese mother's and Jenny's visit

4. Learning activity:
 - a. What traditional Chinese classroom look like?
 - b. Unpack Chinese educational tradition

5. Home-Visit Protocol

This is what I want to know about

How are we going to know this

**Teacher Learning Community for
Promoting Chinese Students' School Learning**

Agenda

10/11/07

2. Meet at Elementary School Library
3. Car pool or drive to the Chinese Restaurant
4. Pick up the father and car pool to the house of the Chinese family
5. Visit the family,
 - a. finding resources at home, including books, games, toys, computer, or any other things related to education
 - b. Asking questions related to family resources and two children's education
6. Go back with the father to the Chinese restaurant
 - a. Talking with either the mother or the father
 - b. Having dinner at the restaurant
 - c. Asking further questions interested

**Teacher Learning Community for
Promoting Chinese Students' School Learning**

Agenda

10/25/07

7. Conversations with the father or both father and mother
8. Reflections on our home visit
9. Helping family change:
 - Sharing and collectively working on Mrs. Staton's ideas:
 - i. Building a study center at the restaurant
 - ii. Helping both Chinese children's socialization with American children
10. Discussion:
 - i. What insights do we gain from our home-visit project and the conversation with the father or parents?
 - ii. How could we take advantage of our experiences to think about our teaching in order to provide the Chinese children a comfortable learning environment?
11. Discussion: School Visit
 - i. More information about the teacher: Ann
 - ii. Revisit school visit time: November 1 and November 2
 - iii. What are we going to observe?

**Teacher Learning Community for
Promoting Chinese Students' School Learning**

Agenda

11/01/07

School-Visit Day

- 1) 12:55 -1:35pm observing writing and read aloud;
- 2) 1:35 – 2:05pm first debriefing with the teacher;
- 3) 2:05- 3:15pm observing Literacy including poem, bigbook, literacy centers, and guided reading;
- 4) 3:30 -4:00pm second debriefing with the teacher.

**Teacher Learning Community for
Promoting Chinese Students' School Learning**

Agenda

11/15/07

School-Visit Reflection Day

- I) Share what efforts have we made for the children, so far, (i.e. curriculum changes, instructional changes) or what changes the children have made (i.e. learning strategies, peer interactions)
- II) Summarize our school visit, share what we learned from the teacher/instructional observations and what strategies might be useful in our classrooms
- III) Share thoughts and ideas about how what we have learned might help us to teach children from all different backgrounds
- IV) Prepare to watch the model ELL teaching video at the next meeting. What do we anticipate we might see?

**Teacher Learning Community for
Promoting Chinese Students' School Learning**

Agenda

11/29/07

Reflection and Video Watching

1. Share what efforts have we made for the children, so far, (i.e. curriculum changes, instructional changes) or what changes the children have made (i.e. learning strategies, peer interactions)
2. Two handouts related to Chinese language
3. Watch the model ELL teaching video and discussion
 - a. Thoughts and ideas about the video
 - b. Reflecting on teaching the two Chinese children based on video
 - c. Reflecting on teaching children from all different backgrounds based on video

**Teacher Learning Community for
Promoting Chinese Students' School Learning**

Agenda

12/13/07

Summarizing the TLC Activities

1. Introduction: Everyone is here.
2. Dr. Susan Florio-Ruane talking about the teacher network project
3. Video clips on China's classrooms
4. Sharing experiences:
 - a. Parents' reflections
 - b. Janet's reflections
 - c. Mrs. Cubiak's reflections
2. Honorary gifts

THANK YOU. WE MADE IT!

Section B

A Sample of Field Notes

08/20/07

On my way to Coopville, I was thinking about my trip at the Chinese family. Suddenly, one question prompted into my mind: Will the language differences be a kind of subject knowledge in literacy teaching? In terms of teaching ELLs, what does teachers' subject matter knowledge include? Then I remember at one meeting related to LARC, Nell Duke mentioned that literacy was not a subject. So if it is not a subject, what is it? How does Nell's definition affect learning how to teach these Chinese children? ... I could not think this through.

Ten minutes to 12 noon. I approached to the front of the Chinese restaurant. I wanted to meet and communicate with the father first before I went to their home directly. Surprisingly, as the time I stepped in the restaurant, the mother greeted me with smiles.

M: Wolai gongzuo le. Tamen zaijia shuijiao ne. (I came back to work. They [the children] are at home, sleeping.)

Me: O, wozhi xiang kankan tamen zai zuo shenme. Wo keyi ziji guoqu. Ninmen buyong daiwo guoqu de. (Oh, I just want to see what they are doing. I can go over and you do not need to do anything for me.)

Restaurant phone rang.

