

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: BRIDGING CULTURES IN A THIRD SPACE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHING CHINESE IN AMERICAN CHINESE SCHOOLS

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This study explores the lived experiences of Chinese teachers in American Chinese Schools. Max van Manen's methodology for hermeneutic phenomenological research provides a framework for the study, and the philosophical writings of Heidegger, Gadamer and Derrida guide the textual interpretations. Pedagogical voices of Aoki, Pinar and Greene, and cultural journeys of Hongyu Wang and Xin Li reveal possibilities for understanding the experiences of Chinese teachers, as I address the question: "What is the meaning of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools?"

Seven Chinese teachers engage with the researcher in a series of open-ended conversations. These Chinese teachers teach Chinese in different campuses of Hope Chinese School or other Sunday Chinese Schools around the Washington D.C. area. They are all women who have between 3 and 15 years experience teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools. In addition, they all have similar teaching or other educational experiences, as well as having studied in Normal Universities in China. Their conversations illuminate the experience of teaching in American Chinese Schools around three main themes. The teachers tell of being shocked by the cultural and pedagogical differences when they land in a foreign place. They speak of the struggles and challenges teaching in-between two different cultures and pedagogies, creating a third space. Finally,

in following the metaphor of Chinese knotwork, they reflect on splitting and splicing the knots through changing and adjusting their way of teaching as they strive to become good teachers.

The study suggests a need for Chinese teachers in American Chinese Schools to participate in on-going professional development to bridge the pedagogical differences in which they find themselves. It is also suggested that a teacher preparation track be developed in Chinese Normal schools for teachers who plan to teach Chinese in the United States. Finally, the study suggests a need for Chinese teachers, administrators and parents to be open to change as east and west cultures are brought together in the Chinese Schools where teachers seek the Tao of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools.

BRIDGING CULTURES IN A THIRD SPACE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
OF TEACHING CHINESE IN AMERICAN CHINESE SCHOOLS

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland – College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2010

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DEDICATION

To my family:

Kun

Luke

Amy

My mother, Xinhua Yi,

And in loving memory of my mother-in-law, Julian Deng

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Francine Hultgren for opening a door and inviting me into a phenomenological world, wherein I find my path and live in a new life different from before. Her listening, caring, and encouragement helped me to overcome all the challenges I encountered walking on my path. Her generous guidance, wonderful insight and thorough reading of this dissertation make it possible for me to begin to understand the Tao of phenomenological inquiry.

I am grateful to Steven Selden for leading me into a beginning understanding of American pedagogy. His generous support and insightful guidance helped me realize the pedagogical differences between Chinese and American education, and I learned to compare them using a critical perspective.

I am grateful to Jing Lin for guiding me to understand more deeply Chinese culture and pedagogy. Her brilliant instruction and generous offering of materials and perspectives helped me develop a deeper understanding of Chinese philosophy and culture. Her caring and support outside the classroom encouraged me to face up to all the difficulties of studying in a foreign country.

To Jing Lin, Meina Liu, Steven Selden, and Linda Valli, thank you for reading my work and responding to it with such helpful and generative suggestions.

I am very grateful to the seven teachers who gave their time to participate in this study. Their generous sharing of their teaching stories provides the solid foundation for my dissertation study. I appreciate each of them for their friendship and support.

I also wish to acknowledge the Hermescircle Group. I have learned a lot from other members presenting and received a lot of valuable feedbacks on my sharing. Thank you to all the members for sharing their time and insights.

Particularly, I am very grateful to my husband, Kun, who encouraged me to pursue my doctoral degree in education and supported my study during the past eight years. I also thank my children, Luke and Amy, from whom I have learned a lot about love, honesty, and real pedagogy. Thanks to my parents and parents-in-law, who flew to the United States from China to take care of the children for us. Without their support, I would not have finished my dissertation study.

Finally, I give thanks to the following authors whose works inspired my dissertation work tremendously:

Wang, H. (2004). *The call from the stranger on a journey home: Curriculum in a third space*. New York: Peter Lang.

Li, X. (2002). *The Tao of life stories: Chinese language, poetry, and culture in education*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pinar W. F., & Irwin R. L. (Eds.) (2005). *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

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CHAPTER ONE:

TURNING TO THE PHENOMENON OF BRIDGING CULTURES IN A THIRD SPACE

Eight years ago, the second month after I arrived in the U.S., I began to teach Chinese at Hope Chinese School in Fairfax, Virginia. At that time, we had no car and I didn't know how to drive. So I had to spend two hours on the Metro to Fairfax and another two hours back home every Sunday. After teaching, I always felt very tired. One day, when I came home, my roommate was there. He was a quiet Chinese graduate student and didn't talk a lot with us. Suddenly he asked: "How was your teaching today?" I felt a little surprised at his question, because he never paid attention to my teaching before. But his question really made me start to think about the answer. When I was trying to figure out my response to his question, he answered it himself immediately, "So far so good?" I was shocked by his answer. Why did he think that my teaching was so far so good? How did he know that? Did I look happy? Did I look like a good teacher? Didn't he see that I was very tired? Did he think my tiredness meant I loved teaching Chinese? In addition, the more important question is whether or not my teaching Chinese in American Chinese School really was "so far so good?"

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary states that far comes from Middle English *fer*, from Old English *feorr*; akin to Old High German *ferro* far, Old English *faran* to go – more at FARE. It means at or to a considerable distance in space (wandered far from home), or at a definite distance, point, or degree. "So far" means to a certain extent, degree, and distance. Does "So far so good" mean that I feel good in this teaching place so far from home? Thus, when I teach Chinese in America, a place at a considerable

distance from China, can I feel good? What does it mean to teach the “familiar” so far from home? Does “so far” also mean that I don’t quite trust my continued success?

American Chinese School, the Sunday Chinese School in the United States, is a unique arrangement as a non-profit informal school. My Chinese School—Hope Chinese School was established in 1994, constituted by first generation immigrants from Mainland China. Why do they name this Chinese school “Hope?” What does “hope” mean? The etymology of hope comes from Old English *hopian*; akin to Middle High German *hoffen* to hope. It means to cherish a desire with anticipation, to desire with expectation of obtainment, to expect with confidence (trust), etc. So hope means expect and trust. Moreover, the Chinese character of hope is 希望. “希” means hope or rare, “望” means look. So “希望” also means looking for a special hope. At Hope Chinese School (HCS), the parents, teachers, and students make great effort to fulfill their “hope” of teaching and learning Chinese “so far so good” with confidence and desire.

They rent an American high school for its school building every Sunday. Our students are born in America and are called second generation Chinese immigrants. All the administrators and most teachers are volunteer parents. There are no standardized tests, curriculum outlines, or strict rules in the school. But there are different expectations from parents, teachers and students, and unavoidable conflicts between different cultures and generations. Every Sunday, teaching and learning Chinese brings Chinese people together in an American school, a non-Chinese place. People share, negotiate and implement their ideas about teaching and learning Chinese in this place, which looks actually more like a community that is perhaps out of place. It is “a third space,” as Wang (2004) names it in her journey between America and China. Teaching Chinese in

American Chinese Schools bring us into a third space. What is this third space? Why does teaching Chinese in the United States bring us into a third space? What is the meaning of being in a third space? I turn to this metaphor here as it helps name the phenomenon I am called by, teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools.

Being in a Third Space

Finally I am home, in a third space. Dancing home, through the body, down to the psyche, in the boats traveling along the river, the river of memory, the river across borders, the river flowing to unfamiliar shore. In a third space, I am no longer at home. Endless homecoming lands in the stranger's kingdom, the queendom of homeless singing. (Wang, 2004, p. 151)

Third comes from Middle English *thridde*, *thirde*, from Old English *thridda*, *thirdda*; akin to Latin *tertius* third, Greek *tritos*, *treis* three (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). Three is a magic number in Chinese literature. It could mean an unlimited being, like Lao-Tzu (1993) says in *Tao Te Ching*:

Tao engenders One,
One engenders Two,
Two engenders Three,
Three engenders the ten thousand things (or translated to *universe*). (p. 42)

So, a third space is a magic and secret universe, rather than being next to the second in place or time. Aoki (1999) states: "It is a space of doubling, where we slip into the language of 'both this and that, but neither this nor that' ... the space moves and is alive" (p. 181). Teaching Chinese in American Chinese School makes me feel caught between a familiar and unfamiliar world, living between home and a foreign land, and floating between past and current experience. The in-between feelings make me "dwell in a conjunctive space, not one splintered by binaries, but a lived space" (p. 77) —a third space. How do we feel the third space? Wang (2004) answers: "It is invisible, beyond the gaze of eyes...A third space is ineffable...It is a space of multiple others interacting

through different times and places" (pp. 146-147). We can not say where it is and when it is. It is ineffable. But we can feel it through experiencing the place and time in "between."

A Third Place

The etymological meaning of place (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*) is from Old French, open space, from Latin *platea* broad street. It means a physical environment, a physical surrounding and atmosphere, which is related to open space.

"Space" and "place" are familiar words denoting common experiences. We live in space... Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other... Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. (Tuan, 1977, p. 3)

Space and place are parts of the lived world. They are inseparable. However, they are different and complementary.

In experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place. "Space" is more abstract than "place"... From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (Tuan, 1977, p. 4)

Space is more abstract than place; place is more physical than space. Space will become place when it feels thoroughly familiar and secure to us. Tuan (1977) describes the process from space to place through explaining learning a maze.

At first only the point of entry is clearly recognized; beyond lies space (A). In time more and more landmarks are identified and the subject gains confidence in movement (B, C). Finally space consists of familiar landmarks and paths—in other words, place (D). (p. 71)

When I began to familiarize myself with the environment in the Chinese School, a third space was becoming a third place for me. Place means an indefinite region or expanse, or a building or locality used for a special purpose. It could be a country, a land,

or a school building. Moreover, experiencing a place will help us to feel the space personally. Therefore, through experiencing the “between” in different countries, lands and school buildings, I may understand how teaching Chinese in America brings us into a third space that bridges differences in a more fluid way.

Actually, there is a small story that enlightens me about the meaning of a third space. One day, when I finished observing in a pre-school classroom, I wanted to have a conversation with Teacher Xu. The class was over. The students and teacher were all clearing their desks and leaving. Suddenly, one boy walked to the teacher’s desk before he left the classroom. He pointed at a chocolate rose on the teacher’s desk and said: “Teacher Xu, this is my Valentine’s day gift for you.” Teacher Xu was shocked and responded: “Oh, I am sorry. I thought it belonged to the teacher in this American school.” I also was surprised. It was two weeks after Valentine’s day. During the two weeks, no one paid attention to this rose, and no one claimed it. This is a third place—in between the master school (the American high school) and the renter school (the Sunday Chinese School). Teaching Chinese in America connects the two places and creates a third place, which is in-between the two places and beyond the gaze of eyes. People can not see it, only feel it. I wonder what the rose thinks? Does it feel lonely, angry, lost, or disappointed? Does it know where it is and to whom it belongs? Sometimes I think I am that chocolate rose.

I am a Chinese person. China is my home country, but I live in the United States. Teaching Chinese in America leads me back to a fictitious “China” in America, because we talk, teach and learn Chinese here like in China. As an immigrant, I left my homeland and stand now in the foreign land. I am displaced. But teaching Chinese in America

brings me the opportunity to implace myself in the “between” of two lands. It is impossible for me to be a pure American. Moreover, I will not go back as a pure Chinese either.

As a renter, my Chinese School uses the school building only on Sundays, while the master school uses the building all the time. The renter school has a totally different feeling about the building from the master school. We have to obey strict rules from the master school—an American high school. We are not allowed to change the arrangement of desks or chairs in the classroom. Actually, we are not allowed to touch any resources belonging to the master school; we are in awe of the building. However, teaching Chinese in an American Chinese School creates a new place beyond the renter and master school. It is an invisible school—a temporary master school. I will change the arrangement of desks and chairs to fit my teaching, and then change back to the original form after the class is over. If I am that chocolate rose, I know I belong to a third space through experiencing the “in-betweens” of places.

A Third Time

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of time comes from Old English *tīma*; akin to Old Norse *tīmi* time, Old English *tīd*. It means the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues, a nonspatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past through present to future, the point or period when something occurs, an appointed, fixed, or customary moment or hour for something to happen, begin, or end, an opportune or suitable moment, a historical period, and so on. Time is usually related to an action, process, events, and something occurs or ends. When people experience

something, they are also experiencing the particular time. Time becomes a way of being in the world.

In addition, time has the historical meaning as well based on its definition. Tuan (1977) says: “Space is historical if it has direction or a privileged perspective” (p. 122), and “space also has temporal meaning at the level of day-to-day personal experiences” (p. 126). Thus, time is also a key dimension of space. “Historical time and oriented space are aspects of a single experience” (p. 129). Thus, experiencing a third time among past, present and future is another way to experience the third space. Teaching Chinese in American Chinese School reveals many examples of the “in-betweens” of time, such as the past and present, Chinese tradition and American modern culture, weekend and weekday, and so on.

In-between the past and present. An international student from Bulgaria, Kobourov, recalls one of his grandmother’s favorite sayings in his reflection on the past: “Don’t dig up the past. Dwell on the past and you’ll lose an eye... However, forget the past and you’ll lose both eyes” (as cited in Garrod & Davis, 1999, p. 13). Indeed, the past means a lot to us. Tuan (1977) says: “When travel brochures tell us to ‘step into’ the past or future, what they intend is that we should visit a historic or futuristic place—a house or city” (p. 125). In my past, I lived in China, a thoroughly Chinese cultural environment. China is my past. All my education, family background, and lived experiences shape my current “me.” They are my “her-story,” and I can’t be “me” without them. Until now, “The old tradition is still within me...” and “I am not yet ready to let go” (Lee, 1989, p.125). Right now, I live in the United States, which is my present. I am thinking, changing, and trying my best to find my present destination in America, a foreign land.

Leaving China means that the river-route suddenly changed. The water flows into the unknown sea. The sea is never flat, but surges. The wave is never calm, but exciting. I am totally lost and confused. I can't tell direction, and don't know how to wave and where to go. But I can't be quiet again because I am in the sea. I become worried, frustrated and suffer a great deal. (Personal reflections)

I am struggling to find my present, while I am not willing to let my past go. I am floating in a third space and time—in-between the past and present. As Wang (2004) says: “The third space is knotted by conflicting doubles” (p. 149). The conflicts between my past and present often make me worried and frustrated as I suffer from teaching Chinese in America. Moreover, the conflicts between Chinese tradition and American culture become very prominent.

In-between Chinese tradition and American modernist culture. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, modern comes from Latin *modo*, just now. It means relating to, or characteristic of the present or the immediate past. It is a concept of time. Tradition comes from Middle French and Latin; Middle French tradition, from Latin tradition-, *traditio* action of handing over. It means the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction. It is relating to the generation, a concept of time. Aoki (2005e) describes the relationship between the third space and traditions:

I mark the third space as an ambivalent space of both this and that, of both East and West, wherein the traditions of Western modernist epistemology can meet the Eastern traditions of wisdom. (p. 319)

A third space is an ambivalent space between the different cultures and traditions. So, the “in-between” of Chinese tradition and modernist American culture creates a third time, which is also a way to experience the third space. Wang (2004) thinks that she is “searching for a third space as a result of this intercultural conversation” (p. 75). The

intercultural conversation between Chinese tradition and American modernist culture helps to shape this third time, which is knotted by some conflicting issues, such as gender and the teacher's professional identity. These conflicts influence my teaching Chinese in America greatly.

Confucianism is the root of traditional Chinese culture. Zhu Xi¹ (1130-1200 A.D.) is one of the most famous Confucian masters. He describes the role of women in the highly hierarchical Chinese society. In his article “Selections From Further Reflections on Things at Hand (*Xu Jinsi Lu*),” Zhu xi (Trans. Wang, 2003) says:

To do wrong is unbecoming to a wife, and to do good is also unbecoming to a wife. A woman is only to be obedient to what is proper. (p. 325)

He insists that the images of women are obedient and doing nothing wrong. Wang (2004) summarizes Zhu Xi’s ideal of womanhood:

Serving her parents-in-law diligently (without any complaints), following her husband’s orders, keeping harmony among family members, taking good care of the household in a frugal way, and educating her children for their moral cultivation. There is no place left for herself: Women are supposed to sacrifice and devote themselves to others and the family. (p. 81)

In addition, Zhu Xi looked down on women’s ability to study. He “did not believe that women had the same intellectual capabilities as men. Women could not understand the higher metaphysical principles he himself promoted” (Birge, 1989, p. 331). Zhu Xi (Trans. Wang, 2003) even says: “Only spirit and food are her concern.” (p. 325)

Therefore, in Chinese tradition, the role of women is inferior as they are supposed to sacrifice for the family and others, and have no ability to study like men.

¹ Zhu Xi is the usual spelling in Mainland China. It is also written as Chu Hsi in Taiwan.

Motherhood, however, is a very important aspect of ancient Chinese women's identity. In "The book of Odes (*Shi jin*)" (Trans. Wang, 2003), the oldest poetry book in China, there are some verses that describe the mother:

The genial wind from the south
Blows on the branches of the jujube tree,
Till that heart looks tender and beautiful.
What toil and pain did our mother endure!

The genial wind from the south
Blows on the branches of the jujube tree,
Our mother is wise and good;
But among us there is no one good... (pp. 10-11)

The most famous images of women are related to mothering. In the book, "Biographies of Women (*Lie nu zhuan*)," the first chapter is "Biographies on the Department of Mothers (*Mu yi zhuan*)."² Zhu Xi also states: "The highest human virtue of a woman is her ability to love" (as cited in Wang, 2004, p. 84). Van Manen (1991) says: "Parents are the original educators" (p. xi). All these traditions regarding mothering identity affect a teacher's professional identity, even in today's China. Though in ancient China, the teachers had to be men, and the primary image of teacher was a "father" who had the power and authority over the students, the mothers also played an important pedagogical role for their children through caring and moral cultivation. In today's China, teaching is considered to be a woman's profession more and more because it seems that women are deemed more able to love and care for others due to being mothers.

In addition, there are several images of teacher in today's China, such as a candle "that fires itself in order to lighten the lives of others" (Wang, 2004, p. 84), a gardener, a soul engineer, and so on. The fate of the candle is to sacrifice itself to lighten others. The role of gardener is to take care of the plants and flowers regardless of herself. The job of

² It is also translated to "Matronly Models."

soul engineer is to cultivate the students' spirit with her own moral behavior. Therefore, being a professional teacher means that you have to be a candle serving others while sacrificing yourself, a gardener working hard to care for others selflessly, and being a moral model to educate others. As a student in the Department of Education in China, I accepted these metaphors. However, when I began to teach Chinese in America, I recognized that these metaphors are seriously challenged by American modernist culture.

Boorstin (1965) writes about the development of American culture in his book, *The Americans: The National Experience*. He believes America grew in its search for community. It lived with the constant belief that something else or something better might turn up. Americans were glad enough to keep things growing and moving. Being glad to do something and enjoying what you do is a kind of American belief. Actually, teaching Chinese in America is not a sacrificed behavior for me anymore. Every time I stand in the classroom of the Chinese School, look at the Chinese faces, speak Chinese, and think the Chinese way, I find that I am happy. I enjoy the feeling of teaching. This emotion helps me overcome the problem of time and space that consume my teaching. I enjoy and take pleasure from my teaching, when I still see it as my responsibility to transmit the Chinese language and culture to the next generation.

In-between the weekday and Sunday. Chinese School is open only on Sunday. I am a teacher on Sunday, but during the weekday, I am a full-time student. My colleagues also have different jobs during the weekday. So, we live in two different career worlds. On the weekend, we are teachers; during the weekday, we play other professional roles. There is a third time created in-between the weekend and weekday. In this third time, I am a teacher. I am a temporal teacher. I have my teaching experience. I have my teaching

plan. I have my teaching purpose. And I am not a teacher. I am not a professional teacher. I have no certificate. I do not have my own classroom. I have no pressure for promotion. I have no pressure from the achievement of students on standardized tests.

I am in a third space, place and time when I teach Chinese in American Chinese School. In the third space, “Different languages, different worlds, and different ways of speaking are connected” (Wang, 2004, p. 147). How does teaching Chinese in America connect all these differences together? What is the lived experience of teaching in a third space?

Teaching as Bridging Cultures

The etymological meaning of teach (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*) is to show, instruct, cause to know. Teaching Chinese is to “cause” the students to know the Chinese language through showing and instructing. Gadamer (1975/2003) says: “Language is the medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between two people” (p. 383). Therefore, teaching Chinese is also teaching children to understand and communicate in a way that is related to the values of the culture. America is a different cultural place. Casey (1993) says: “It is in the mediation of culture that places gain historical depth. We might even say that culture is the third dimension of places” (pp. 31-32). America doesn’t only mean physical space, but also cultural space. Thus, teaching Chinese in America means experiencing a “between” place, like a bridge across two different cultures.

What is bridge? The Chinese character for bridge is 桥 or 橋, which is constituted by tall 乔 or 喬 (phonetic) and wood 木. 喬 is constituted by tall 高 with being bent forward 夂. 桥 is the simplified character, which is used more popularly today. So, 桥 is a

man-made architectural structure or building. It is made of wood. Its shape is tall over the earth or water and looks like an arch bending forward. The *Dictionary of Chinese Characters* translates 桥 to be a bridge, any bridge-like structure, or beams of a structure, or cross-grained structure. As a structure crossing over the earth or water, the bridge 桥 has physical and metaphorical meanings.

Aoki (2005k) discusses the general function of the bridge. He says:

In our everyday activities, we walk over bridges, drive over bridges, and build bridges... We are accustomed to think that bridges link lands. Bridges allow us to cross from bank to bank, from one land to another, and even cross the wide Pacific. (p. 437)

However, beyond a physical function, the bridge has philosophical meaning. Heidegger says:

The bridge swings over the stream “with ease and power.” It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge expressly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge. (1993f, p. 354)

The bank comes into being through a bridge. It is the bridge that locates the two banks, which exist across from each other. If we don't teach Chinese in America, there is no stream running between Chinese and American cultures. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, culture comes from Middle English, from Middle French, from Latin *cultura*, from *cultus*. It means the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties especially by education, the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon a person's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. So, culture is related to human knowledge, values, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes, which can be passed on from one generation to the next. For the teacher, different cultures mean different values, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes, which

result in different pedagogies. Actually, under the name of culture, there are many ways of expressing bridges in my Chinese teaching experience in America. Bridging cultures means bridging pedagogy.

Building Bridges—Implacement at Home

There are two famous stories about bridges in China. One is called the “Magpie Bridge.” A long time ago, there was a fairy who lived in heaven up in the sky, and a boy who was a human living on the earth. Between heaven and earth, there was no connection. However, an unexpected meeting made the two young people fall in love. They got married and lived on the earth secretly. But the God found out their secret finally and separated them. He created a huge river called the “Silver River” between them, and didn’t allow them to see each other any more. The two young people loved each other and suffered very much. Touched by their love, countless Magpie, a kind of bird meaning happiness in China, gathered together to build a “Magpie Bridge” to help the two lovers meet. In this story, a bridge was built to connect the two banks, and every July 7th this story is celebrated in China.

According to Heidegger (1993f), “The essence of building is letting dwell. Building accomplishes its essential process in the raising of locales by the joining of their spaces. Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build” (p. 361). Aoki (2005k) also writes:

Any true bridge is more than a merely physical bridge. It is a clearing—a site—into which earth, sky, mortals, and divinities are admitted. Indeed, it is a dwelling place for humans who, in their longing to be together, belong together. (p. 438)

Therefore, building bridges means creating a place, which connects two locales in order to dwell and belong together.

As one of the first generation of Chinese immigrants, I have left my home and live in a foreign land. My life is separated by the two places. The *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* states that the word “home” is derived from old English *ham*, village, home; akin to old high German *heim*, home. Its Indo-European base form is *kei*, meaning to lie or settle down. This is related to the German *Heim* to lull or put to sleep. In Old Norse the word *heimr* means residence or world. The Old Irish word *doim* or *coem* derives from the same root and means dear or beloved. So home is not only a residence, but also means root, a place we love and where we belong. *The Thorndike Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary* (1951) defines foreign in two ways. The first definition is “outside one’s own country.” The second definition is “not belonging, not related” (p. 319). So foreign seems to connote a disconnected feeling, to be outside and alien to others. Foreign land means a disconnected place, outside of home. As I relate these meanings to teaching Chinese outside the place of my home, Casey’s work helps to understand this experience.

Casey (1993) states: “To exist at all as a (material or mental) object or as (an experienced or observed) event is to have a place—to be implaced, however minimally or imperfectly or temporarily” (p. 13). Implacement means being in place. The object or event exists in a place. When they are implaced, the being and place belong to each other. So being home means being implaced. However, sometimes, the object or event will become misplaced due to the moving of the body, becoming displaced. “To be dis-placed is, therefore, to incur both culture loss and memory loss resulting from the loss of the land itself, each being a symptom of the disorientation wrought by relocation” (p. 37). The displacement separates our home and foreign land. To dwell in the foreign land, we

need to be implaced. Then, how do we become implaced in a foreign land? “Moving bodies on land or at sea provides us with oriented and orienting placescapes. From being lost in space and time, we find our way in place” (p. 29). Moving one’s body from home to a foreign land will change one’s life because one’s soul may not move with the body. Therefore, we have to build a bridge in order to connect the body and soul together through re-creating space and time. Teaching Chinese in America is a way of creating the space and time to help people be implaced.

Home as familiar place. I will never forget the first day when I was teaching Chinese in America. Standing outside Fairfax High School, the rented building for Chinese School, I felt lost and didn’t know where I was. It was large but not high, unlike the school building in China, which had 5 or 6 stories, and huge parking lots and no windows. It looked so strange, distant and empty for me. I felt nervous and scared in this unfamiliar place. Casey (1993) says:

The desolating action of displacement consists, I believe, in an extero-centric movement from a real or imagined place of familiarity into unknown marginal areas where desolation is prone to be found and experienced. The familiar place is prototypically a home-place. (p. 194)

So home doesn’t only mean a physical place, but also a feeling: a familiar and secure feeling—the combination of mind and body.

Li Bai (701-762 A.D.), one of the most famous poets in Chinese history, wrote a poem called “静夜思” (Night Thoughts):

I wake, and moonbeams play around my bed,
 Glittering like hoar-frost to my wandering eyes;
 Up towards the glorious moon I raise my head,
 Then lay me down—and thoughts of home arise. (Translated by He, 2003, p. 36)

There is only one moon in the sky. However, people sense that they see a different moon in different places. Older Chinese people often say that “The moon in the homeland is brightest.” The moon seems warm and bright in the familiar place, but cold and apart in the unfamiliar place. “The initial effect of such displacements from a home-place is a primary desolation, one of whose main modes is homesickness” (Casey, 1993, p. 194). Homesickness will make people feel lonely, nervous, insecure and desolate when they are in an unfamiliar place.

Therefore, after I entered the classroom, and stood in front of the familiar Chinese faces, spoke and taught Chinese, I felt I was back home. My familiar classroom was back; my passion and confidence in teaching were back; and my feeling of being at home was back. It was “worlding,” as Heidegger says: “Living in an environment, it means to me everywhere and always, it is all of this world, it is worlding” (as cited in Safranski, 1998, p. 95). And it “therefore invites one to describe that which normally we do not recognize because it is too close to us” (p. 95). I recognized that I loved teaching and Chinese, something that was a new realization for me. I enjoyed teaching Chinese and felt so happy to be doing this. My body and soul lived together and were implaced at that moment. That experience for me was “so far so good.”

Building-as-cultivating. Besides the familiar faces, the building and classroom are still unfamiliar to me. The chairs and desks are arranged line by line to fit the high school students. The computer and documents on the front desk remind me that this classroom doesn’t belong to me. It isn’t a home for my kindergarten Chinese students and me. “In pursuing educational aims, we care for our minds, much as we care for our bodies when we exercise or undertake athletic activities” (Casey, 1993, p. 173). This is

“building-as-cultivating,” as in “the English word *cultivate*: i.e., the Latin verb *colere*, one of whose basic meanings is to care for” (p. 173). Sometimes, in education, we have to care for the place—the classroom we live in which connects with our bodies and minds.

To dwell in the classroom we need to

Exercise patience-of-pace; it requires willingness to cultivate, often seemingly endlessly, the inhabitational possibilities of a particular residence. Such willingness shows that we care about how we live in that residence and that we are about it as a place for living well, not merely as a ‘machine for living.’ (Casey, 1993, p.174)

When I entered the American high school classroom, I didn’t feel it was a dwelling place for me. I felt disconnected from the classroom. Casey (1993) says: “We cultivate the concrete forms in which we dwell, and we begin by cultivating the construction of places” (p. 173). Therefore, to help the students and me dwell in the classroom, every time before class began, I would change the arrangement of chairs and desks to fit my teaching. In pedagogy, we have to build bridges to connect our bodies and minds in the classroom to help the experience of teaching Chinese in America become “so far so good.”

Crossing Bridges at Heart

The second bridge story is named the “*Nai He Bridge*.” It is told that when people died, they had to pass the bridge to be reborn again. On one bank, there is the ending of life; on the other bank, there is the beginning of life. But after crossing the bridge, people will lose all memory of their past lives. “*Nai He Bridge*” connects life and death. No one can reject or avoid it. *Nai He* means “however” or “have no way out” in English. When people cross the bridge, they have no choice and have to experience the pain of giving up

and the happiness of receiving in their hearts. Actually, in China, people often see the bridge as a metaphor of ways to overcome barriers in their hearts.

Cross is Middle English, from Old Norse *kross*, from Old Irish *cros*, from Latin *cruc-*, *crux*. It is a structure consisting of an upright with a transverse beam, an affliction that tries one's virtue, steadfastness, or patience; the intersection of two ways or lines. Crossing is not simple walking and passing. Actually, it is a situation and process, not the ending of a behavior. Crossing the bridge is the process of overcoming struggle and conflict. It is related to personal experiences, involving feelings and understandings. When I experienced happiness and suffering, as well as confidence and nervousness during my teaching, I was crossing the bridge.

Under the gaze. I can't forget my first year teaching Chinese in America. One Sunday night eight years ago, I received a call from the principal. He asked me if I had been impolite to a parent of one of my students that afternoon. I felt so strange and didn't know what he was talking about. He told me that one parent complained because I didn't respect her and she didn't like my teaching style. I taught kindergarten in Chinese School. One afternoon, a mother came to ask me to reduce my teaching material because her son couldn't keep up. She told me that she was not interested in having her son learn Chinese formally, but rather playing in a Chinese environment. She said that was the American teaching style for young kids. But I told her that other parents asked me to teach more because they wanted their children to learn Chinese seriously. Then she said she would like to stay in the classroom with her son, and I said OK. In the class, I felt heavy pressure from the mother who observed my teaching intently. I didn't know if she liked

Chinese or American teaching styles. I felt so uncomfortable and began to lose confidence in my teaching under her gaze that afternoon.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) says:

In fact the other's gaze transforms me into an object, and mine him, only if both of us withdraw into the core of our thinking nature, if we both make ourselves into an inhuman gaze, if each of us feels his actions to be not taken up and understood, but observed as if they were an insect. (p. 361)

Under this parent's gaze, I felt I became an object and therefore objectified her as well.

Like van Manen (2002) says:

I have become his look—the object of his look. I began to watch myself as I imagine he must see me. It is as if I have moved outside myself, and am looking down on myself, watching like an out of body experience. (p. 540)

Being an object sensitizes me to my body and I feel I am no longer in charge of my self. But not any gaze will bring about the feeling of being an object. There are some other gazes, which treat me as a subject.

Through a natural empathy, one body takes up the affective responses of another... In mutual incorporation, each other's capacities and interpretations find extension through the lived body of the Other. (Leder, 1990, p. 94)

So, under the different gazes, I have different responses in my mind and body. When the gaze treats me as a subject with respect and appreciation, the mutual incorporation will engender a different way of being. My response will be confident, excited and happy. But when the gaze treats me as an object to do critique and evaluation, I will feel nervous, frustrated and embarrassed. These uncomfortable feelings are called social *dys-appearance* by Leder (1990):

This disruption of communication gives rise to what I will term social dys-appearance. We have seen that dys-appearance results when the body is somehow away, apart, asunder, from itself, as in spatio-functional or temporal terms. In social dys-appearance, this split is effected by the incorporated gaze of the Other. (p. 96)

Since the parent observed me as an object, I became frustrated and vulnerable under her gaze. Moreover, I began to watch myself as I imagined she must see me. I was measured by her, and judged by her value. I seem to have lost my worth. Like van Manen (2002) says: “When I am aware that I am being judged, I become uncertain, unnatural” (p. 56). I began losing my confidence and felt even more displaced from my familiar home of China.

I knew I tried my best to find an acceptable teaching “bridge” between different expectations. But I felt angry. Why did this parent treat me so critically? Does being in America offer her the right to evaluate the teacher without showing respect? In China and Singapore, I never experienced this kind of suffering in my teaching. Does American culture provide a different relationship between parents and teachers from Chinese culture? Does the change of relationship create a problem for my teaching? I found out my teaching Chinese in America was *not* “so far so good.”

In addition, do the other teachers who teach Chinese in America feel “so far so good?” When I have a conversation with a teacher this semester, she says disapprovingly: “The school enacts a new policy. They organize the volunteer parents to constitute an evaluation team in order to evaluate every teacher’s teaching in the class. They don’t allow us to have a breath.” What is it like to experience the look of a principal or other evaluator? Howard (2002) describes it in her reflection: “*The Look*” in Teacher’s *Performance Evaluation*. She feels like she becomes an object:

Frustrated, vulnerable, I am no longer in charge of my self. I have become his look—the object of his look. I begin to watch myself as I imagine he must see me. It is as if I have moved outside myself, and am looking down on myself, watching like an out of body experience. (pp. 54-55)

She also feels measured:

In this “objectness” I feel less human, less worthy. I am on display to be measured, to be given a value, a grade. I am held up here to be a measure of his worth. His worth? It is not his worth that is to be measured. It is mine. How did he become my measure? I seem to have lost my worth. I want to be in a position where I am in charge... When I am aware that I am being judged, I become uncertain, unnatural. His looking deprives me of my doing, and I must concentrate on how to do it, rather than on the doing of it. (p. 56)

I sympathize with Howard’s experience and feeling. Being under the gaze makes me think a lot about the relationships between the administrators and me, parents and me, and even students and me. I couldn’t help but ask these questions: Do the administrators and parents have power over me? What empowers them? What is their standard to judge? Who creates the standard? Why am I afraid of being judged and evaluated? Why do I care about the evaluation? Why do I feel a different relationship to the observer after being under the gaze? Does my gaze give me power over my students? Do the students fear my gaze? The power of the gaze has a connection to control models of punishment.

Punishment or encouragement. In the second year I taught Kindergarten, I welcomed 18 new children in my class. At the first class, a mother of one of the students came to see me and said honestly: “Please be strict with my kid. You can punish him if he makes any trouble in the class. I won’t say anything about that!” Could I punish the students in America? Punishment is a common strategy to control the class in China. However, although I taught Chinese in Chinese School, I still taught in America. I have heard many kindly warnings from colleagues and parents in the past year. They told me to try encouragement rather than punishment with students in the class. “It is the practice to primarily encourage the students in America” one senior teacher says.

Punishment or encouragement means different power relationships in the class. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, punish comes from Middle

English *punishen*, from Middle French *puniss-*, stem of *punir*, from Latin *punire*. It means to impose a penalty on for a fault, offense, or violation, or to inflict a penalty for the commission of (an offense) in retribution or retaliation. The relationship involves offense and defense. When punishment becomes the main tool to control the class, the relationship between the teachers and students is oppositional. However, encourage comes from Middle English *encoragen*, from Middle French *encoragier*. It means to inspire with courage, spirit, or hope, to spur on, or to give help or patronage to. The relationship involves giving help and being helped. When encouragement becomes the primary tool in the class, the relationship between the teachers and students is friendly and agreeable, although it is not totally equal.

As a first immigrant from China, I experienced teaching and learning in China. Due to this history I am used to punishment as a classroom-management strategy. Some Chinese parents and teachers have the same expectations. But I teach in America now. People are inclined to use encouragement in the school culture here. Therefore, teaching Chinese in America often creates conflicts between my past history and current context. It seems like there are many bridges to cross.

Playful or competitive curriculum. According to Wang (2004), the sense of playfulness does not exist in Chinese schools. She says: “Our intellectual traditions do not leave much room for children to play” (p. 163). Yu (2001) suggests that the essence of the Chinese intellectual tradition is loyalty. Chinese intellectuals emphasize studying for the nation and family. They place a heavy responsibility on their own shoulders. Like Shu Ting writes:

Today is heavy with tomorrow—
The future was planted yesterday.

Hope is a burden all of us shoulder
Though we might stumble under the load. (as cited in Wang, 2004, p. 164)

In addition, they emphasize competing for excellence, because “You will be an official only if you study very well” (a Chinese old saying). Only excellent performance in the academic world will honor you and your family. For Chinese, study is not playful. It is serious, competitive and toilsome.

However, although I have inherited the Chinese intellectual tradition, my students have not. On the contrary, they may get used to their American teachers’ teaching style more than mine. In my first year of teaching, I prepared a really “competitive” lesson plan, which included a lot of knowledge and information I thought I should teach for my students’ excellent academic achievement. I felt confident that the principal and parents would like this lesson plan because it was fitting the needs of Chinese parents and students. However, after several classes, the principal told me that some parents responded that they only wanted their children to have fun and develop some interest in Chinese. They didn’t look forward to serious Chinese teaching. I was a little shocked by the response. Why do some parents want playful over competitive curriculum? Do they think that playfulness is characteristic of the American school? Do they believe the playful curriculum is better than the competitive one? Don’t they think that study is a serious thing? Does being in America influence their attitude? What kind of curriculum should I adopt? How can I negotiate between the two curricular perspectives to cross the bridge? Can bridge-crossing help me to teach Chinese in America in order to feel “so far so good?”

Bridging Possibilities for Understanding

There are many banks in my teaching: administrators and parents, parents and parents, parents and students, Chinese and English, Chinese and American teaching styles, first generation and second generation. Other banks exist in my heart: confidence and nonconfidence, enjoyment and hurting, feeling of implacement and displacement, being at home and not belonging, and so on. Among these banks, one of the most significant experiences for me is bridging two different language banks: Chinese and English. According to Heidegger (1971), the nature of language is “the echo of a thinking experience, the possibility of which we are trying to bring before us: the being of language—the language of being” (p. 72). The bridge crossing between Chinese and English is making it possible to understand the two thinking experiences which we are trying to bridge. Therefore, besides connecting the banks, bridges also bring about possibilities.

Heidegger (1971) says:

Anything that gives us room and allows us to do something gives us a possibility, that is, it gives what enables us. ‘Possibility’ so understood, as what enables, means something else and something more than mere opportunity. (pp. 92-93)

Possibility means not only a chance, but also a space for us to do something. Bridging Chinese and English is making a space for us to understand the two different thinking experiences. So, teaching Chinese in America bridges a possibility for understanding the two worlds.

Understanding the world and word. Gadamer addresses Heidegger’s theory of understanding, saying:

Understanding is not a resigned ideal of human experience adopted in the old age of the spirit, as with Dilthey; nor is it, as with Husserl, a last methodological ideal

of philosophy in contrast to the naivete of unreflecting life; it is, on the contrary, the original form of the realization of *Dasein*, which is being-in-the-world.
(Gadamer, 1975/2003, p. 259)

Understanding thinking is a part of *Dasein*. It represents the way that people are in the world. Gadamer also says:

Language and thinking about objects are so bound together that it is an abstraction to conceive of the system of truths as a pre-given system of possibilities of being, with which the signs at the disposal of the signifying subject are associated.
(1975/2003, p. 377)

If language and thinking about objects are bound together, understanding languages lies in the word itself. The language speaks what it is itself. Therefore,

To have learned a foreign language and to be able to understand it—this formalism of a faculty—means nothing else than to be in a position to accept what it says as said to oneself. The exercise of this capacity for understanding always means that what is said has a claim over one, and this is impossible if one's own ‘view of the world and of language’ is not also involved. (Gadamer, 1975/2003, p. 401)

In America, Chinese is a foreign language even for the Chinese immigrant children. The children always speak English with me at break time. I often have to explain Chinese using English in the class. For me, I understand Chinese more, while for the students, they understand English more. When I bring my Chinese world to teach, the students bring their American world to learn. What is the difference between our worlds and words? Can we understand them through teaching and learning Chinese?

Language as “the house of being”. Heidegger (1971) thinks that “The being of anything that is resides in the word. Therefore this statement holds true: Language is the house of Being” (p. 63). He also writes that the nature of language is a possibility of undergoing a thinking experience with language:

To undergo an experience with something means that this something, which we reach along the way in order to attain it, itself pertains to us, meets and makes its appeal to us, in that it transforms us into itself. (Heidegger, 1971, pp. 73-74)

So, we may bridge a possibility of understanding through teaching and learning Chinese, which undergoes an interactive thinking and transforming.

Wang (2004) writes about her own language experience in America:

At the threshold of fantasy and reality, I knock on the door, willing to go back to the world. The door is closed and indifferent to my call. I sit down and write, casually. Chinese words and English words mingle together, mostly English words, since I have learned to think in English. Reading what I have written down, I feel Chinese and English fit together so nicely, while translation is impossible and not necessary. Chinese comes out naturally when English fails me. English commands me with its own structure and rhythm, but it is more like a game. Before I finish my practice, though, I am back to the World, in which I must express myself either in Chinese or in English. In my mind, however, the two languages are already mingled, sometimes in honeymoon, sometimes in conflict, with, unsurprisingly, many English grammatical errors. (p. 113)

Chinese and English are two different language systems, which mean different ways of thinking, different understandings and different pedagogies.