The mother picked up the phone and quickly wrote down the order. Then another phone rang. Then I noticed that they have two phones side by side on the counter. The mother signaled me to wait for her. Then grabbed the other phone. She murmured, must be repeating the order, and quickly put the order down.

Then she shouted at the father in Chinese dialect. I could not understand what it was. She turned to me and said, "Deng yixia. Rang tamen de baba dai ni qu. (Just a moment. Let the father take you over.)

Me: Buyong, buyong. Wo zhidao zengme qu. Ninmen buyong dai wo qu de. (No, no. I know where it is. You do not need to take me there.)

When we had such short conversations, the restaurant phone rang again and again. She had to answer each phone call, talk to me and to the Dad.

When the father finished one dish, he came over from inside the counter. I felt guilty about pulling him out from his duty at such busy time.

I said, "Duibuqi. Nin zhidao wo ziji keyi qu de. (I am sorry. You know I can go over myself.)

Father: Meiguanxi. Wo yaoqu geini kaimen de. (That's ok. I need to open the door for you, anyway.)

Me: Na wo genzhe nin ba. (Then I will follow your car).

Father: Haode. (Ok).

We came out of the restaurant. Each went into our own car. I sat in my car for about 2 minutes without seeing the father's car move. So I decided to go first.

Section C

A Sample of Categorization of Meeting Transcripts

Brief categorizations of tapes are made first and whenever the data needed in detail, detailed transcription is made through transcriber. Here is an example of a TLC meeting transcription:

11-15-2007

215-261

RC: Another volunteer family wants to introduce themselves at the restaurant.

GT: J's family pair-up activity: Bee Movie

Rui: intro of H's family having the children for whole week.

SS: first experience to go to McDonald.

JK: We just took these for granted.

261-305

RS: Her son's adoption of a whole Somali family.

JK: explaining "Had," I "have" it, and I "had" it.

RS: son's admire of instruction in Chinese what it is for not understanding instructions.

305-346

GT: Rose's clothes.

ML: American like McDonald- wrong assumption.

Rui: Kentucky and McDonald.

ML: Beef expensive in Germany.

347-394

Rui: how could we understand the things that we take for granted?

GT: pictures, modeling

JK: cannot lose track of who we are teaching. Kids bring baggage to school; equity vs equality.

SS: visited school; half day

RS: Ann let one child sleep because she understood her.

ML: tells more than parents telling you at conferences.

394-422

Rui: parents took for granted.

SS: We have more children than they do.

Rui: the father never noticed children not going outside playing with other kids until we visited his home.

Section D

A Sample of the TLC Artifact

From: "JK" <Kj@k12.us> [Trust] [Block]
To: "Rui Niu" <niurui@msu.edu>
Date: 26 Oct 2007, 04:14:16 PM
Subject: Re: Imight visit 2nd grade classroom on Friday

HTML content follows

Sorry, I was at a conference on Wednesday and Thursday.
Did it work out OK?

J

>>> "Rui Niu" <niurui@msu.edu> 10/24/2007 12:18 PM >>>

J,

I forgot my cell phone today again. I could not call you.
Would you mind going over to Mrs. G. 's room to let her know that
I would like to go in her room on this Friday to see how Rose has
been doing? I am not sure about the specific time, which depends
on how the other rooms go.
But I will stay about 40 minutes.
Thank you.
Rui

K. writes:

> I think that is a great idea (and only fair). I would like to hear his
> questions as I think they might reflect any concerns he may have
> about our school system.

>
> Thanks,
> J
>
>>>> "Rui Niu" <niurui@msu.edu> 10/12/2007 3:03 PM >>>
> Hi Everyone,
> Thank you very much for coming together yesterday to do the home
> visit.
> I noticed the meeting went over our time limit. I appreciate your
> extra time staying at the restaurant and your talking with the father
> and Bridget.
>
> You all asked many good questions to help all of us understand the
> family better. The father was quite open yesterday to talk about
> himself and his family, including the children. But I am not sure
> whether the session went successful because I did not predict that
> when we came back to the restaurant, the father was so busy
> that he could not find time to talk with us. Although Bridget was
> called over to the restaurant, she did not have
> much time to talk with all of us, either. I wonder what you think
> about this?
>
> After you all left, the father told me that he should have had asked
> you some questions about their children's education. But he was not
> sure whether it was appropriate. So I invited him to come back to
> our next session for about 20-30 minutes to ask his questions and
> to talk with us again when we do our reflection on the home-visit.
> He agreed and he said he would ask you all the question he had.
> I think this might be a good opportunity for us to ask more
> questions that are back in our minds about how to teach these
> children. I invited Bridget as well. But she was not sure whether she
> could come to our next meeting.
>
> Please let me know if you have any concerns or questions. Have a
> nice weekend,
> Rui
>
>

>

Rui Niu
Teacher Education
Michigan State University

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