Kristeva (1981) acknowledges several particular features of Chinese, such as the phonetic and grammatical polyvalence of words, and the intricate relationships between figurative representations and written forms, which modify the pattern of referent/signifier/signified. Meaning/sound/thing are fused into an ideogram. Chinese has many homophones; one word can be used as a noun, verb, or adjective, depending on its context. To isolate the meaning of a thing, a process, or a quality is impossible without approaching it contextually. Due to such an intertwining relationship among the concept, the sound, and the thing, Chinese ideographic writing cannot be confined within the Western framework of the subject/object system. (as cited in Wang, 2004, p. 115)

There is a long-term controversy about whether Kindergarten children should learn *Han yu pin yin* or not in Chinese school. *Han yu pin yin* is a system of phonetic symbols, which looks like the English letter although they have totally different pronunciations. I talked with three kindergarten teachers about this. One of them supports the teaching of *Han yu pin yin* as early as possible because it can help children to develop

a standard Chinese pronunciation. But the other two teachers disagree about teaching *Han yu pin yin* in kindergarten. They think the 4 or 5 year old children may be learning English letters at the same time. Learning two different systems of phonetic symbols may confuse the students. Do the two different pedagogies make a difference in the students' growth experience? Do they make a difference in the teachers' and students' possibilities for undergoing thinking? Do they make a difference in the possibility for understanding?

Language is the house of being, "the keeper of being present" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 135). Chinese is the house of my being as a first generation Chinese teacher, while English is the house of my students as American-born Chinese. Teaching Chinese in America means undergoing a possibility of connecting the two houses, which bridges the possibility for understanding.

Homesteading and homecoming.

Ends of journeys fall into two extreme exemplars: homesteading and homecoming. In homesteading, I journey to a new place that will become my future home-place. The homesteading place is typically unknown to me, or known only from accounts given by others who have preceded me. But I am determined to settle down for the long term in this novel place...In homecoming, the duration of this alliance is no longer of major importance. What matters most now is the fact of return to the same place. (Casey, 1993, p. 290)

Home has two dimensions: time and place. At the ending of a journey, there are two different places: a new place and a beginning-place. When we arrive at a new place and try to stay long-term, it is called homesteading. When we arrive back at the beginning-place, it is called homecoming. Although people have the same beginning-place, different ending-places will determine the different experiences and feelings people have on their journeys. I am a first generation immigrant. On my teaching journey, Chinese is both the beginning-place and ending-place. America is the in-between place

on the journey. Teaching Chinese in America means homecoming for me. However, as second-generation immigrants, the students are born in America, or arrive in America at a very early age. On their learning journey, American English is the beginning-place, and Chinese is a new and unknown place. Learning Chinese in America means homesteading for them. These different journeys will determine the different attitudes, emotions, and feelings on the journey. Moreover, Casey (1993) says:

Homesteading and homecoming possess two features in common. On one hand, they both involve re-implacement... In homecoming, the re-implacing may be momentary and need not include residing or re-residing. Indeed, homecoming may be followed by yet another journey, e.g., back to one's contemporary home, whereas the intention in homesteading is to remain in one's newly adopted home-place... On the other hand, both homesteading and homecoming can achieve co-habitancy...In homesteading, one seeks to attain an ongoing co-habitancy with one's new home-place and its denizens...In homecoming, by contrast, the co-habitancy is distinctively different...The co-habiting is not now with a new place and an open future...but with a known place and a past remembered in that place, as well as a past of that place in the present. (p. 291)

A homecoming journey means going back home, back to a past memory and history. A homesteading journey means settling in a new place and beginning a future. Teaching Chinese makes me feel at home, bringing me back to past culture and values. However, learning Chinese brings the students to a new place and opens new possibilities for understanding the future. Therefore, I am concerned about the transfer of culture and values in my teaching. I would like the students to see Chinese and Chinese culture as a home-place. However, for the students, this may not be desired. Chinese is a foreign language for them. They may only want to use it fluently in some context in the future. I love Chinese; they may not love it. I love Chinese culture; they may not love it. I enjoy Chinese characters; they may not enjoy them. Actually, they spend only one day with me but five days with American school teachers in a week. I have to admit that we are

different. Our ending-place is different. Our experience of the journey is different. Our feeling connected to being Chinese is different. Our attitude to Chinese culture is different. Our purpose for teaching and learning Chinese is different.

Since all the textbooks come from China in our school, the content involves Chinese ethical values, and even ideologies, which are so different from the teaching and learning context in America. Daifeng, a sixth-grade Chinese teacher in Chinese School, says: “I only choose what is fitting for the students to teach.” What is a fitting curriculum to teach? How do we choose what is “fitting?” Understanding these differences is very important for us to teach Chinese in America, “so far so good.”

Turning to Phenomenology to Study My Phenomenon

Teaching Chinese in America is really a unique experience for me, which differs from my past Chinese teaching experiences in China and Singapore. China is my home. Teaching Chinese in China is like cultivating my children as a mother. Singapore means a hotel in my life. Teaching Chinese in Singapore is like introducing new things as a guest. America is my temporary home. Teaching Chinese in America makes me live in-between cultivating-as-mother and introducing-as-guest. The struggle of living “in-between” uncovers an array of interesting and significant issues, such as cultural struggles, pedagogical struggles, and so on. I have chosen to study this phenomenon because I am attracted by its richness and significance for my pedagogical interests.

Entering the Question

Van Manen (2006) says:

A research method is only a way of investigating certain kinds of questions. The questions themselves and the way one understands the questions are the important starting points, not the method as such. (p. 1)

Phenomenology is a philosophy about questioning being. Phenomenological study is a way of questioning the lived experience of human beings. Thus, when I am doing phenomenological research, I can't stop questioning: Since teaching Chinese in American Chinese School is a unique experience for me, what is the meaning of this experience? Why am I so glad to teach Chinese in America? Does this teaching make me feel at home? Does teaching give me the confidence to play my new role better in America? Does teaching give me a social identity to evolve into my new life in America?

Teaching Chinese in American Chinese School helps me and other Chinese teachers to find a familiar place in an unfamiliar land. However, it also helps us stand in the center of the conflicts between two very different cultures. So I continue questioning: How does teaching Chinese in American Chinese School magnify a struggle between different cultures? How might Chinese teachers embrace an American teaching style in their Chinese teaching? Do Chinese parents and children think a Chinese teaching style is different from other American teachers? Do they accept Chinese teachers and their teaching style? Can we teach Chinese in American Chinese School, "so far so good?" What is the lived experience of bridging two cultures in teaching? More specifically, the phenomenological question in my research is: **What is the meaning of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools?**

Landing the Approach

Nietzsche says: "Whoever is searching for the human being first must find the lantern" (as cited in van Manen, 2006, p. 4). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a lantern to search the meaning of being a human being. It is human science that studies persons. Van Manen (2006) says:

Natural science studies “objects of nature,” “things,” “natural events,” and “the way that objects behave.” Human science, in contrast, studies “persons,” or beings that have “consciousness” and that “act purposefully” in and on the world by creating objects of “meaning” that are “expressions” of how human beings exist in the world. (pp. 3-4)

Compared to natural science, which aims to taxonomize natural phenomena, human science aims to explore the meaning of human phenomena. Viewed from a phenomenological perspective, “To do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings” (p. 5).

Teaching Chinese in American Chinese School is a lived experience for me and other Chinese teachers. It exists in our life worlds. According to van Manen (2006):

Phenomenology is the study of the life world—the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it. Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. Phenomenology asks, “What is this or that kind of experience like?” (p. 9)

Therefore, phenomenology offers me an approach to explicate the meaning and nature of teaching Chinese in America.

Moreover, teaching Chinese in America is a pedagogy. “A distinguishing feature of a human science approach to pedagogy is how the notions of theory and research are to be related to the practice of living” (van Manen, 2006, p. 15). Pedagogy, then, roots itself in the practice of living. Phenomenology offers me an approach to situate the pedagogical meaning of teaching Chinese in America in the everyday life practices of Chinese teachers. The insights gained from this study can be used to provide ways for pedagogical bridging of cultures.

To conduct my research from this hermeneutic phenomenological mode of inquiry, I use van Manen's (2006) elemental methodological structure, which is constituted by six dynamic research activities:

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

I attempt to describe and interpret the lived experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese School based on these six methodological dimensions, which are discussed more in depth in Chapter Three.

Mapping the Journey

In this Chapter, I have discussed my turning to the phenomenon of teaching Chinese in American Chinese School. In this turning piece, I borrow “bridge” and “a third space” as metaphors to express unique aspects of the phenomenon. In addition, I have introduced the phenomenological methodology briefly in relation to my research question used in this inquiry.

Chapter Two is a deeper exploration of cultural and pedagogical issues that the teachers may encounter when they teach Chinese in American Chinese School. In order to uncover many layers of these issues, I trace my past teaching experiences and connect them to my present cultural and pedagogical struggles as I teach in an American Chinese School. I also draw upon the stories of other Chinese teachers, as well as phenomenological sources to expand the meaning of my phenomenon and use Chinese knotwork as the metaphor to express the Tao of my teaching stories, as well as the stories of other teachers, in a third space.

In Chapter Three I describe my philosophical understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology, addressing such questions as: What is hermeneutic phenomenology? Why do I choose it as my methodology? How will I carry out a phenomenological study? In fact, in this search for grounding, I am seeking who I am and finding my own voice through answering these questions.

In Chapters Four and Five, I focus on essential themes that I derive from my conversations with other Chinese teachers in American Chinese School. In Chapter Six, I draw insights from the study and make pedagogical recommendations to help Chinese teachers teaching Chinese in the United States to bridge cultures, and consider possibilities of teaching “so far so good” in a third space.

CHAPTER TWO:

SPLICING THE TAO OF TEACHING STORIES

Several threads can be twisted to make a rope. Two independent ropes are needed to splice. As soon as the two ropes are spliced they become strands in the knotted structure. (Li, 2002, p. 49)

After turning to the phenomenon of teaching Chinese in American Chinese School in Chapter One, in this chapter I seek the Tao of teaching stories to explore the deep cultural and pedagogical struggles encountered when I teach Chinese in the United States. In order to uncover these struggles, I trace my teaching experiences in China, Singapore and the United States, which connect to my present teacher being, and draw upon the stories of other Chinese teachers, as well as phenomenological sources, to expand the meaning of my phenomenon. I also use the metaphor of Chinese knotwork to contrast Chinese and American pedagogies.

In Eastern philosophy, Tao is the fundamental truth of the Universe. “Heaven and earth are created from it. All things come from it. Human is created by it” (Yang, 1987, p. 2). It is the “way” of origin. The *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* also states that Tao is the unconditional and unknowable source and guiding principle of all reality, and the process of nature by which all things change and which is to be followed for a life of harmony. Therefore, when we explore the way by which all things work, we are looking for the Tao in our lives.

However, Tao is hard to define. The first sentence in Laozi’s³ (trans. 2003) *Dao De Jing*⁴ is “The Tao that can be spoken of, is not the constant Tao” (p. 31). People have to adopt the arts or other parable ways to express their understanding of Tao. According

³ Laozi is the common spelling in Mainland China. It is also written as Lao Tzu in Taiwan.

⁴ Same as above, *can also be written as *.**

to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, Tao also means the art or skill of doing something in harmony with the essential nature of a thing. Maxine Greene (1995) also says: “For me as for many others, the arts provide new perspectives on the lived world” (p. 4). Therefore, I am using Chinese knotwork, a kind of traditional Chinese folk art, as the metaphor to explore the Tao of my stories of teaching Chinese in the United States.

There are many tales on the origin of Chinese, such as “Pan-gu creates the heaven and earth,” “Nu-wa creates the human being,” and so on. I adopt the beautiful tale of Nu-wa here because she is a woman and she creates the human being using a rope. In his book, “The art of Chinese knotwork: A Short History,” Chen (1996) writes down this beautiful tale-story:

The goddess Nu-wa shaped mankind out of yellow earth. However, as this task was too fatiguing and time-consuming, she trailed a rope in the mud, removed it and created men. The noble and the rich were made out of the yellow earth, while poor and lowly people were created from the mud-covered rope. (p. 89)

This story signifies the inextricable ties between rope and persons. The rope has played an important role in the real life of humankind. Ropes have significance in Chinese knotwork. “The original meaning of the word ‘knot’ is to take pieces of rope and tie them together; to tie the two pieces of rope is to make a knot” (Niu, 1989, p. 6). In ancient times, Chinese people used knots to record events. The knots are even the forerunners of Chinese characters. For example, “十” is used for the number 10, which is close to the present Chinese character for ten “十.” Since the beginning, Chinese knots have carried significant symbolic meaning. They connect the arts with real life. Actually, the attraction of Chinese knotwork comes from an old Chinese saying: “Knot indicates meaning; knot expresses emotion.”

To explore the Tao of my teaching stories in American Chinese School, I am using the symbolism of “ropes” to contrast Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies. These two independent “ropes” are spliced in different knotted structures as two independent cultures and pedagogies encounter and negotiate conflict in different situations. The “threads” are my different selves of experiencing each culture and pedagogy, which reveal my internal dialogue. I also weave the contrast between pedagogies through various connections to the literature and philosophy of teaching between Chinese and western foundations.

Moreover, in the making of Chinese knotwork, “Two ropes take turns to lead the splicing activities and they also take turns to interlace symmetrically” (Li, 2002, p. 51). Therefore, during the splicing, there is always one dominating rope and another dominated one. As an immigrant, I carry my past conceptions and experiences into the new world. The Chinese rope often dominates my encountering of American culture and pedagogy when I teach Chinese in the United States. However, it is often the dominated American rope that leads to the different splicing in making my Chinese knotwork. Other Chinese teachers’ experiences also help to splice the Tao of teaching stories in a third space. They enrich the structures and patterns of Chinese knotwork.

According to Chen (1996), Chinese knotwork has several characteristics: “Chinese knots are very compact in structure; Chinese knots are complex insofar as interlacement is concerned; Chinese knots, for the most part, are symmetrical in form; and Chinese knots are three-dimensional; they consist of two layers of cord, with an empty space in between” (pp. 90-91). Teaching Chinese in the United States is a complex phenomenon, so this idea of interlacement is a helpful metaphorical connection. It opens

a door for me to experience the conflicts and negotiations between two different cultures and pedagogies, which are symmetrical in form also, as I stand in this “empty space in between.” This knotwork metaphor also offers me the possibility of bridging the two different cultures and pedagogies through splicing them in different knotted structures, shaping this empty space in between two cultures, two pedagogies, home and foreign land, the past and present.

The following section is an exploration of the Tao of my teaching stories, as well as the stories of other Chinese teachers, in a third space. Aoki (1999) says the third space “is a space of doubling, where we slip into the language of ‘both this and that, but neither this nor that’” (p. 181). It presents what cultural and pedagogical struggles Chinese teachers encounter when they teach Chinese in the United States. It also exhibits how Chinese teachers tell their teaching stories in this “space of doubling.” We are splicing our different teaching selves in the making of Chinese knotwork.

The Double Coin Knot: Splicing My Teaching Selves Before and After 1999

We were connecting to one another with our newly discovered similarities; simultaneously, we were separating from one another with our differences. Interdependence and autonomy were also playing their roles in this splice. I call this splice Double Coin Knot 双钱结, which intertwines tails of two dragons in Chinese knotwork. (Li, 2002, p. 59)

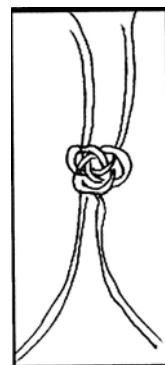


Figure 1. The Double Coin Knot 双钱结 (Li, 2002, p. 58)

The Double Coin Knot has the longest application in history. It emerges in the Han Dynasty (202 B.C. to A.D. 220), and often shows the intertwining of the tails of two dragons. Coin means nice, short, descriptive and succinct. Almost all other Chinese knots are composed of knots based on it. The Double Coin Knot connects the first splicing of Chinese and American cultural and pedagogical “ropes.” The similarities and differences between the two “ropes” splice my teaching experiences in two different spaces—before and after 1999.

My Normal-University-Student Self and Learning-to-Teach Self Before 1999

Looking back, I find myself seeing past experiences in new ways—and I realize what it means to say that I have lived one possible life among many—and that there are openings even today to untapped possibilities. (Greene, 1995, p. 77)

I was born in a typical professional family in China. My father was a government official and my mother was a pediatrician. They paid a lot of attention to my brother’s and my education when we were young, because they believed that “Education could change your life.” When I applied for college, they supported my choice of Education for my major. So, after I graduated from high school, I spent seven years studying education in the Department of Education, East China Normal University in Shanghai. Normal University is a special university in China. The etymology of “normal” is from the French, *école normale*, from the first French school so named to serve as a model. A Normal School is usually a 2-year school for training elementary teachers (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). In China, a Normal University is usually a 4-year general college for training teachers. “Normal” is translated to “师范” (*Shi-fan*) in Chinese: 师 means teacher; 范 means model. Therefore, the purpose of a Normal (师范) University is to train all kinds of future teachers who will become models of teaching in society.

Similar to the former Soviet Union, the program and course of study in a Normal University are different from other general universities. The most distinct difference is the establishment of a Department of Education, which only exists at a Normal University in China. Its purpose is to prepare teacher educators to teach other K-12 teachers how to teach. As students in the Department of Education, this was our major focus. Therefore, our courses included pedagogical theory, curriculum theory, educational history, educational psychology, sociology, philosophy, etc. I learned to teach theoretically there.

Dr. Du. Of all the courses I have taken, the *History of Chinese Education* was the most memorable one for me. It was a core course for all students in my department for which we received 12 credits. We had to spend 2 years (4 semesters) to complete it. This course was divided into two parts—ancient and modern. The professor who taught the *Ancient History of Chinese Education* was our favorite teacher—Dr. Du. It was unusual to call a person “Dr.,” although he was really a “Dr.” in China. We generally called our professors teacher.

Dr. is translated into “博士” (*Bo-shi*) in Chinese. In the fact, “博士” means much more than “Dr.” in Chinese culture. Based on the *Concise Chinese-English Dictionary*, “博” means rich, plentiful, win and gain. “士” means bachelor, person, scholar, and soldier. “博士” usually means a scholar who gains rich knowledge. It is a title of great respect.

Dr. Du was a very knowledgeable scholar on the history of Chinese education. When he lectured, his tone was neither rapid nor slow; his voice was neither high nor low. In the class, he never needed to check his teaching materials. He seemed to share a story

as if talking to friends. So we would remember his lectures easily because we were listening to a story, not an event in history. Confucian thoughts were his favorite. He spent a lot of time on teaching and sharing Confucian philosophy in the class. When he talked about Confucius, Mencius, and other Confucians, his eyes became excited and his voice was full of passion. We thought that he was a real Confucian.

Dr. Du often required us to memorize Confucius or other important Confucian wise sayings. We had to recite them in order to achieve high scores in his exams. Even though more than 10 years have passed, some famous sayings are still marked in my mind. For example, each time when I think of the purpose of teaching, I can't help but recall Han Yu (768-828 A. D.), a famous Confucian scholar in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). He wrote down the purposes of teaching on his essay “Discourse on Teachers” (师说: *Shi-Shuo*). He says: “师者，所以传道受业解惑也。” 传 (*Chuan*) means to transmit; 道 (*Tao*) is the Tao; 授 (*Shou*) means to instruct, teach, or give; 业 (*Ye*) means course of study, enterprise, etc.; 解 (*Jie*) means to explain, unbind, or solve; 惑 (*Huo*) means to be puzzled, or doubted. So, Han Yu's words transmit a message that teachers are the people who transmit Tao—the way of living, teach knowledge and solve problems. He assumes that the teacher is a “Master” who knows “Tao”—the way of living and all kinds of knowledge. The teacher is the leader and controller in the class.

Influenced by Dr. Du, I became interested in traditional Chinese culture and education, especially, Confucian philosophy. In my first year of learning to teach, I was marked deeply by traditional Chinese culture.

Am I a “good” teacher? I studied education at East China Normal University for seven years. During this time, I had three chances to teach as a student-teacher: teaching

in an elementary school for three weeks, a Normal School for five weeks, and a Normal University for four weeks. However, the total number of times I taught in the class was less than a dozen. My first practical teaching experience was a nightmare. As a sophomore, a young woman less than 20 years old, I was looking forward to being a “good” teacher. For me, a “good” teacher meant a Confucian follower, like Dr. Du at that time. In my mind, a “good” teacher had to be a master of knowledge, a friend who was nice to the students, and an elder who was respected by the students. I dreamed of having a wonderful teaching experience.

My tutor was a senior elementary math teacher. She looked demanding and serious. When I met her for the first time, she warned me to be strict with the children in order to build my authority. She said: “The students like to tease a new teacher, specifically, the intern teacher. You have to be strict with them and make them afraid of you. Otherwise, nobody will hear you.” I was shocked by her words. Might these lovely and innocent children tease me? Do I have power over them in the class? Don’t I have to be their friend? Anyway, the tutor’s words planted a seed of doubt in my heart and made me see children in more of a negative light.

These suspicious and negative moods ruined my first teaching experience. When I stayed with the children, I tried to maintain a cool teacher look and hide my passion. I even avoided smiling much at school. When I lectured in the class, following my tutor’s guidance, I required the students to sit quietly and obey my instruction without any argument. I even avoided eye contact with the students. In the quiet and “empty” classroom, only my voice echoed.

After three lessons, I finished my practical teaching. My tutor gave me an “A” grade and praised me as being a good student-teacher. What did a “good” teacher mean for her? Is being strict with students the mark of a good teacher? Does controlling students in the class make one a good teacher? Do good teachers call for students to be silent and obedient? What is a “good” teacher in Chinese pedagogy? Am I a “good” teacher really?

Before I left the school, I attempted to watch my students carefully in order to find something I didn’t know. They looked so lovely and innocent. Their eyes were clear and honest. They looked at me kindly but distantly. They didn’t see me as their friend or respectable elder, but an ordinary teacher. Compromising to my tutor’s beliefs about teaching made me a “good” teacher in her eyes, but I was not a “good” teacher according to my own beliefs. I felt I was hurt by myself. My dream was broken. I was not a “good” teacher.

On the road of learning to teach through practice, I fell down. I lost my confidence to become a “good” teacher. Although the other two intern-teaching experiences were much better, I couldn’t overcome the hurt in my heart. I didn’t doubt my ability to teach, but I questioned whether I was ready to teach. Can I teach? Can I be a “good” teacher?

Therefore, when I graduated after seven years of study in education, I rejected teaching. I was afraid to fail and ruin my dream again. However, the seven-year learning-to-teach experience wouldn’t disappear. As Heidegger (1971) says:

To undergo an experience with something means that this something, which we reach along the way in order to attain it, itself pertains to us, meets and means its appeal to us, in that it transforms us into itself. (pp. 73-74)

Thus, all the courses I had taken, all the knowledge I had gained, and all the failures and successes in teaching I had experienced were buried deep in my memory. I just hid them temporarily. One day, they would be released and show their significant influence on me. They labeled me a “Chinese” teacher. I would carry this label into my new teaching stories.

My “Chinese Tutor” Self and Teaching-for-Living Self Before 1999

When I graduated from my education program at East China Normal University in Shanghai, my husband decided to study at National University of Singapore. Although Singapore has only one season—summer, and Maryland has four definitive seasons in a year, I have experienced similar hot and cool feelings. Singapore, like the U.S.A., also was a foreign land for me. I felt lost. I was homesick. I was isolated. I doubted myself. The only difference was the popularity of Chinese in Singapore, which gave me an opportunity to teach for a living. Ayers and Miller (1998) write:

And so we look back, not just as a way of remembering our lives, but as an incentive for action. (p. 1)

My past teaching experiences didn’t only mark me as a “Chinese” teacher, but they also caused me to re-think what it means to be a “Chinese” teacher.

Re-seeing “Chinese.” Singapore is a small country. Before Singapore established diplomatic relations with China in 1990, English was their one and only official language. The government didn’t welcome the teaching of Chinese language courses in schools. However, after 1990, the Singapore government changed their language policy quickly. They required all the students to study mandarin Chinese in school. So Chinese became the core course at all K-12 schools. However, due to the English only policy before 1990,

the schools were in short supply of Chinese teachers. Being a “Chinese Tutor” became a popular job in Singapore.

The first job I obtained was to teach Chinese as a private tutor. Wasn’t that strange? I rejected teaching in China, but I had to teach Chinese for a living in Singapore. For the first time in my life, I found that Chinese could be a difficult foreign language for many people, and realized that Chinese was my native language, which was related to my culture and root.

David Abram (1996) connects language with landscape. He says:

To such peoples, that which we term “language” remains as much a property of the animate landscape as of the humans who dwell and speak within that terrain. Indeed, the linguistic discourse of such cultures is commonly bound, in specific and palpable ways, to the expressive earth. (p. 139)

Chinese is my dwelling landscape. She speaks out my root and home. She carries my cultural and pedagogical understandings when I teach. Being a Chinese tutor made me go back to my familiar landscape, and re-see my native language and culture through a third eye—beyond the traditional sights within China.

Tao-transmitter. Singapore was an amazing country for me, a cross between modern Western and traditional Chinese cultures. When I first took the metro—the major transportation vehicle in Singapore, I surprisingly found that there were Confucius’ words in *Analects* written on the wall of the metro station. They were written in Chinese and highlighted by spotlights. I can’t remember the words now, but I won’t forget the feeling of standing before Confucius’ words surrounded by crowds of people speaking English. I felt proud of being a Chinese teacher transmitting Confucian culture in this foreign land.

I had two students: Vern, a 10-year-old boy and big brother, and Vera, a 8-year-old girl and younger sister. They were good children. I had a very wonderful teaching experience with them. They also liked me very much and called me their “best tutor.” We still keep in touch and share our lives with each other.

Mrs. Vu, mother of Vern and Vera, is a second-generation immigrant from Guangdong province, China. Mrs. Vu strongly advocated traditional Chinese culture and applied it in her daily life. One day when I arrived at her house, Vern and Vera were kneeling down on the floor. I was angry and blamed Mrs. Vu’s sternness in my mind. Mrs. Vu explained that Vern and Vera threw away their supper under the table. She said: “I have told them that it’s a shame to waste food. There are lots of children in Africa having no food to eat yet.” I couldn’t believe my ears. These words came from Mrs. Vu, a very rich woman. She said: “I hear there is a famous ‘Tang poem’ on cherishing food, Could you teach them? Chinese culture is the best resource to cultivate the children.” I was impressed by her words. She reminds me that Chinese is not only a language, but a culture, a value, a thing which can educate people.

That night I taught Vern and Vera “悯农” (The Peasants)—a famous poem written by the Tang dynasty poet Li Shen (772-846 A.D.):

锄禾日当午,
汗滴禾下土.
谁知盘中餐,
粒粒皆辛苦.

At noon they weed with hoes;
Their sweat drips on the soil.
Each bowl of rice, who knows!
Is the fruit of hard toil.

I had learned this poem when I was four years old. I had also taught it several times. But I never had this strong feeling that I was cultivated and cultivating other people through it. Heidegger (1971) says:

The language of poetry whose site is in apartness answers to the home-coming of unborn mankind into the quiet beginning of its stiller nature. (p. 191)

The poem “The Peasants” didn’t only bring me home, but also helped Vern and Vera begin their home-coming to Chinese culture. I was not only teaching Chinese, but Chinese ethics and life values. I was not only teaching knowledge, but Tao—the way of living. I was the teacher—Tao transmitter.

After several months of Chinese tutor life, I obtained a full time job editing Chinese teaching materials at a language center. But I chose to continue teaching Vern and Vera at the same time, although two jobs often made me feel exhausted. I liked my Chinese tutor job, which satisfied my eagerness to be myself, reshaped my confidence to be a “good” teacher, and opened my mind to experience the cultural and pedagogical differences for the first time.

In making the Double Coin Knot, the Chinese rope is twisted by my several teaching stories before 1999. It takes a turn to dominate the first meeting with another rope because the American rope is the latecomer. It appears in my life after 1999.

My Foreign Student Self and Learning-from-Difference Self After 1999

To see oneself on a strange island, clearly, is to imagine oneself in another space, looking at an unfamiliar world. To poke around is to investigate that world, to pay attention to it, to think about it. (Greene, 1995, p. 24)

Teaching in the United States—“a strange island,” leads me to imagine myself in a third space, investigate an unfamiliar world with others, and learn from differences I

have experienced. I pay attention now to what these experiences as “stranger” have taught me.

Being others. In 1999, my husband and I arrived in the United States and became foreign students. When we landed at Dulles International Airport, it was midnight. Our friend picked us up and drove us to College Park. On the road, we were impressed by the width of the highway and the quiet of the night. My husband sighed: “This time I feel I really have gone abroad.” I totally understood what he meant. Singapore was a modern city, which didn’t look much different from Shanghai. The flashing neon lights and lined-up skyscrapers often reminded us of our similar city life in Shanghai. However, America was a completely foreign land, which didn’t have any similarity to our past life. The quiet and dark night reminded us we were immigrants—we were others. As Drew Leder (1990) says: “My body everywhere bears the imprint of Otherness” (p. 66).

On the way back to College Park, the friend who picked us up at the airport also shared some of his opinions about American life. When he heard that I studied Education in China, he tried to convince me to study Computer Science rather than Education in the United States. He said: “It is so easy to find a job if you study Computer Science... Do you know how hard it is to find a job if you study Education as a foreign student in U.S.?” I was kind of shocked by his words and had to face up to the problem of survival in the future.

Because I was not confident or passionate enough about teaching at that time, I was easily convinced by what he and other friends said. Six months after I arrived in the United States, I became a full-time foreign student studying Computer Science. In the class, I felt I was different from other people. Leder (1990) says:

My awareness of my body is a profoundly social thing, arising out of experiences of the corporeality of other people and of their gaze directed back upon me. Am I fat or thin, beautiful or ugly, clumsy or agile? My self-understanding always involves the seeing of what others see in me. (p. 92)

Under the gaze of other people, I realized I was “other.” I didn’t look like other American classmates; I didn’t wear earrings like other girls; I couldn’t speak English like them.

“Other” means a thing opposite to or excluded by something else; or a different or additional one (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). Moreover, Levinas (1969) says:

“The other qua other is the Other” (p. 43). It is unique and incommensurate with me.

According to Levinas, “The other is also what challenges the dominance of the present, and may be either past or future” (as cited in Moran, 2000, p. 337). As the “other,” we have to learn from difference in order to find ourselves a place in a foreign country; we have to learn from our past and future to locate our present in this third space.

Learning from difference. After graduation with a M.S. in Computer Science, I found a job teaching computers at the Board of Childcare, a special educational organization. My students were special children from elementary to high school, who had some problems controlling their emotions. Due to my pregnancy and other factors, I only worked there for three months. However, the short-term teaching experience played an important role in my teaching development.

It was my first time to observe American schools, teachers and students so closely. I realized I had learned so little during the past two years. Even though my English was improved and I received a master’s degree, I didn’t know Americans yet. I didn’t know their culture yet. I didn’t know their pedagogy yet. I didn’t know the American students yet. Actually, I was shocked by the huge difference between American and Chinese

schools. I began to reflect on my future career orientation. Finally, I decided to go back to school to continue my learning to teach.

During my study in the College of Education at the University of Maryland, my most impressive feeling still was “difference.” As a foreign student, I experienced “difference” everywhere and everyday. What is difference actually? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, difference is a characteristic that distinguishes one from another or from the average; an element or factor that separates or distinguishes contrasting situations; a distinction or discrimination in preference, or a disagreement in opinion. So, here I was separated, distinguished, contrasted, and many times, in disagreement with others.

In addition, according to Derrida (1978), *différance* has two meanings in the verb *différer*: “to differ (in space) and to defer (to put off in time, to postpone presence)” (p. xvi). Difference has significant meaning for space—place and time. Contrasting Chinese and American pedagogy, there is a separation of place and time. Derrida says:

The difference between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, for example, is not uniquely, nor primarily, a distinction, an exteriority, but rather the original possibility, within life, of the detour, of deferral (*aufschub*) and the original possibility of the economy of death. (p. 198)

Difference doesn’t only mean distinction or exteriority, but the possibility of experiencing and learning from the detour and deferral within life.

As a Chinese student in a College of Education, I was experiencing differences in-between American and Chinese conceptions of education, school systems, theories of pedagogy, educational cultures, and so on. These experiences pushed me to reflect on my past pedagogical understanding and how these differences influenced how I taught. I began to rethink how I could teach Chinese “so far so good” in the United States. I began

to look for the Tao of my teaching Chinese stories in the United States. I was learning from these differences.

My “Chinese Teacher” Self and Teaching-in-Between Self After 1999

One month after my arrival in the United States, I became a Chinese teacher at Hope Chinese School, a non-profit Sunday school. Teaching Chinese at Hope Chinese School was an incredible experience for me. Although it was only a part-time job of teaching two hours per week, it brought me back “home” and made me feel refreshed. My confidence was restored in teaching and I enjoyed it.

Homecomer. In order to teach my first class at Hope Chinese School well, I spent two days preparing the teaching materials according to my past experience, even though my students were only Kindergarten children. But when the class was over, I found I had only finished one fourth of my teaching materials. These American-born children’s responses were beyond my control and expectations. They were not quiet receivers. They always wanted to make their own voices heard in the class. Their American-way of responding interrupted my teaching plan, and I was not able to finish my planned lesson. After the class, I talked with several parents who stayed in the class during my teaching. Before I apologized that I didn’t teach enough, they told me that I might teach too much. Why didn’t they expect me to teach more knowledge to their children? What did they really want besides knowledge?

Several weeks later, I asked these questions to our Director, Li Bin, at a teacher meeting. He smiled and said: “The parents don’t expect their children to learn lots of knowledge at their age in the United States. They may want to develop their children’s interest or common sense in Chinese language and culture.” Was the purpose of teaching

to develop interest, not to transmit knowledge? I realized a real difference between Chinese and American pedagogies for the first time.

Being a “Chinese tutor” in Singapore helped me see “Chinese” in a new way. Teaching Chinese in the United States opened my eyes to see “Teaching” from a new perspective. I took a stranger’s vantage point of the pedagogy in my class and felt like a “Homecomer.” Maxine Greene (1973) defines the homecomer as somebody who “is returning home from a long stay in some other place” (p. 268). Therefore, “The homecomer notices details and patterns in his environment he never saw before” (p. 268). She also says:

The homecomer may have been such a person. Now, looking through new eyes, he cannot take the cultural pattern for granted. It may seem arbitrary to him or incoherent or deficient in some way. To make it meaningful again, he must interpret and reorder what he sees in the light of his changed experience. He must consciously engage in inquiry. (p. 268)

Teaching in the United States offers me new eyes to see the world. I teach in a strange environment, although the subject matter is my familiar Chinese. I live in a foreign place and watch the different patterns in a strange culture and pedagogy I had never seen before. I begin to question my pedagogical pattern I had taken for granted and reflect on my teaching in order to improve my pedagogy for teaching in the United States.

“Who cares?” My friend Han was a 6th grade Chinese teacher at Hope Chinese School. She told me she felt excited to teach Chinese on the first day. She spent a lot of time preparing her lesson in order to teach well. Moreover, she attempted to share more information on Chinese culture or values beyond the textbook in the class. She thought it was more important to transmit culture than language knowledge. However, when she was teaching, a girl interrupted her and said: “Who cares?”

Chinese is not Math. Whether in China or the United States, math is always useful knowledge. Teaching math in a foreign land may not make you feel back home, nor displaced. But teaching Chinese contributes to a feeling of being displaced. Abram (1996) says: “It should be easy, now, to understand the destitution of indigenous, oral persons who have been forcibly displaced from their traditional lands” (p. 178). When the language is displaced from its landscape—cultural root, it may become destitute knowledge. So the students may think it is useless, and sigh: “Who cares?”

Casey (1993) also discusses the conception of displacement. He says:

Displacement has two dimensions.... First, it represents the loss of particular places in which their lives were formerly at home... Second, beyond the relinquishment of particular places, there is the still greater loss of an entire land, a region. (pp. 35-36)

Indeed, Chinese language is displaced from Chinese culture in the United States. But it doesn't mean they can't be implaced. As I have described in Chapter One, teaching Chinese in the United States is a way of bridging cultures and pedagogies. Casey says:

Implacement is an ongoing cultural process with an experimental edge. It acculturates whatever ingredients it borrows from the natural world, whether these ingredients are bodies or landscapes or ordinary “things.” Such acculturation is itself a social, even a communal, act. For the most part, we get into places together. (1993, p. 31)

Teaching Chinese in the United States is an ongoing cultural process. It is building a bridge in-between Chinese and American culture. If we can help the students to acculturate their bodies, landscapes or other ingredients through our teaching, the Chinese language will be implaced, and the students will say: “We care!”

Teaching on the hyphen. In the United States, we are called “American-Chinese teachers.” According to Torres-Queral (1998), “The hyphen connects. And by connecting two things, it amplifies both of them” (p. 32). I am teaching on the hyphen, which means

I am teaching in-between Chinese and English languages, Chinese and American cultures, home and foreign land, and my past and present. The hyphen linking Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies creates a unique third space for my teaching.

The third space is an invisible space beyond the gaze of eyes, according to Wang (2004), and “It is a space of multiple others interacting through different times and places” (pp. 146-147). Ted Aoki (2005e) also says:

I mark the third space as an ambivalent space of both this and that, of both East and West, wherein the traditions of Western modernist epistemology can meet the Eastern traditions of wisdom. (p. 319)

When I teach Chinese in China, I try to teach all that I have to the children like a mother.

When I teach Chinese in Singapore, I attempt to introduce new things to the host like a guest. The United States is my temporary home. Teaching Chinese in the United States makes me live in-between cultivating-as-mother and introducing-as-guest. When I am teaching in-between, teaching becomes more than transmitting knowledge, but a bridging of cultures and pedagogies as well.

While my teaching stories before 1999 are twisted to the Chinese rope, my teaching stories after 1999 are twisted to another American rope. The two ropes are spliced to the first knotwork—Double Coin Knot. The similar and different pedagogical experiences reveal my initial encounter and struggle between two different cultures and pedagogies, teaching Chinese in the United States.

The Cross Knot: Splicing the Doer Self and the Designer Self

This knot brought some symmetry into our splicing. Unlike in our first two splices, I took the turn to initiate and dominate it. And this turn-taking brought more intersubjective exchanges into our relationship. (Li, 2002, pp. 62-63)

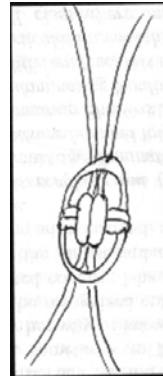


Figure 2. The Cross Knot 十字结 (Li, 2002, p. 62)

The Cross Knot looks like a cross. A simple cross character in Chinese means "ten," and looks like “十”. It takes its shape as two ropes that weave their way into each other to form the body of the knot. The Cross Knot is one of the basics of Chinese decorative knotting. It is a stable knot, and can be tied in multiples for decorative ideas and to represent various levels of achievement as well.

When I was offered the job to teach Kindergarten students Chinese, I was told that there was no textbook for the K level. I had to design the Kindergarten curriculum by myself. Determining what to teach was a hard job for me because I had very little experience with this before. In China, the Ministry of Education will create the outlines and the government-owned publishing will design the textbooks. The teachers are not required to create or develop curriculum themselves. Their job is to do the teaching following the assigned outlines and texts. We are only the “doers” of already developed curriculum plans. The ideal of a good teacher is to fulfill the guidelines of the teaching plan, which is determined by educational authorities (Paine, 1990).

However, the teachers are encouraged to design curriculum in American schools. McAdams (1998) compares the teachers' job with the architects,' and says:

We are architects of spaces in higher education—intellectual spaces where our students reside for a time. In these spaces, we hope to meet their intellectual needs... Kindergarten teachers know the secret of using spaces. They use educational space in all its dimensions. (p. 61)

Like architects, the teachers design the curriculum to make both teachers and students more satisfied. They are the curriculum designers.

Tang Poem or Nursery Rhyme

Teaching Chinese in the United States gave me an opportunity to be a curriculum designer for the first time. How could I do this? I was puzzled and worried. Finally, I chose the most secure way I knew—to copy the curriculum outline from China's Kindergarten textbooks. Although I had become a “designer,” I was still a “doer” indeed.

The “Tang poem” was an indispensable part of the Chinese textbook from K-12 in China. Tang dynasty (618 A. D. –907 A.D.) is an imperial dynasty of China. With its capital at *Chang'an* (present-day *Xi'an*), the most populous city in the world at the time, Tang dynasty is regarded by historians as a high point in Chinese civilization, as well as a golden age of cosmopolitan culture. It is considered the greatest age for Chinese poetry. Two of China's most famous historical poets, *Du Fu* and *Li Bai*, belonged to this age, as well as the poets *Meng Haoran*, *Du Mu*, and *Bai Juyi*.⁵ Therefore, Tang poetry has a special status in Chinese culture. In China, many Kindergarten students can recite some Tang poems, even though these poems were written in ancient Chinese and are hard to understand. I liked the Tang poems and thought it might be a great way to transmit Chinese culture. So I decided to teach some Tang poems in my class. The first one I taught was Wang Zhi-huan's (688-742 A.D.) “*登鹳雀楼*” (*Deng Guan Que Lou*):

⁵ Tang Dynasty, from *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_Dynasty.

白日依山尽，
黄河入海流。
欲穷千里目，
更上一层楼。

Against the mountains sets the white sun,
Towards the sea flows the Yellow River.
To see as far as your eyes can reach,
You need to ascend a story higher.

This piece is one of the greatest Tang poems. Its words are simple and easy to understand. Therefore, it is often cited in Chinese textbooks for lower-grade students.

Before I taught the poem, I would read it lyrically. Reading the Tang poem was also an art in Chinese culture, and I enjoyed reading it. But I felt really uncomfortable when I read “登鹳雀楼” in front of these American-Chinese children. They looked at me curiously as if I were from another planet. Regardless of this strange feeling, I continued to explain the poem line by line. There were some words, like “尽”, “穷”, which had rich meaning in ancient Chinese that were not easy to translate. So I had to connect them to simple modern Chinese words carefully. But most of the children shifted their attention to other things and ignored my lecture. Only a few of them seemed to be listening to me. They were gazing at me with puzzled eyes. Leder (1990) writes:

It is different when the primary stance of the Other is highly distanced, antagonistic, or objectifying. Internalizing this perspective, I can become conscious of my self as an alien thing. A radical split is introduced between the body I live out and my object-body, now defined and delimited by a foreign gaze. (p. 96)

When I watched my students' puzzled faces and foreign gazes, I felt distanced from them. I was really becoming an “alien.”

Why didn't they like to learn the Tang poem? I felt odd and frustrated. In the end, I asked them to read the poem following me. However, nobody could read it correctly. I

had tried my best to explain the poem easily and simply. Why couldn't the students understand my words? Was the Tang poem too difficult for them? Or was the Tang poem too far away from their lives? My curriculum-as-plan from China didn't fit my teaching work in the United States. Aoki (2005g) says:

For it to come alive in the classroom, the curriculum itself has to contain, said or unsaid, an invitation to teachers and students to enter into it. Not only that, there needs to be a reciprocal invitation. The curriculum-as-plan must wait at the classroom door for an invitation from teachers and students. (p. 362)

Curriculum is not only designed and enacted by the teachers, but also the students.

McAdams (1998) thinks that good teaching should be like good modern architecture:

Le Corbusier noted that good modern architecture lives "in the present." So does good teaching. Study your students; they are the presents. In meeting their needs, you will meet the needs of generations. (p. 65)

The students are the presents we have to study. We have to consider the students' abilities and interests besides our own to design an appropriate curriculum, and invite all of us in the classroom to build a curriculum-as-lived. We have to be a real curriculum designer, not only a doer. Therefore, I started to collect some traditional Chinese nursery rhymes, tales and children's songs instead of Tang poems. They were easier to read and understand for my American-Chinese children, and could transmit some Chinese culture as well. Each time when the children read the rhyme or sang the song happily with me, I felt I was one of them. I was not an "alien" anymore.

Han Yu Pin Yin and English Letters

Based on Aristotle, the written (text) is the sound of the voice (cited by Heidegger, 1977). How to choose a text expresses the voice of the teacher. It is related to the teachers' understanding of culture, history and pedagogy, and their own personal teaching experiences.

Han yu pin yin is a system of phonetic symbols in Chinese, which looks like the English letters, although they have totally different pronunciations. As a fundamental element of Chinese, it is always taught to the people who would like to learn Chinese as early as possible in China. However, the 4 or 5 year-old children may be learning English letters in the United States. When I asked Teacher Tan, Chen, and Xu, the other three Kindergarten teachers if they put *Han yu pin yin* into their curriculum, they gave me different answers. Teacher Tan and Chen thought learning two different systems of phonetic symbols at the same time might confuse the students. So they gave up teaching *Han yu pin yin* in their class. Teacher Xu taught a Kindergarten bilingual class. She thought learning *Han yu pin yin* would help the children learn English letters better and insisted on teaching it in her class. As the curriculum designers, the Kindergarten Chinese teachers determined what to teach based on their own teaching experiences and understandings of pedagogy.

I had taught Kindergarten Chinese for three years. During my first year, I chose to teach *Han yu pin yin* because it was required by the curriculum outline from China. During the second year, I taught *Han yu pin yin* because I didn't think my students were confused by two different systems of phonetic symbols. During the third year, I created a unit of *Han yu pin yin* because I found that consistent and continued teaching would help the students learn *Han yu pin yin* better and faster. Should we teach *Han yu pin yin* or not? What can we do when *Han yu pin yin* conflicts with English letters? We negotiate in-between the curriculum doer and curriculum designer. In fact, we are “bridging the gap between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-in-use” (Pinar, 2005, p. 5). Aoki (2005e) says: “On the bridge, we are in no hurry to cross over; in fact, such bridges lure us to

linger” (p. 316). When Teacher Tan, Chen, Xu and me, the four Kindergarten teachers plan and do curriculum, we are in no hurry to unify our ideas, although we interact. We linger between Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies. The Chinese and American ropes are intersubjectively exchanged and spliced in making a Cross (十) Knot.

The Child Knot: Splicing Teacher-as-Father Self and Teacher-as-Professional Self

On this topic of children we spliced for the second time backwards in history... we exchanged our stories and understandings about children in our lives. We confirmed each other's autonomy and blurred our separateness as well. Child Knot 儿童结 can be an expressive name for this splice. (Li, 2002, p. 68)

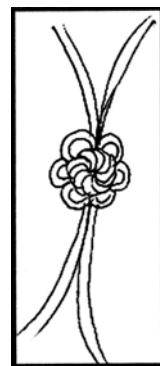


Figure 3. The Child Knot 儿童结 (Li, 2002, p. 68)

Our students are children. How to understand children is an important pedagogical question. The teachers' understandings about children determine their attitudes toward students. The teachers' attitudes toward children influence their roles in teaching, which have significant meaning in pedagogy. The Child Knot is an appropriately expressive name for the splicing of two different teacher roles in Chinese and American culture and pedagogy.

Being “Father”

One day in the summer of 2002, I received a big box in the mail from Mrs. Vu in Singapore. The box was full of baby dresses, hats, socks, and even a bowl and spoons. I

sent an email to Mrs. Vu and told her that I was pregnant one year ago. I couldn't believe that she mailed so many baby things to me after one year. I called her and expressed my appreciation. She said: "It's my appreciation for you. You are Vern and Vera's best tutor. Do you remember a Chinese old saying: 'The person who teaches you one day will be your father in your lifetime.'" After the phone call, I couldn't calm down for a long time. I was experiencing a very close bond with my students and their family, even though I hadn't seen them for three years. I was not only a teacher, but a "father," a family member.

The teacher's close relationship to children is emphasized in Confucian education. Confucius, the "teacher of the ten thousand generations," is honored as "仲父" (*Zhong Fu*). "仲" means second one; "父" means Father. So Confucius is named the "second father" by his disciples and followers.

What does "Father" mean? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, Father comes from Latin *pater* and Greek *patEr* originally. There are several explanations: a man who has begotten a child, an old man; used as a respectful form of address, God, or one of the leading men; usually used in plural Father as a family member. Therefore, father means one who has a child. He loves and cares for his child. His relationship to the child is close and personal. When I received Mrs. Vu's presents and her kind words, I felt so close to her, Vern and Vera. I was considered the "father." In addition, the father is a respectable and powerful person. He has authority over the child. Especially, in ancient China, the father is regarded as the head of the family and has the right to control his child's life. His relationship to the child is hierarchical. As Chinese teachers in the United States, do we have this close and personal relationship with our

students and their families like a “father?” Do we have authority and power in the class like a “father?” Do the students respect us like a “father?”

Teacher Ding was a retired teacher in China and taught 3rd grade students Chinese at HCS. She told me she required her students to “respect” her. What does respect mean for her? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, respect comes from Latin *respectus*, literally, the act of looking back. It means a relation or reference to a particular thing or situation; an act of giving particular attention; or a high or special regard. Teacher Ding’s idea of “respect” may mean a relation of high or special regard according to her background as a traditional Chinese teacher.

China is a highly hierarchical society. Chinese culture emphasizes teacher authority. *Three-Character Classic* is a primary Confucian textbook in ancient China. In its third chapter, the author says:

养不教, 父之过. (To feed the body, not the mind—fathers, on you the blame!)
 教不严, 师之惰. (Instruction without discipline, the idle teacher’s shame.)
 (as cited in Lee, 2000, p. 460)

In fact, the roles of father and teacher overlap. Both of them are important in educating children. The authority of the father empowers the teacher. When teacher Ding requires her students to “respect” her, she is building her teacher authority.

Being Challenged

Aoki (2005f) says: “For me, being and becoming a teacher and teacher educator has been an experience made richer by the fact of my ethnicity” (p. 348). It is the same for my colleagues and me. As the first generation immigrants from China, we are becoming teachers through experiencing rich cultural and pedagogical struggles. Being Chinese in the United States, we carry cultural and pedagogical baggage from our

homeland into the foreign land. When I began my teaching at HCS, I really enjoyed the close, but somewhat power-over relationship with the students. One mom even said: “Please be strict with my kid. You can punish him if he makes any trouble in the class. I won’t say anything about that!”

However, the story of “Under the Gaze” in Chapter One pushed me to reflect on my relationship with the children and their parents. When the principal told me that there was a parent complaining about me, I felt so strange, angry and upset. I felt strange because I never experienced a parent’s challenge and complaint before. I was angry because my authority was offended. I was upset because I couldn’t accept this judgment. How could this parent challenge my teaching? What did it mean? Although this story happened between the parent and me, I also started to question my relationship with the child. Could the child challenge my teaching? Didn’t the teacher have the “power of father” any more? What does the teacher’s relationship with the children really look like when they teach Chinese in the United States?

Being Professional

According to Linda Evans (2002), “Teacher development has emerged over the last decade as an identifiable area of study and much has been written on the subject” (p. 123). Many teacher development forums are provided for discussion about the future of the teaching profession. She also defines teacher development as:

An ideologically-, attitudinally-, intellectually- and epistemologically-based stance on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs, and which influences her/his professional practice. (Evans, 2002, p. 130)

An individual has to experience professional practice to become a teacher. Actually, in the United States, “Teaching is usually seen as a form of professional work, that is, a type of complex work requiring a great deal of specialized knowledge” (Rowan, 1994, p. 4).

What is a professional? As a noun, professional means a person who has a particular profession as a permanent career. Profession comes from Middle English *professioun*, from Anglo-French *profession*, and is a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation, or an act of openly declaring or publicly claiming a belief, faith, or opinion (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). Being professional indicates that the teachers have specialized knowledge and academic preparation, and openly declare their beliefs and opinions. But the idea of emotion or personal relationship is absent.

Aoki (2005f) asks himself: “What does it mean to become a teacher?” and answers:

I learned, from becoming one, that to become a teacher one undergoes a ritual that allows one entry into a culturally shaped and culturally legitimated world in which are prescriptions of years of training, certification, automatic membership in a teachers’ association, apprenticeship, scrutiny and evaluation by legitimated seniors, and so on. (p. 337)

Becoming teachers in the United States means that we have to undergo a new ritual, culturally shaped and legitimated in the new country. During the undergoing, we may make mistakes, fail, and feel frustrated. But as professionals, we have to face those trials and deal with them. Thus, I have to understand what it means to be challenged by the students or other people. I have to treat the children fairly, although I may not develop a close personal relationship with them. Teaching Chinese in the United States, I experience the struggle of different teacher rituals. I have to readjust my relationships

with the children. I am not the “Chinese father” any more, but have to develop my professional spirit.

As first generation immigrants, when we begin to teach Chinese in the United States, we carry our past teacher role as a “father” into our present teaching. The Chinese rope takes a turn to meet another rope first to make this Child Knot. However, after experiencing a challenge from students, parents, etc., due to the different culture and pedagogy in the foreign land, we have to adjust our relationship with the children and accept the new teacher role as a professional. So, the American rope responds immediately and takes a turn to dominate this splicing.

The *Sauvastika* Knot: Splicing Teacher-as-Virtuoso Self and Teacher-as-Midwife Self

Our splicing here began to overlap and build, one upon the splicing of the other. (Li, 2002, p. 72)

The *Sauvastika* Knot is a simple knot with one knot being tied and then a second one tied opposite the first knot and connected to it. The point where they connect is the center of the knot (Niu, 1989). Since the *Sauvastika* Knot is unstable, the two ropes have to pull tightly in making the knot. They overlap and build upon the splicing of each other.

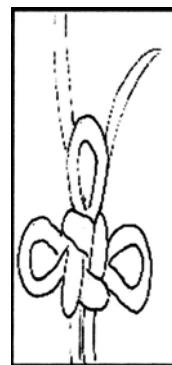


Figure 4. The *Sauvastika* Knot 万字结 (Li, 2002, p. 77)

Being a Virtuoso

When I walked into my classroom in HCS for the first time, I was a little confused by the classroom setting. The teacher's desk was at the corner, and the children's desks were not in rows. They were arranged loosely around the classroom. Was this the typical American classroom arrangement? What a big difference from my familiar classroom setting in China! Paine (1990) has described the typical classroom arrangement in China's schools:

Classrooms typically are arranged with a podium or table at the front of the room. (There are no teachers' desks. The teacher is not seen as working on something, but as coming to present something.) Teachers use the blackboard, placed on the front wall, but rarely move to the other side of the podium, where students sit in rows. (p. 51)

Paine thinks that this kind of setting reveals the conception of teacher as virtuoso in Chinese pedagogy. What is a virtuoso? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, it embraces at least two different understandings: one who excels in the technique of an art, or one who is skilled in or has a taste for the fine arts. There are two aspects of virtuosity: knowledge and heart. According to Paine (1990), "The model for teachers in China is that of the virtuoso" (p. 54). It means that the teacher has to excel in the subject-matter knowledge and teaching skills, present and transmit knowledge well with little of his/her own interpretation and understanding, and commit to be willing to work as a group, and be concerned for others. Overall, the teacher has to be a good performer and can make the performance understandable for the students (audience).

Being a teacher as virtuoso means that lecture is the primary teaching approach. Confucian and Buddhist philosophy both emphasize the importance of lecture in education (Lee, 2000). The teacher uses the lecture as a main approach to transmit

information and knowledge, while the students sit quietly and listen to the lecturer (Turner & Acker, 2002). It is a teacher-centered approach.

安 (An) sitting and 静 (Jing) listening. Teacher Ding, a senior 3rd grade Chinese teacher, says: “I feel uncomfortable when I find that the students sit on the skew.” Since she had taught Chinese in China for many years, she holds onto many of the Chinese traditional teaching practices. She tells me that good teaching needs good classroom discipline. So, she asks the students to “安 (An) sit and 静 (Jing) listen.” 安 means safe and tranquil; and 静 means quiet and peaceful in Chinese. “安 (An) sitting and 静 (Jing) listening” means that the students have to sit upright, look at and listen to the teachers quietly in the class. “The students can do it!” teacher Ding says affirmatively.

安 (An) sitting and 静 (Jing) listening is a typical teacher-centered pedagogy. The teachers give lectures, while the students listen to them quietly without argument. This teaching style still dominates the classroom curriculum in China today and impacts every student who gets educated in China’s educational system, like me, and other first generation Chinese immigrants. Does this teaching style fit Chinese teaching in the United States? It may be helpful for the teachers to impart knowledge since they have language expertise. However, is imparting knowledge the only purpose for us to teach Chinese in America? If it is not, then what are the other purposes for teaching Chinese in America? Does the teacher-as-virtuoso approach fit for all purposes? What is the appropriate teaching style for us to teach Chinese in the United States?

Being Midwife

Socrates, the trailblazer of western culture, rejects the “teacher” title and calls himself a “midwife” (Power, 1991). What is a midwife? Midwife comes from Middle

English *midwif*, from *mid* with (from Old English) + *wif* woman. It is a person who assists women in childbirth, or one who helps to produce or bring forth something (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). It states that a midwife is not the center, but an assistant or helper. She can't do it for you, but helps you to do it. It is a child-centered teaching method.

Dewey (1902/2001) says: “The child is the starting-point, the center, and the end” (p. 9). He states that the children have to learn by doing. When the student learns through doing by himself, the teacher becomes a facilitator. Geraldine Coleman (2001) says:

In some institutions of learning more emphasis is being placed on developing student-centered learning environments in which students are required to take more responsibility for their learning, and the role of the teacher is to assist them in the process. (p. 93)

Teacher as facilitator means that the teacher assists the students to learn and “facilitates learning by encouraging students to express their opinions and is genuinely interested in what they have to say” (p. 102). The teachers’ primary responsibility is to guide, as well as to stimulate. They have to be enthusiastic and “teach as celebration” (Coleman, 2001; Phenix, 1975). Greene (1995) also thinks that imagination can “have strong impulses to open pathways towards better teaching and better ways of life” (p. 13). The teachers’ imagination can stimulate people to teach and learn better. Moreover, according to Coleman (2001), in American schools, the master teachers have to

- Understand that students learn at different rates and in different ways;
- Refrain from using sarcasm when the target of criticism;
- Discipline with dignity; is able to allow students to save face; corrects behavior without humiliating or denigrating the student;
- Critically evaluate his/her teaching and seeks feedback from others;
- Actively seek ways to motivate students to learn and do their best... (pp. 102-103)

The teachers prefer praising over criticizing the students; prefer students' doing over listening; prefer imagination over memorization; prefer critical thinking over quiet receiving; prefer dialogue over lecture; and prefer teaching as midwife over being a virtuoso.

Sitting At the Center of the Knot

It was a headache for me to manage the classroom setting. My Chinese school only used the school building on Sunday as a renter, while the master school used the building all the time. I was teaching in a third space. If I changed the setting, I had to change it back when the class was over. There were always a lot of materials on the teacher's desk, so I never dared to touch them. I had to move a chair to the front or the center of the children.

When I sat on the chair, I felt my center of gravity lowered a little bit. I became closer to the children. In fact, I had never sat down when I taught in China. As a virtuoso, I had to stand up on the stage and perform like an actor. My standing high above the students also indicated my authority and power in the class. However, as a midwife, I had to withdraw from the high and centered position, and share it with the students. Sitting at the front or center seems like splicing two different ropes at the center of the knot in making the *Sauvastika Knot* (万字结).

As a Japanese Canadian, Aoki (2005f) contrasts rose and *sakura* to his Canadian and Japanese lifestyle. He says:

I could try to give meaning to my lifestyle keeping the rose and the sakura in view simultaneously. Instead of the power of monovision, the power of double vision may be what I should seek. (p. 347)

Like Aoki, as Chinese teachers in the United States, we are experiencing two different teaching styles at the same time. Teaching-as-virtuoso pushes us to improve our abilities to lecture and explain. Teaching-as-midwife encourages us to understand and assist the students. We are lucky to have this opportunity to enrich our teaching experiences. These experiences also create a possibility for us to discover the infinite treasure of pedagogy. The Chinese and American ropes are connected at the center of the knot and pulled tightly to make the *Sauvastika Knot*.

The *Tai Ji* Knot: Splicing *Yin* Self and *Yang* Self

Like the Taoist concept of *Yin* and *Yang*, the dominating and the dominated were interpenetrated into one another. I name this splice *Tai Ji Knot* 太极结. *Tai Ji* represents the Taoist concept *Yin* in *Yang*, and *Yang* in *Yin*. (Li, 2002, p. 85)

The *Tai Ji* Knot is spliced by *Yin* and *Yang* ropes. The *Yin* and *Yang* represent all the opposite principles one finds in the universe. Under *Yang* are the principles of maleness, the sun, creation, heat, light, Heaven, dominance, and so on; and under *Yin* are the principles of femaleness, the moon, completion, cold, darkness, material forms, submission, and so on. Each of these opposites produces the other. The dominating and dominated ropes are interpenetrated into one another in making the *Tai Ji* Knot.

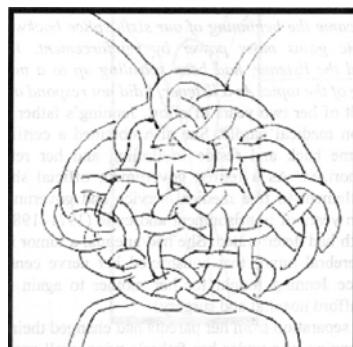


Figure 5. The *Tai Ji* Knot 太极结 (Li, 2002, p. 85)

Aoki (2005e) likens “East” and “West” to “Eastern culture” and “Western culture,” and discusses their relationship within the context of cultural identity. He says:

So understood, the term “East and West” is rendered as a binary of two separate preexisting entities, which can be bridged or brought together to conjoin in an “and.” (p. 315)

Yang and *Yin* share a similar relationship with “East and West.” They are bridged or brought together to conjoin. Laozi (trans. 1987) also says:

All things bear the negative represented by *Yin* and face the positive represented by *Yang*; these two mingled in balance and created harmony. (p. 105)

Thus, “*Yin* and *Yang*” in the *Tai Ji* Knot means *Yin* in *Yang*, and *Yang* in *Yin*—“fathering” in “mothering” pedagogy, and “mothering” in “fathering” pedagogy.

Fathering—Yang Pedagogy

In Chinese culture, *Yin* and *Yang* often represent woman and man. *Yin* means dark, negative, empty, while *Yang* means light, positive and full. Based on a Confucian view, the woman is inferior to the man. Confucius himself says: “Women and people of low birth are very hard to deal with” (*Analects: Chapter 17*). In ancient China, no schools or academies could accept women students by law. Women could neither take civil service examinations nor hold office positions or participate in government legitimately (Lee, 2000). Zhu Xi also states that “Women have not the same intellectual capabilities as men” and they “can not understand the higher metaphysical principles” (as cited in Birge, 1989, p. 321). Therefore, there is no formal female teacher at all in ancient China. People usually respect the teacher as the “father” or emperor. But they never link the image of teacher to the mother or queen.

Having no female teacher in the formal school doesn’t mean we can ignore women’s influence on their children’s education. “孟母三迁” (Mencius’ Mother’s

“Three Moves”) is a famous story. Mencius (371 B.C.–289 B.C.) is one of the greatest Confucians in Chinese history. The story tells how Mencius’ mother educated young Mencius through changing their living place three times. People often use this story to praise the parents who know how to teach their children. Actually, the mother’s diligence and honesty influenced Mencius greatly. Although women can’t become formal teachers themselves, they do influence pedagogy through impacting their children who may become teachers in the future. However, women’s voices are weak in the ancient patriarchy of China. Although mothers infuse more and more feminine fruits, such as love, patience, kindness, etc., into the image of teacher, and there are many changes at school in today’s China, such as forbidding corporal punishment, emphasizing respect for the students, etc., “fathering” is still a typical pedagogical characteristic in China. We relate it to *Yang* pedagogy.

The people sitting behind the desk. Every Sunday when I walked into the school building, the first thing I saw was the front desk set up by the administrators. It was actually a temporary school office for HCS. The principal and other administrators sat there and served people. The interesting phenomenon was that all the people sitting behind the desk were male. However, more than 90% of the teachers were female. Even though these administrator positions were volunteers, this phenomenon still made me question: Did the male administrators have teaching experience? Did they know how to teach? Why did they prefer being administrator to being a teacher? Why did so few females become administrators? Was this phenomenon common in the United States?

Score, score, the student’s命根 (*Ming Gen*). Teacher Bi, taught 6th grade Chinese in HCS at the Fairfax campus. She was a retired teacher in China. Once I heard

her sigh: “‘Score, score, the student’s 命根.’ Even though the score is not everything, the students really care about it.” 命 is fate, and 根 is root. So, 命根 combines fate and root together and means the most important thing in a person’s life. One’s score or grade is the most important thing for the students in China. Is the score the most important thing for the students in American Chinese Schools?

In a teacher meeting, teacher Chen, a 10th grade Chinese teacher shares a real story. She says:

One day, when I hand out the mid-term exam papers after grading in my 8th grade class, I find one boy looks really unhappy. I know his score is not bad, so I ask him why he looks so sad. He says: “My parents will punish me because I didn’t attain the score they required.” Just like he said, his mother looked angry when she came to pick him up and found his exam paper. I am really worried that the boy will be punished because of the score.

After I heard the story, I had nothing to say. Is the score really the students’ 命根? Can we judge the student’s ability only based on “the score?” What does the score mean for the parents, students and teachers? Should we care about the students themselves or their scores? Should we see the student as a person or a producer of the score? What can we do to change this traditional conception in American Chinese Schools?

Mothering—Yin Pedagogy

Influenced by scientific and humanistic traditions in western culture, there are some trends in today’s American pedagogy. For example, “No Child Left Behind” is “a fascination with standards, testing, and evaluation” (Reese, 2005, p. 323). “Caring” and “letting learn,” emphasize reflecting, listening, understanding and experiencing (Greene, 1973, 1988, 1995; Noddings, 1998, 2001). “Teaching as Cognition,” emphasizes psychological concepts and strategies in pedagogy, such as choice, decision making, problem solving, behavior, motivation, “scaffolding” student learning strategy, etc.

(Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005). Although American pedagogy has “fathering” features also, it seems to be more “mothering” than Chinese pedagogy. We relate it to the *Yin* pedagogy.

Caring. Nel Noddings (2001) relates the conception of “caring” with a mothering pedagogy. She writes:

I think the critics are right to worry about caring as solely a women’s ethic but wrong to deny its heritage in women’s experience. Just as right-thinking men are now sharing opportunities long withheld from women, women should be generous in extending opportunities to men to care in the direct way long expected of women. The caring orientation (or ethic of care) cannot be responsibly confined to women, but neither can it be discarded. (p. 100)

What is caring? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of care is from Old English *caru*; akin to Old High German *kara* lament, Old Irish *gairm* call, cry, Latin *garrire* to chatter. Care means a disquieted state of mixed uncertainty, apprehension, and responsibility; regard coming from desire or esteem; to have a liking, fondness, or taste, or to have an inclination. Caring means a state where a person understands, likes, desires, and respects others. Nel Noddings (2001) says: “Caring is phenomenologically accurate and highly useful for our work in education” (p. 99). It is not only used to refer to an attitude, but to “describe a relation or to point to something far deeper and more important—a way of being in the world” (p. 99). So caring becomes a way of being “mothering” teachers.

Nel Noddings (2001) also discusses how to be a caring teacher:

A caring teacher is someone who has demonstrated that she can establish, more or less regularly, relations of care in a wide variety of situations. (p. 100)

When a caring teacher teaches, he/she will require “personal understanding,” “invite communication,” and “demand that competent carers remain close to the recipients of

care" (p. 101). Caring emphasizes the teachers'—carers' understandings and communication with the students—the cared-fors.

Facing the person. Maxine Greene (1973) offers some clues to explore how the teacher sees his/her students in the class. She asks:

What does he see when he looks at a child, at a young person of any age? A spiritual creature? A social organism? A half-civilized barbarian? A potentially rational being? Does he see a case sitting before him, an instance of cultural deprivation, an IQ, an underachiever or an overachiever, a kid, a pupil, a fellow creature? What does he mean when he says someone is only human, deeply human, not even human? What does he mean when he discusses self-concept, identity, individuality? What does he mean by man? (pp. 52-53)

These questions remind us that "mothering" teachers are facing the learner as a person in the class. The students are subjects rather than objects. In her book *Releasing the Imagination*, Greene (1995) also emphasizes that teachers are facing the person:

Teachers are also being asked to treat their students as potential active learners who can best learn if they are faced with real tasks and if they discover models of craftsmanship and honest work. Only when teachers can engage with learners as distinctive, questioning persons—persons in the process of defining themselves—can teachers develop what are called "authentic assessment" measures, the kinds of measures that lead to the construction of new curricula. (p. 13)

The students are potential active learners. The teachers have to respect the students, engage with their lives, and give them freedom to learn. In her book *The Dialectic of Freedom*, Greene (1988) claims her hopes for contemporary pedagogy:

My hope is to reawaken concern for and belief in a humane frame-work for the kinds of education required in a technological society...My hope is to remind people of what it means to be alive among others, to achieve freedom in dialogue with others for the sake of personal fulfillment and the emergence of a democracy dedicated to life and decency. (p. xiii)

The pedagogy is a humane frame-work. As teachers, we are alive among the students. We are facing the person—the students' culture, age, identity, self-consciousness, and so on. To achieve personal fulfillment, we have to live in the students' world and experience

democratic dialogue with them. Actually, our worlds will encounter theirs. Both of us will change through the encounter when we teach.

Yin in Yang, And Yang in Yin

Victoria Kennick Urubshurow (1998) speaks highly of the importance of *Yin-Yang* balance in the classroom:

Teaching becomes easier and more effective when the *yin-yang* balance between passive and active, receptive and expressive is maintained in the classroom. (p. 210)

As a teacher from China, I have become used to the students' docility and quiet nature in the classroom. Only when I ask a question, may students raise their hands and respond to my teaching in China. But when I teach in the United States, I often am impressed by the students' active participation. When they get any idea, they will speak it out loudly without hesitation. Therefore, as Chinese teachers in the United States, how can we become used to our students' activity? How do we adjust our teaching between fathering and mothering pedagogy? Can we balance *Yin-Yang* in our classroom? Can we teach Chinese in the United States "so far so good" if we put *Yin in Yang* pedagogy and *Yang in Yin* pedagogy, as splicing *Yin* and *Yang* ropes in making the *Tai Ji Knot*?

Urubshurow (1998) shares her Tao of teaching involving a *yin-yang* flow of communication:

If students are overly yin or passive, I aim to activate the "dot" of yang available by allowing them to adopt the active role of questioning or problem-solving. If the class is overly yang or active, I aim to activate the "dot" of yin by providing them with a question of introspective character. (p. 211)

Her flexible teaching approach reminds me of Teacher Li's teaching in HCS. When I was a new teacher in HCS, I attended several senior teachers' lectures in order to learn from them. Teacher Li was a full-time Chinese teacher in an elementary school in Montgomery

County and taught 2nd grade in HCS. She was regarded as an excellent teacher in the school. Her teaching impressed me, indeed.

Different from the traditional “good Chinese teacher” who emphasizes the performance of lecturing, Teacher Li asked questions during her lecturing. Actually, she usually spent more time on questioning than lecturing. The class period seemed flexible. Lecture didn’t seem the primary teaching method. She even encouraged the students to ask their own questions anytime. When the students gave an incorrect answer, Teacher Li would give the students some tips and ask them to think about it again. She would wait 10-20 seconds instead of turning the attention to another student immediately. The 10-20 seconds wait time was not long, but it made a significant difference in pedagogy. It meant that the teacher paid more attention to the students’ responses than her own teaching plan. It helped to build a student-centered teaching environment. However, she emphasized discipline in the class and declared the rules at the first class meeting. She said: “The students should know when they can say, and when they cannot say.”

Tai ji is a state of harmony with *Yin* in *Yang*, and *Yang* in *Yin*. Teacher Li’s teaching mixes the characteristics of Chinese and American pedagogy, and expresses a *yin-yang* balance in her class. On one side, she welcomes the students’ participation and encourages dialogue in the class. On another side, she still emphasizes the authority of the teachers. Indeed, teaching Chinese in the United States offers us a good opportunity to learn and benefit from both Chinese—*Yang* and American—*Yin* pedagogies. The *Yin* and *Yang* pedagogical ropes are interpenetrated into each other and spliced in making the *Tai Ji Knot*.

The Good Luck Knot: Splicing Chinese and American Teacher-as-Learner Selves

Jenning initiated this splice around the historical event of the Tainanmen Square tragedy. I listened and responded at the point of her reason to leave China... We joined at the topic of a reason to come to America. And this splice is our Good Luck Knot 吉祥结 from the Chinese Knotwork. (Li, 2002, pp. 93-94)

吉 means beauty and good. 祥 means happiness and kindness. 吉祥 indicates auspicious, beauty and harmony. To make the Good Luck Knot (吉祥结), you have to lay out the rope with as many elongated loops as you wish, then cross the loops twice over each other and then pull tightly. The Good Luck Knot commonly has seven loops (Niu, 1989). It is often used to decorate the Buddhist's cloth and temple.

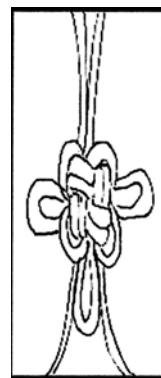


Figure 6. The Good Luck Knot 吉祥结 (Li, 2002, p. 94)

Regarding the meeting of different cultures, Aoki (2005c) says this:

When two strangers meet, indeed two worlds meet. How is it when two worlds meet? I have heard that a bridge is necessary only when there are two worlds to begin with and when there is a committed interest in bridging the two worlds. (p. 219)

When Chinese and American cultural and pedagogical worlds meet, there is a bridge to make them meet. Heidegger says: "The bridge expressly causes them to lie across from each other" (1993f, p. 354). During the crossing over from one culture to another, there are some common beliefs and understandings of teaching that can be observed between

Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies, although there are many more differences. I am not only learning from the differences, but also the commonalities. For example, based on both of the pedagogies, teaching is also a learning experience.

学无止境 (*Xue wu zhi jing*)

For Confucians, the ultimate goal of Confucian education is to achieve “sagehood (*Sheng-ren*)” (Bol, 1989). Bol says, “If the goal of literati learning is sagehood, then in practice literati learning can never cease; it is a lifelong enterprise” (p. 152). Confucians stress 学无止境 (*Xue wu zhi jing*). 学 means learning; 无 means nothing or non-; 止 means stop or end; 境 means an area or border. So 学无止境 means there is no end border for people’s learning. Learning is a ceaseless process. De Bary and Chaffee (1989) translate it to “living and learning.”

What is the nature of learning? Confucius says, “Learning is a personal and enjoyable thing” (as cited in Lee, 2000, p. 19). In the beginning of *Analects*, Confucius writes, “To learn and at due time to revise what one has learned, is that not after all a pleasure?” (pp. 19-20). He thinks that studying or learning is the human being’s most important thing. So Confucius loves to learn and cherishes the joy of learning. For him, learning is an enjoyable and infinite venture. It is the only way to achieve “sagehood” or to become a “gentleman.”

Confucius also emphasizes that learning is “a source of inner joy and a condition for completing humanity” (Lee, 2000, p. 179). For Confucius, learning is a “moral enterprise” and “fundamental to moral life” (Bol, 1989, p. 157). To complete “humanity” and achieve “sagehood,” Confucians advocate a special way of learning—“self-cultivation.” “Self-cultivation” implies that learning has shifted from acquiring

information to transformation (Tu, 1989). Chu Hsi thinks that “self-cultivation” is “learning for the sake of oneself” (as cited in de Bary, 1989, p. 189). “Self-cultivation” doesn’t only mean learning knowledge by ourselves, but also enjoying and broadening our spiritual and intellectual worldviews.

In ancient China, most teachers are Confucian followers. They see “the improvement of the self and the search for sagehood as the most worthy ends of education” (McKnight, 1989, p. 493). To self-cultivate and seek sagehood, the teacher becomes a learner.

教学相长 (Jiao xue xiang zhang)

Confucius says: “Two companions walking alongside me can certainly be my teachers. I will learn whatever is good from them and reject whatever is bad” (*Analects*: Chapter 7, as cited in Cleverley, 1991, p. 6). Teaching and learning will occur anywhere and benefit anybody. So he emphasizes “教学相长 (Jiao xue xiang zhang)” (*Li ji: Xue ji*).

教 is teaching. 学 is learning. 相 means each other, mutually. 长 means progress. So, the phrase 教学相长 means that teaching and learning make progress together in the class. The teachers learn from their students while the students are learning from the teachers. “Teacher as learner” becomes an important image of teacher in Chinese culture. There is a similar relationship expressed in western culture through the idea of encounter.

“I-Thou” Encounter

Maxine Greene (1973) thinks that the teacher becomes a learner when he/she participates into the students’ life-world. She says:

He can discover, at appropriate moments, what it is to meet his students’ gaze and become aware of their existence as his own gaze comes in contact with theirs. An encounter of this sort—an “I-Thou” encounter—occurs always in a present

moment, in a domain apart from the object-world. In such dialogic relation, the teacher can experience being a learner; he can become, in a distinctive fashion, a learner himself. (p. 94)

Encounter comes from Middle English *encountren*, from Middle French *encontrer*, which means to meet as an adversary or enemy, to engage in conflict with, to come upon face-to-face, or to come upon especially unexpectedly (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). So, encounter means that a person may meet something or somebody as an adversary or enemy. What he meets may conflict with what he knows or expects. If we regard what the teachers have or expect as “I,” and the something different or adverse as “Thou,” then the “I—Thou” encounter may lead to teachers experiencing conflicts and differences, but in the process treating students as respected persons. The teachers have to learn the different or adverse “Thou” so that they can connect with the students’ “world-as-an-individual” and “teach the young person to know” (Greene, 1973, pp. 91-94).

Letting Learn

Heidegger (1993g) says, “Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn. Indeed, the proper teacher lets nothing else be learned than—learning” (p. 380). What does it mean to learn? The etymology of learn is from Old English *leornian*; akin to Old High German *lernEn* to learn, Old English *last* footprint, Latin *lira* furrow, track. Learn means to gain knowledge or understanding of by study, instruction, or experience; and to come to know (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). Heidegger (1993e) says:

This genuine learning is therefore an extremely peculiar taking, a taking where one who takes only what one basically already has. Teaching is a giving, an offering; but what is offered in teaching is not the learnable, for the student is merely instructed to take for himself what he already has. If the student only takes over something that is offered he does not learn. He comes to learn only when he experiences what he takes as something he himself really already has. True

learning occurs only where the taking of what one already has is a self-giving and is experienced as such. Teaching therefore does not mean anything else than to let the others learn, that is, to bring one another to learning. (p. 275)

Persons come to learn only when they experience what they take as something they themselves really already have. The thing that we want to learn is already there, so that the task of teacher is not offering knowledge or guiding students to receive knowledge. Teaching is letting others learn, that is, bringing persons together in learning. Teaching is letting learn. It is more difficult than learning. As Hultgren (1995) says:

To let learn means to prepare a space for listening that intertwines identities (self/other and self/society) in a retrieval of being, a leading in itself that withdraws from teacher to being-in-teaching-together. (p. 377)

Therefore, if we want to learn, we have to experience it ourselves; we have to listen to others; we have to withdraw from the leading-teaching positions. If we want to teach, we have to be able to learn. As a result, the teacher becomes a learner, and learners become teachers.

Learning From Bo Tao

According to the regulation of HCS, when an academic year is over, the teachers have to honor two or three excellent students in their classes. At my last class in June of 2001, I honored three of my Kindergarten children and gave each of them a special gift. Actually, I didn't treat it seriously because I thought that the students were so young and might not understand its meaning.

Suddenly, a boy cried out. He looked very sad. When I tried to comfort him, he said: "I want to be the excellent student, I want the special toy." His words shocked me. Why did a little child less than six years old care about the honor and gift so much? Did

he feel pressure from his parents? If he did, why did his parents push such a young child to experience competition? I became a little angry and felt uncomfortable.

Although I didn't regard this issue seriously, I had picked the three excellent students fairly based on their academic achievements and performance in the class. I couldn't take away anyone's gift and give it to the crying boy in order to comfort him. It was unfair to the other children. In addition, I didn't believe that anybody was willing to give up his (her) own honor and gift. So I had to promise the crying boy that I would give him a special gift next time. But the boy didn't stop crying and insisted on it.

When I felt a headache and began to question the regulations of the school in my mind, Bo Tao stood up suddenly and said: "Teacher, you can give my special gift to him. Please tell him do not cry!" I looked at Bo Tao with surprise and appreciation. He was only a six-year old boy. But he knew giving-up and tolerance. He didn't care about his own gain or loss. I felt shame that I didn't believe that the young children would give up their own benefit to help others. I felt shame that I didn't understand my students. I saw the young children through my own adult perspective. From Bo Tao, I have learned the meaning of selflessness. From this story, I have learned there is a young child's world I may not understand. I have to learn more. I have to learn "letting learn."

Greene (1995) says:

Surely, we all have memories of our worlds opening outward through encounters we have had with other human beings, with texts, with works of art, with games, and with structured disciplines. If we were fortunate, we were able to develop open capacities—meaning the kinds of capacities that enabled us to move on our own from particular texts to other texts and other modes of representation. (p. 181)

Living in between two cultures and pedagogies, we encounter troubles, conflicts, struggles and negotiations, fortunately, which are our treasures. As Chinese teachers in

the United States, we want to teach “so far so good.” These encounters help us develop our open capacities to learn from others and differences in-between. I am learning the Tao of teaching stories in a third space from them. My teaching in HCS is finished, but my learning to teach “so far so good” is not finished yet. My exploration of the Tao of teaching is not finished yet... T.S. Eliot says:

We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And know the place for the first time. (“Little Gidding,” Four Quartets, as cited in Greene, 1973, p. 27)

The Good Luck Knot (吉祥结) means harmony and luck. In making the Good Luck Knot, Chinese and American ropes are laid out and cross each other to knot seven loops. These loops form a closing circle, which expresses the sameness and consistency of the two cultures and pedagogies. As the last Chinese knotwork in this chapter, it expresses our wish as Chinese teachers to teach Chinese “so far so good” in the United States.

In this chapter, I compared my two different experiences of teaching in China and America (places), and between the past and at present (times). I described my cultural and pedagogical journey in the third space teaching Chinese in the United States. Through the metaphorization of the six Chinese knotworks, I uncovered my experience of encountering the differences and negotiation between them, such as the *Yin* and *Yang* pedagogical philosophies, the virtuoso and midwife roles, and the text-doer and designer selves, etc. All of these pedagogical differences enriched my teaching experience and inspirited me to explore more meaningful stories of other Chinese teachers teaching Chinese in the United States. In Chapter Three, I provide the philosophic and

methodological grounding for my study of pedagogical differences of teaching Chinese in the United States.

CHAPTER THREE:

DWELLING IN MY TAO: THE PHILOSOPHICAL GROUNDING OF MY PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Who am I?
 I don't know.
 I live in your eyes,
 Could you tell me who I am?

No, although what you tell me is about me,
 but, it is not me.

This morning, I look at the mirror to find who I am.
 How surprising! I don't know the girl.
 That's my eyes, my nose, and my mouth,
 but it doesn't look like my face.
 I am not familiar with her.
 I don't know her.
 There are the eyes full of fear.

What happens here?
 I have changed.
 I have moved from home to a foreign land.
 I am living between them.
 I am lost in my orbit of Tao.
 I am not Being who I was being...

Then, who am I?
 Do I see the one who I am?
 I gaze at the image in the mirror.
 This is my eyes, my nose, and my mouth.
 I want to know her.
 There are the eyes full of hope.

I have listened to a man called Heidegger who tells me:
 I am being in the world.
 In the experience of Being, I will discover who I am.
 I have learned a philosophy called Phenomenology which teaches me:
 Understanding the possibility of my being,
 teaching as letting learn,
 and doing philosophy in my life.
 I have seen a truly pedagogical world.
 In this world,
 I study.
 I experience.

I reflect.
 I dream.
 I change.
 I seek my Tao.
 I am Being who I will be.

Finally, who am I?
 Am I the one who I am?
 I gaze at the image in the mirror.
 This is my eyes, my nose, and my mouth.
 I know her.
 There are the eyes full of relief.

That's me—

a Being dwelling in my Tao. (Weng, 2004, Reflective Writing)

Who I Am: A Journey into Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The expression “phenomenology” signifies primarily a concept of method. It does not characterize the “what” of the objects of philosophical research in terms of their content but the “how” of such research. (Heidegger, 1993a, p. 72)

What is a phenomenological study? According to *Merriam—Webster Online Dictionary*, phenomenology comes from German *Phänomenon*, phenomenon + *-logie* – logy. Phenomenon derives from the verb *phainesthai*, which means to appear, to show. For Heidegger (1993a), *phänomenon* means “what shows itself, the self-showing, the manifest” (p. 73). Logy derives from *logos*, which means “word,” “reason,” “plan” in Greek philosophy and theology. Heidegger emphasizes that “*logos* is ‘translated,’ and that always means interpreted” (p. 78), and “itself is a kind of *hermeneuein*” (Moran, 2000, p. 235). Thus, phenomenology means:

To let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself. That is the formal meaning of the type of research that calls itself “phenomenology.” (Heidegger, 1993a, p. 81)

It is the study of showing the phenomenon itself. Its aim is “gaining a deeper understanding of nature or the meaning of our everyday experiences” (van Manen, 2006,

p. 9). Philosophy only meant theory and theorizing activities for me before I came to know phenomenology. It is phenomenology that has helped me realize another meaning of philosophy that is more active: doing philosophy and being in philosophizing. It is phenomenology that awakens my self-consciousness and calls me to do philosophy in my life. It is phenomenology that opens my eyes to see who I am and pursue the meaning of my everyday life experiences.

“Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation” (van Manen, 2006, p. 179). It comes from the Greek god, Hermes, who works as a messenger between Zeus and other gods in order to make communication. Heidegger (1962) understands hermeneutics as an interpretive phenomenology. He thinks that hermeneutic understanding aims to grasp one’s own possibilities for being in the world. “To interpret a text is to come to understand the possibilities of being revealed by the text” (van Manen, 2006, p. 180).

Therefore, “Phenomenology describes how one orients to lived experience, hermeneutics describes how one interprets the ‘texts’ of life” (van Manen, 2006, p. 4). Hermeneutic phenomenology has two different elements to its methodology. One is a descriptive methodology (phenomenology) that wants to show or make the things appear. Another one is an interpretive methodology (hermeneutics) that attempts to interpret every thing in our lives. In addition, “Semiotics is used here to develop a practical writing or linguistic approach to the method of phenomenology and hermeneutics” (p. 4). Hermeneutic phenomenology, then, is fundamentally a writing activity. Practical writing is the approach to description and interpretation. To sum up, hermeneutic phenomenology is a human science that “studies ‘persons,’ or beings that have

‘consciousness’ and that act ‘purposefully’ in and on the world by creating objects of ‘meaning’ that are ‘expressions’ of how human beings exist in the world” (van Manen, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Since phenomenology is “a radical way of doing philosophy, a practice rather than a system” (Moran, 2000, p. 4), I can’t help practicing it and being changed when I am doing phenomenological research on the lived experience of teaching Chinese in the United States. I start to reflect on my past as a Chinese teacher and imagine my future teaching in America in order to understand my present being in between. I start to seek by questioning “Who am I?” Actually, when I explore the philosophical grounding of phenomenological inquiry, I am on a journey to seek “who I am.”

Being and Tao

Heidegger (1993a) writes:

The Phenomenological concept of phenomenon, as self-showing, means the Being of beings—its meaning, modifications, and derivatives. This self-showing is nothing arbitrary, nor is it something like an appearing. The Being of beings can least of all be something “behind which” something else stands, something that “does not appear.” (p. 82)

A phenomenological study seeks something behind itself, something that “does not appear,” which is Being. We can’t understand phenomenology without knowing Being. Being is a fundamental concept of the phenomenological philosophy of Martin Heidegger. “Being is no sort of genus of beings; yet it pertains to every being” (Heidegger, 1993a, p. 85)⁶. Indeed, “Being is always the Being of a being” (p. 50).

However, every time when I read or write Heidegger’s “Being,” I can’t help thinking of Laozi’s “Tao.” It is a “worlding” experience. Heidegger says: “Living in an

⁶ It also can be translated: “Being, as the basic theme of philosophy, is no class or genus of entities; yet it pertains to every entity” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 62). The “being” may be translated to “entity” by other translators.

environment, it means to me everywhere and always, it is all of this world, it is worlding” (as cited in Safranski, 1998, p. 95). Thinking of Being always makes me think of Tao. Laozi (trans. 1987) says in *:*

Tao appears void, but its strength and effectiveness are infinite. It is so profound that it comprehends all things...

Tao is deep and invisible, yet it is a being existing everywhere and anywhere. (p. 29)

Like Heidegger’s “Being,” Laozi’s “Tao” is being everywhere and comprehends all things as well.

The presuppositions of Being and Tao. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) claims the three presuppositions of “Being”: the most “universal” concept; the undefinable concept; and the self-evident concept (pp. 22-29). Heidegger says:

It has been maintained that “Being” is the “most universal” concept: An understanding of Being is already included in conceiving anything which one apprehends in entities. (p. 22)

Being is a universal concept. Understanding Being means thinking the Being of entities or beings. Tao is also a concept about the universe. “Tao is the origin and element of the universe, or the general treatise of the universe” (Yang, 1987, p. 191). In *, Laozi (trans. 1987) says:*

There is something evolved from void, and was born before the makings of heaven and earth....I do not know its name but call it Tao. If I must describe it, I would have to say it is great, far, infinite and perpetuating. (p. 71)

Tao is everywhere, and has no beginning nor end. It is a way of nature and the truth without detailed form or shape. Like Being, Tao is the most “universal” concept as well in Eastern philosophy.

Heidegger (1962) states that the concept of “Being” is indefinable. He says:

“Being” cannot indeed be conceived as an entity; nor can it acquire such a character as to have the term “entity” applied to it. “Being” cannot be derived from higher concepts by definition, nor can it be presented through lower ones. (p. 23)

Being cannot be defined through describing beings or entities. Being is beyond any application. But, “The indefinability of Being does not eliminate the question of its meaning; it demands that we look that question in the face” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 23). People can seek the meaning of Being although they can’t define it.

Laozi (trans. 2003) also claims the indefinability of Tao clearly in the beginning of *. He says, “A Tao that can be spoken about, is not the constant Tao” (p. 31), and “Tao, though ever present, could never be defined” (1987, p. 85). Laozi (trans. 1987) explains:*

That which cannot be seen is invisible, that which cannot be heard is inaudible, that which cannot be held is untouchable; all of these three cannot be examined but are missed as one entity of the unseen world! (p. 49)

Laozi’s Tao is “seemingly haze” (Yang, 1987, p. 191). It is being in the world without form or shape. Tao cannot be seen, heard or touched. Therefore, similar to Being, Tao cannot be defined through describing beings or entities in the world.

Heidegger’s (1962) third presupposition is that the concept of “Being” is self-evident. He says:

Whenever one cognizes anything or makes an assertion, whenever one comports oneself towards entities, even towards oneself, some use is made of “Being;” and this expression is held to be intelligible “without further ado,” just as everyone understands “The sky is blue,” “I am merry,” and the like. (p. 23)

Being is always the Being of a being or entity. When we understand something which is made of “Being,” we don’t have to question further. Tao can also be seen as a self-evident concept. Laozi (trans. 1987) says:

It never appeared obnoxious, it is simple but controls the complicated, and resolves all controversies....
No one knows its origin, but its existence preceded the coming of Gods. (p. 29)

Tao is a being existing everywhere and controlling all things in the world. Moreover, according to Yang (1987), Tao is

shape within, elements within, essence within; it is real, it is confident; from ancient till present, its name never disappears, in order that all things enjoyed life from it. (p. 191)

Therefore, Tao exists in the world and doesn’t have to prove itself. It is a self-confident concept as well.

无(Non-being) and 有(Being). Laozi’s Tao appears void and is born before the makings of heaven and earth. He claims that “无” and “有” are the fundamental essences of Tao. “无” means “non-” or “nothing;” and “有” means “having” or “being.” In order to compare these two key concepts, they maybe translated to “Non-being” and “Being,” or “Nothing” and “Something” in *. Laozi (trans. 1987) says:*

“Non-being” denotes the state existing prior to the formation of heaven and earth. “Being” denotes the origin of all existence in the universe. Thus, when the mind rests in the state of Non-being, one would be able to observe the wonders of all things; when the mind rests in the sate of Being, one would be able to observe realities of things. These two denominations bear the same origin but with different names. Both are mysterious and wonderful. They are the most mysterious but form the gateway to all wonders of the world! (p. 23)

“Non-being” and “Being” are both the “mother” of all things. They share the same origin but with different names. They are mutually inclusive and generative. Thus,

Something and Nothing⁷ produce each other;
 The difficult and the easy complement each other;
 The long and the short off-set each other;
 The high and the low incline towards each other... (Lao Tzu, 2001, p. 5)

For Laozi, “无” (Non-being) shares the same origin with “有” (Being). But “无” exists before “有.” “The multitude of things came from real Being. Reality came from Non-being” (Lao Tzu, trans. 1987, p. 5). Nothing or Non-being rises to “Being.”

Heidegger’s “Nothing” or “Non-being” means less than Laozi’s “无,” but “Being” means more than “有.” Heidegger (1993b) says: “What is the nothing... For the nothing is the negation of the totality of being; it is nonbeing pure and simple” (p. 97). Nothing is a nonbeing pure and simple, and “the complete negation of the totality of beings” (Heidegger, p. 98). It is not the origin of all things, but a state of being.

According to Heidegger:

Being and the nothing do belong together, not because both—from the point of view of the Hegelian concept of thought—agree in their indeterminateness and immediacy, but rather because Being itself is essentially finite and reveals itself only in the transcendence of Dasein which is held out into the nothing. (p. 108)

Being and the nothing belong to each other, but don’t generate each other. The nothing can’t give rise to Being. But Heidegger’s Being is beyond Laozi’s “有” (“having” or “being”). It is the Being of beings. In fact, “Nothing” or “Non-being” is the negative of the being as whole. It is only a character of Being.

Heidegger’s Being and Tao. I am intrigued by Martin Heidegger. When I look at his picture on the cover of *Martin Heidegger: Between Good And Evil* (Safranski, 1998), the view of his back moves me. I feel his solitary and spiritual mood.

⁷ Something and Nothing are another translation of “Being” and “Non-being.”

Heidegger's background was humble. His academic life was not smooth, as he experienced failures and frustrations as well as achievements. He even chose to compromise with the evil political power of the Nazis in his life. However, Martin Heidegger is considered to be one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, although people raise questions about his involvement with the Nazi party. He offers a creative understanding of phenomenology and a powerful way of seeing the world. He brings us fresh thinking about the fundamental question in philosophy: What is Being? Heidegger's answer is *Dasein*. *Dasein* is the Being of being. Heidegger (1962) says: "This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term *Dasein*" (p. 27). According to Heidegger, *Dasein* is individualized as myself or someone else. It is not an object, but a subjective existence. He says: "*Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself" (p. 33). *Dasein* is the fundamental structure of "Being-in-the-world." Thus, Being is a state of *Dasein* being in the world.

In his letter to Engelbert Krebs, Heidegger (as cited in Safranski, 1998) writes:

It is hard to live the life of a philosopher; the inner truthfulness toward oneself and those for whom one is supposed to be a teacher demands sacrifices and struggles that the academic toiler can never know. (p. 108)

I am encouraged to hear Heidegger write real words about his life. One of my most respected professors in China once told me: "Doing academics is becoming a human being!" After reading Heidegger's biography, I feel confused by the contrasts in Heidegger's philosophical academic life and his own private life. Doesn't his philosophy influence his everyday life? How could he gain such prominence in philosophy while

engaging in selfish or evil things in his everyday life at the same time? What is his *Dasein*? What does Heidegger's ontological philosophy of Being mean for his real being in the world?

Heidegger has been accused of nihilism. The Nazi philosophers thought his thinking inherited the characteristics of Jewish philosophy. Actually, his philosophy was attacked on “the traditional metaphysics of racism and biologism” (Safranski, 1998, p. 302). People couldn't forgive Heidegger's Anti-Semitic behaviors when he served as rector at Freiburg. For example, he released Jewish professors and approved the boycott of Jewish professionals. He compromised to Nazis and did what they asked him to do. Why didn't his philosophical position influence his behaviors? Perhaps survival in his leadership position in academia was the stronger motivating force. Laozi (trans. 1987) says:

Men follow the way of earth;
Earth follows the way of heaven;
Heaven follows the way of Tao;
Tao is Natural way. (p. 71)

What is Heidegger's Tao of being in the world?

Laozi doesn't invent the conception of “Tao.” More than two thousand years before Laozi's *Tao Teh Ching*, “Tao” appeared in *I Ching* (*Yi Jing*), *the Book of Changes*.⁸ Based on a dissertation of “The Origin and Meaning of the Tao,” published in a free academic webpage, Tao has two original meanings.⁹ The author writes:

The Tao has at least two origins. One is the realism-orientation origin. It means the way and road in the real life. It is the origin of Confucian Tao. Another one is the mythological-orientation origin. It means a universal rule or principle. It is the origin of Taoism's Tao, actually, Laozi's Tao.

⁸ Derek Lin, *The Real Origin of The Tao*, at <http://www.taoism.net/enter.htm>.

⁹ The resource is a free dissertation webpage at <http://www.lwkoo.cn>. The paper link is <http://www.lwkoo.cn/Freepaper/Zhexue/Guoxue/200805/10260.html>.

For a Confucian, the Tao means a way of living in the real world. Confucius says: “正心, 修身, 齐家, 治国, 平天下” (*Li ji: Da xue*), which means that you have to purify your heart, cultivate your own behavior, unite your family, and then you may accomplish a great enterprise, even lead the country. This is the essential way of being in the world as a Confucian. Heidegger’s Being shows me a world between good and evil. His compromise to selfish and evil things became an indelible stain in his life. Even his distinguished academic achievement could not cover it. “正心” (purifying your heart) and “修身” (cultivating yourself) are the essences of being in the world. I also believe “doing academics is becoming a human being.” I draw upon Heidegger’s philosophy, then, and use it toward the good. His ontological questioning can be used to confront evil in our world today.

In Laozi’s *Tao Teh Ching*, there are two major parts: “The first part is the book of Tao and the second part is the book of Teh” (Yang, 1987, p. 9). Yang says:

The Tao is abstractive and Teh is existential.... He used Tao as the theme, the Teh as the application of the theme. (p. 9)

What is Teh? The Chinese character of “Teh” is 德, means virtue. In Chapter 51, Laozi says:

Tao gives life and form to all things; the way of Nature-Teh nurtures all things. Each thing has its individual shape and form, each individual force contributes to its completion.

Hence, as regards all things, Tao is cherished and Teh is respected.

The significance of Tao and Teh is not a matter of controversy but a matter of natural event.

Tao gives rise to life. Teh determines the individuality, growth, development, completion, maturity, nature and security of all things.

The most wonderful way of Tao and Teh is that they provide life but never claim ownership; give support without the wish for return; rule without Lordship! This is so-called Supreme Teh or the Teh of Tao. (p. 123)

Tao gives the life, Teh nurtures the life. Teh is the virtue of the Tao. Teh is the way for people to achieve the Tao. Teh is the great way of being in the world. Only through uniting the Tao of Heaven and the Teh of Men, the final stage of Laozi's philosophy—"The Union of Heaven and Men (天人合一)" can be completed. Then, what is the Teh of Tao? What is the way of a great Being? Laozi says:

The Sage has no wishes but always regards the wishes of people as his wish. Those who are good, he treats well; those who are not good, he also treats them well.
Those who are sincere, he trusts; those who are not sincere, he also trusts. (p. 119)

The way of a good person is like water, it benefits all but never for itself; it puts itself in the place where no one else would wish to be, hence, he is closest to Tao. (p. 37)

Being a great Being means that one has to have "non-action" (无为) for oneself. One has to consider the others and be regardless of one's own wish.

Heidegger is not a Sage. His being is far from Laozi's Tao. But through studying him and his philosophical work, we can see how he struggles between good and evil. In his philosophical world, he pursues the Tao—being and non-being. In his real life, he chooses to pursue the benefits away from the Tao. Through reading his biography, I find that Heidegger's philosophy and being changed according to his experience and status.

Safranski (1998) says:

The gap between Heidegger's thinking and external events is growing ever wider. While events are drifting toward their disastrous conclusion and the crimes of the Hitler regime are reaching a horrible peak with the murder of the Jews, Heidegger immerses himself ever more deeply into the "beginnings." (p. 330)

World War II, the surveillance status, and the failure of Germany made him seek the hidden spirit in the “beginnings.” Heidegger became more lonely and solitary. In his later philosophy, it seems that Heidegger came back to ancient eastern philosophy. “As for the meaning of Being, the meaning that the question of Being asks about, there exists another nice Zen dictum, entirely in Heidegger’s spirit” (Safranski, p. 429). Heidegger begins to seek the union of earth, sky, divinities and mortals (human beings).

Exploring Heidegger’s Being and Tao also makes me wonder about my being and how I reveal my being in the world. Who I am means questioning my *Dasein*—the possibilities of my being. *Dasein* has a history, and the being of *Dasein* finds its meaning in temporality. Heidegger (1993a) says: “Being is comprehensible only on the basis of the consideration of time, the answer to the question of Being cannot lie in an isolated and blind proposition” (p. 62). Therefore, to know my *Dasein*—the being of myself, I have to question my history, and the present and future possibilities of my being. How I act in the world means questioning my Tao—a way, a rule, and an orbit of my being. My Being and Tao answer the question: Who am I?

Seeking My Being

In my first class meeting of *Phenomenology*, I was shocked by the openness of my instructor and classmates. I felt a freedom of soul and passion exuding from their own beings. I couldn’t help question myself: Do I know myself? Can I open myself? Ever since that moment, I have been deeply attracted by phenomenological philosophy. I struggle sometimes to do hermeneutic phenomenological writing, not because I am a foreign student and have a language barrier, but because I am hesitant sometimes to open myself, to share my self due to my cultural learning of not sharing one’s personal life. My

journey into hermeneutic phenomenology is a process of reflecting on myself, opening myself, and knowing myself. I am seeking *Dasein*—my Being. And in doing that, I am crossing cultural boundaries, stepping outside of my cultural traditions. This study looks at the way in which other Chinese teachers also engage in this boundary crossing.

Authenticity of Dasein and anxiety. Heidegger states that there are two modes in which possibilities present themselves to *Dasein*: authenticity or inauthenticity. Heidegger (1962) says: “But only in so far as it is essentially something which can be authentic—that is, something of its own—can it have lost itself and not yet won itself” (p. 68). Thus, “Authentic moments are those in which we are most at home with ourselves, at one with ourselves” (Moran, 2000, p. 240). In such authentic moments, we can be true to our *Dasein*. Our being is a kind of “potential-to-be-whole.” But Heidegger claims that we live in an inauthentic way most of the time. Human beings desire to find authentic being and develop consciousness of phenomena confronted in the world. To find authenticity of *Dasein*, “Anxiety leads us to drop the mask of our everyday familiarity with the world” (p. 241).

According to Heidegger (1962), “Anxiety makes manifest in *Dasein* its Being towards its own most potentiality-for-Being” (p. 232). Anxiety helps us to be free to choose and grasp ourselves. It also “reveals to us a certain homelessness—we are not at home in the world, the world faces us as something weird, or ‘uncanny’ (which carries the meaning of something being unfamiliar, un-homely)” (Moran, 2000, p. 241). We are homeless in the world. Heidegger (1962) says:

Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world. Hence it is necessary to think that destiny in terms of the history of Being. (p. 259)

Our homelessness brings us into reflection on the history of Being. We carry the meaning of something familiar and unfamiliar in the world. Teaching Chinese in the United States makes us feel far away from our homeland and we feel homeless. Homelessness brings about a desire for homecoming. It is anxiety that leads us to unmask what carries us, as we track our history in order to know the true being of ourselves.

Thinking as being and letting learn. According to Heidegger (1993g), “We never come to thoughts. They come to us” (p. 365). Thinking is coming to Being. Heidegger (1993d) says:

Such thinking is, insofar as it is, recollection of Being and nothing else. Belonging to Being, because thrown by Being into the preservation of its truth and claimed for such preservation, it thinks Being. Such thinking has no result. It has no effect. It satisfies its essence in that it is. (p. 259)

What is the relationship between thinking and Being? Thinking belongs to Being. It is an essence of Being. Thinking is not our general ideas to think something. It has no result, no effect. Thinking is the recollection of Being and nothing else. It is a kind of Being.

Moreover, Being claims thinking. Heidegger says:

Thinking, in its essence as thinking of Being, is claimed by Being. Thinking is related to Being as what arrives. Thinking as such is bound to the advent of Being, to Being as advent. Being has already been dispatched to thinking. Being is as the destiny of thinking. (1993d, p. 264)

The destiny of thinking is being. Thinking is a way of being-in-the-world. It is claimed by Being and goes to Being. Indeed, thinking is being in the world as a kind of Being.

What kind of thinking propels me as a Chinese student, teaching Chinese in America?

What is the thinking that propels other Chinese teachers to teach Chinese in America?

Heidegger (1993g) also says: “We must learn thinking, because our being able to think, and even gifted for it, is still not a guarantee that we are capable of thinking” (p.

381). For *Dasein*, thinking is already there and comes to us. It is there already, and what we have to do is to “take it.” Heidegger (1993e) says:

This genuine learning is therefore an extremely peculiar taking, a taking where one who takes only takes what one basically already has.
True learning occurs only where the taking of what one already has is a self-giving and is experienced as such. (p. 275)

Thinking as being makes true learning occur only with the taking of what one already has. “Teaching therefore does not mean anything else than to let the others learn, that is, to bring one another to learning” (p. 275). Teaching has to let learn. Teaching is letting others learn, that is, to bring one another to learning. As teachers experience learning themselves already, they will know how to teach—to help the students to sense and experience something that they already have. Thus, Heidegger says: “Teaching is more difficult than learning” (p. 275).

To teach Chinese in the United States well, I have to learn thinking as being—to sense my own being and experience what I have, and then let learn. Letting learn means that the teacher has to “listen to the students,” trying to “trace the patterns and textures of their lives, their fears, their dreams” (Taylor, 1991, p. 351). My students are second-generation Chinese immigrants. They have different cultural understandings, identities and backgrounds from me. Thus, for me, letting learn means to take a fresh pedagogical approach to cultural learning, like Hultgren (1995) says:

To prepare a space for listening that intertwines identities (self/other and self/society) in a retrieval of being, a leading in itself that withdraws from teacher to being-in-teaching-together (p. 377)...
to allow for the finding of one’s voice through a cultural remembering. (p. 381)

Teaching is an experience of letting learn. As a teacher, I have to learn how to let learn—not only to let the students learn, but let myself learn. Heidegger (1993e) says: “In all

teaching, the teacher learns the most” (p. 276). Teaching Chinese in the United States requires me to learn how to know my own being, listen to the students, understand others, and let the students learn. I have to find the Tao of my teaching. In this self pursuit I also will be able to listen more intently to the authentic voices of other Chinese teachers.

Finding My Tao

Doing phenomenological research on the lived experience of teaching Chinese in the United States brings me on a journey to find my Tao while seeking my being. Tao is a way of being in the world. Tao is the eternal Truth. All things—heaven, earth, spirit, and man—have to follow the orbit of Tao. Otherwise, all creatures will be destroyed, as Laozi (trans. 1987) says:

In the beginning, there was the true One (Tao).
When heaven was in accord with It, heaven became clear.
When earth was in accord with It, earth became secured.
When spirit was in accord with It, spirit became divine...
Conversely, Without it to render the clarity, heavenly order may be disrupted;
Without It to render security, earth may explode;
Without it to render divinity, the Spirits will be impotent.
Without it to render the plenty, the valleys may be desiccated.
Without it to render them life, all creations will be perished. (p. 99)

As a teacher being in the world, I have to find the Tao of my teaching and follow it in order to teach “so far so good.” To find the Tao, as a foreign teacher living in a strange land, I am eager to understand and be understood. As I bring the voices of other Chinese teachers forward, our experiences can contribute to pedagogical insights in our border crossings.

Language and understanding. For Heidegger, being is understood through experiencing and expressing. The nature of lived experience is encapsulated in the use of language (Moran, 2000). Heidegger (1993d) says:

In its essence, language is not the utterance of an organism; nor is it the expression of a living thing. Nor can it ever be thought in an essentially correct way in terms of its symbolic character, perhaps not even in terms of the character of signification. Language is the clearing-concealing advent of Being itself. (p. 230)

Language is a way to understand Being. “The being of anything that is resides in the word. Therefore this statement holds true: Language is the house of Being” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 63). We can see objects and things through language. Language creates a bridge to understanding.

Gadamer (1975/2003) offers a fresh and lived understanding of hermeneutics. He views hermeneutics as the art of interpretation or a kind of phenomenology that focuses on the act of understanding. He highlights the meaning of language, and treats philosophy as dialogue. Moran (2000) summarizes Gadamer’s understanding of language and says: “Language does not just reflect human being but actually makes humans be, brings about human existence as communal understanding and self-understanding” (p. 270). Therefore, Gadamer (1975/2003) says: “Being that can be understood is language” (p. 474).

Furthermore, according to Gadamer, language is never completely neutral. It “is already colored with the value system of the culture which supports it and which language in turn vivifies” (as cited in Moran, 2000, p. 270). It means that language carries value and culture. Language is the vehicle of communication and cultural preservation, a way to encompass experience and a medium of understanding. We can understand and be understood through our values and culture by our use of language.

Gadamer (1975/2003) also analyzes Heidegger’s theory of understanding. He agrees with Heidegger’s thought:

Understanding is not a resigned ideal of human experience adopted in the old age of the spirit, as with Dilthey; nor is it, as with Husserl, a last methodological ideal of philosophy in contrast to the naivete of unreflecting life; it is, on the contrary, the original form of the realization of *Dasein*, which is being-in-the-world. (p. 259)

Understanding as thinking, is a part of *Dasein*. It is being in the world. People are living and understanding. Understanding embodies our living and thinking.

Ted Aoki states that understanding is not only knowing what people say, but also what people don't say. He says: "Now, say to him or her: he is the teaching; she is the teaching. And after you have said these words, allow the unsaid to shine through the said" (as cited in Pinar, 2005, p. 20). Yes, persons may not be aware of everything. When the teachers are teaching, they might not realize the knowledge, behaviors and attitudes that influence the students. However, after reflection for self-understanding, teachers or the participant-researchers may understand what is hidden and unsaid in the teaching, and allow the unsaid to shine through the said.

Teaching Chinese offers me an opportunity to speak Chinese to the students. Moran (2000) states: "For Gadamer every effort to speak or comprehend already carries the baggage of the cultural and educational tradition" (p. 270). What I say in the classroom carries my cultural and educational baggage, which embodies my being. Teaching Chinese helps me find a way to share my values and cultures in order to be understood. I wonder what this experience is like for other Chinese teachers?

Teaching Chinese in the United States also provides an opportunity to learn English. Gadamer (1975/2003) says:

By learning foreign languages men do not alter their relationship to the world, like an aquatic animal that becomes a land animal but, while preserving their own relationship to the world, they extend and enrich it by the world of the foreign language. Whoever has language "has" the world. (p. 411)

Learning a foreign language is a complicated experience. In this learning, we are opened to a new world. Language is not just a language, but a world for those who share it.

Learning English enriches my experience and helps me to understand others, their values and cultures.

Bridging the difference. I am eager to understand and be understood because I am living in difference. It is that difference that propels me to want to know the experience of other Chinese teachers teaching Chinese in America. Aristotle (trans. 1975) says:

Things are said to be “different” when they are other (*hetera*), but are in some respect the “same:” other not merely numerically, but formally or generically or analogically. To be different things must be generically other, or contraries, or other in their very being. (p. 101)

Difference means other, or contrary beings compared to the “same.” Derrida (1978) develops Aristotle’s point. For him, *différance* has two meanings in the verb *différer*: “to differ (in space) and to defer (to put off in time, to postpone presence)” (p. xvi), which lead to two sets of meanings:

Différance means non-identity, otherness, alterity, being discernible, distinct, and, secondly, it can connote some kind of temporal and or spatial separation, interval, distance, spacing, distantiation, which may include temporal distancing, deferring. (as cited in Moran, 2000, p. 466)

Difference means temporal or spatial separation and intervals in-between two things. As a Chinese student and teacher in the United States, I am in a different space. I am the other. I am not identified with American people. I am also deferring. I am living in an interval between my past and present. I wonder how other Chinese teachers experience this place “between?” Derrida (1998) also says:

The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles. The origin of the speculation becomes a difference. What can look at itself is not one; and the law

of the addition of the origin to its representation, of the thing to its image, is that one plus one makes at least three. (p. 36)

Original thinking may be the condition for difference between inner meaning and outer representation. Thus, as Chinese immigrants, our cultural learning and educational backgrounds provide us with a particular way of seeing the world. Looking at the same reflection and image, we may be thinking in difference. Moreover, Derrida's *Différance* "plays between 'things' and 'doing,' between entity and action" (Collins & Mayblin, 1997, p. 76). Thus, thinking and living in difference offers me some possibilities to play with between being and doing, for identity construction and understanding.

To identify our being and find understanding, we have to bridge differences we encounter. Heidegger (1993f) says:

The bridge swings over the stream "with ease and power." It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge expressly causes them to lie across from each other. (p. 354)

When we build the bridge, the differences become the banks. The banks may be the different languages or cultures, different teaching experiences in different countries, or our beings and actions. "The bridge gathers, as a passage that crosses" (Heidegger, 1993f, p. 355). Bridging the difference gathers the different things across the temporal and special separations or intervals.

Aoki (2005e) explains Heidegger's bridge from his own perspective:

Such a bridge is very unlike the many bridges that cross the Han river in Seoul. But on this bridge, we are in no hurry to cross over; in fact, such bridges lure us to linger. This, in my view, is a Heideggerean bridge, a site or clearing in which earth, sky, mortals, and divine, in their longing to be together, belong together. (p. 316)

This bridge is a site in which the things belong together. Actually, Heidegger's bridge is a locale, a space. Heidegger (1993f) says:

The bridge is a thing; it gathers the fourfold, but in such a way that it allows a site for the fourfold. By this site are determined the places and paths by which a space is provided for. (p. 356)

The bridge allows a space into difference. "Spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man" (Heidegger, 1993f, p. 359).

Teaching Chinese in the United States creates a third space in-between the difference. The third space opens up the fact of Chinese teachers dwelling in the United States and lures us to linger in-between. In this space, we are allowed to experience difference, learning, understanding and being understood.

Being implaced. Bridging the difference makes us live in between—a third space. However, can we bring the space into place and dwell in the place as the others? Tuan (1977) says: "When space feels thoroughly familiar to us, it has become place" (p. 73). When we experience the space physically, the unknown space becomes a steady place. Place is a way to understand space. "Place can acquire deep meaning for the adult through the steady accretion of sentiment over the years" (p. 33). Tuan also says:

Familiarity is a characteristic of the past. The home provides an image of the past. Moreover in an ideal sense home lies at the center of one's life, and center (we have seen) connotes origin and beginning. (pp. 127-128)

As Chinese teachers, we treat China as the past. We are familiar with it. Every time we think of the past, we will recall home. To dwell in another place beyond home, we have to become familiar with it and make it stable. However,

Any stability we experience is precarious. Even though we know where we are in relation to other places, we lack a sure sense of where our own place is. What we lack, therefore, is twofold: *stabilitas loci* ("stability of place") and *inhabitancy in place*. (Casey, 1993, p. 109)

This feeling of instability is so real for me. As a Chinese woman in the United States, there is no real “inhabitancy” in my life. When my body moved from China to the United States, my soul did not necessarily catch up. As such, I am delayed in my inhabitance of place. Casey says: “When we cannot find a habitable place, we must set about making or building such a place to ensure stable inhabitation” (p. 109). It is called “implacement.”

Casey (1993) says:

To exist at all as a (material or mental) object or as (an experienced or observed) event is to have a place—to be implaced, however minimally or imperfectly or temporarily. (p. 13)

Implacement means being in place. The object or event exists in place. When persons are implaced, being and place belong to each other. However, sometimes, an object or event will lose place due to the moving of the body, which brings unplacement. “Unplacement becomes implacement as we regain and refashion a sense of place” (p. 29). Otherwise, we may dis-place the object and event.

Actually, “Moving bodies on land or at sea provides us with oriented and orienting placescapes” (Casey, 1993, p. 29). Moving our bodies to a new place changes the Tao of our life because our soul may not move together with the body. The separation of body and soul due to unplacement may make us—the moving bodies—experience suffering and great loss. Casey says:

To be dis-placed is therefore to incur both culture loss and memory loss resulting from the loss of the land itself, each being a symptom of the disorientation wrought by relocation. (p. 37)

Thus, we have to become implaced to find our Tao in the foreign place and relocate the body and soul together. Implacement is so important for the beings who move from a

familiar place to a foreign land. As Chinese immigrants, we only feel secure and joyful when we live in a stable inhabitation with a feeling of being home. In order to dwell at “home,” we have to find the Tao of building a place to connect our souls together with our moving bodies. To become implaced, we have to find the Tao of understanding the beings and things in a foreign place and be understood by them. To teach Chinese “so far so good” in the United States, we have to find the Tao of teaching as we become implaced.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld. It searches for what it means to be a human being. Its aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our lived experience. Studying the lived experience of teaching Chinese in the United States allows me to experience and understand pedagogical differences, struggles, conflicts and negotiations between Chinese and American cultures. The pedagogical insights gained from those understandings will contribute to helping Chinese teachers feel more at home in this in-between place. For me, it also is a journey to seek my Being and Tao in the third space. The phenomenological question I am exploring is:

What is the meaning of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools?

Six Research Activities: The Tao of My Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study

Whoever is searching for the human being first must find the lantern. (Nietzsche, as cited van Manen, 2006, p. 4)

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a study of human beings. Being human is “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 78). We can capture the essence of human beings only as they live in the world through understanding and experiencing. Phenomenological research concerns the lived experience of beings in the world. Its aim is making meaning of things and beings. It is the lantern to search for the human being.

How can phenomenological research be pursued? Van Manen (2006) has identified six research activities to complete phenomenological research. The six activities are the lived ways of researchers “doing” phenomenology and seeking phenomenological meanings. These activities for me are the Tao that we follow for being in the phenomenological world. They are:

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

“Phenomenology has been called a method without techniques” (van Manen, 2006, p. 131). These activities are not technical guides followed in linear order. Rather, they create a dialectical circle. In the circle, there is no order, but a going back and forth among all the activities, which interplay dynamically.

Turning to My Phenomenon

Van Manen (2006) states that phenomenology is the study of a description of a phenomenon. He says:

The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence—in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (p. 36)

Thus, the lived experience is “the starting and end point of phenomenological research,” and “the breathing of meaning” (p. 36). From a phenomenological point of view, turning to a phenomenon is a way to seize the lived experience and express its essence, and to show the way in which the phenomenon has called us to a deep abiding interest in it.

Turning to the phenomenon of teaching Chinese in the United States offers me a unique opportunity to seize the lived experience of living between two different cultures and pedagogies in order to understand this teaching place. In Chapter One, I describe the stories I have experienced as a Chinese teacher in the United States. The stories are drawn from school, as well as out of school, experiences in my class as well as other teachers' classes. All of them show different aspects of this phenomenon in different situations. Turning to my lived experience helps me come back to my authentic being in pedagogy and reflect on the meaning of being.

Van Manen (2006) says: "To do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (p. 5). According to Heidegger (1993a), questioning is a way of being-in-the-world. He says:

Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought. Questioning is a knowing search for beings in their thatness and whatness. (p. 45)

Our use of language is the way to encapsulate the meaning of being. We have to pay attention to the nature of questioning itself (Moran, 2000). Gadamer (1975/2003) also says: "The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities" (p. 266). Therefore, based on a phenomenological view, questioning is way to open us up. It refers us back to our lifeworlds to know who we are and how we came to be.

In Chapter One, when I describe my lived experience, I can't help but pose the questions to myself. I question why I feel this way or that way. According to Heidegger (1962), we have a "fore-conception" before we question. He says: "Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guided before-hand by what is sought" (p. 24). Thus, the answer we get depends on our way of posing the question (Moran, 2000). The description

helps me reflect on my past experience, which leads me to question how it might influence my research. When I am writing down the questions, my experience comes back to me and orients me to further exploring.

Using metaphor is a phenomenological way to interpret something. Van Manen (2006) says:

By way of metaphor, language can take us beyond the content of the metaphor toward the original region where language speaks through silence. This path of the metaphor is the speaking of thinking, of poetizing. (p. 49)

In Chapter One, I adopt “the third space” as a metaphor to express my feeling of living-in-between. Teaching Chinese in American Chinese School, I live in between two different times, places, languages, cultures, and pedagogies. I feel like I am living in “a third space.” The exploration of this space for me opens up the opportunities to draw out the experience for other Chinese teachers as well as I explore the phenomenon. In Chapter Two, I use “Chinese knotwork” as a metaphor to address my cultural and pedagogical experiences when I teach Chinese in the United States. As a Chinese immigrant, I carry Chinese culture and pedagogy into my teaching. I encounter many cultural and pedagogical struggles when I teach in the United States. The “Chinese knotwork” is spliced mostly with two ropes. People can make different designs through splicing the ropes in different ways, such as Connection Knot, Cross Knot, Friendship Knot, Child Knot, and so on. These different Chinese knots have different symbolic meanings, such as happiness, harmony, conflict, and so on. They help me speak of my lived cultural and pedagogical struggles poetically, and again, open up the possibilities for other Chinese teachers to name their experiences.

Investigating Experiences

According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), the world is experienced through the body.

He says:

Our body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system. (p. 203)

For example, “Space reveals itself through our bodily gestures and our desire to traverse distances” (Moran, 2000, p. 404). Phenomenology helps to focus on concrete lived experience as it is lived rather than conceptualized. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), doing a phenomenological study of concrete lived experience requires people to rethink the meaning of humanness in historical and temporal terms. He says:

If time is similar to a river, it flows from the past towards the present and the future. The present is the consequence of the past, and the future of the present. (p. 411)

Thus, when we rethink the meaning of present beings, we have to disclose the future as well as the past. “Being experienced is a wisdom of the practice of living which results from having lived life deeply” (van Manen, 2006, p. 32).

Phenomenological research requires the researcher to explore the fullness of life in the world of living relations and shared situations. It means that we have to gather all kinds of experiential accounts or lived-experience descriptions to grasp the meaning of a phenomenon. As van Manen (2006) says: “All recollections of experiences, reflections on experiences, descriptions of experiences, taped interviews about experiences, or transcribed conversations about experiences are already transformations of those experiences” (p. 54). There are many ways to collect these textual accounts. We can use personal experience as a starting point because one’s own experiences are also the

possible experiences of others, and may provide some clues for other stages of phenomenological research (van Manen, 2006). At the beginning of Chapter One, I share my initial experience of reflecting on my teaching and asking myself whether my teaching is “so far so good.” This personal experience initiates my journey to explore the meaning of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools.

Etymological sources also can be used because seeking the etymological origins of words may provide us an opportunity to connect with an original form of life (van Manen, 2006). In Chapter One and Two, I have explored the etymological origins of some key words, like teach, home, place, culture, root, others, difference, etc. I also analyze the Chinese etymological origin of 桥 or 橋—the Chinese character for bridge, to seek the original meaning of bridge in Chinese culture and open up two meaningful stories about bridges in China in Chapter One. In addition, In Chapter Four, I seek the Chinese etymological origin of 爱 (*ai*)—the Chinese character for love, to indicate the Chinese teachers’ belongingness and desire to teach. These etymological understandings of the key words offer me a hand to explore the essence of my teaching experiences.

Searching idiomatic phrases is also a phenomenological way to reveal the meaning of lived experience because idiomatic phrases are born out of lived experience (van Manen, 2006). There are rich idiomatic phrases in Chinese language. For example, In Chapter One, I adopt an old Chinese saying: “The moon in the homeland is brightest” to explore my homesickness due to being in the foreign land. In Chapter Two, I adopt a Chinese idiomatic phrase, “The person who teaches you one day, will be your father in your life” to express the “fathering” meaning of teaching in a Chinese context. Compared to a “mothering” pedagogy that emphasizes love, patience and kindness, a “fathering”

pedagogy means authority and hierarchy. In Chapter Five, I adopt a Chinese idiomatic phrase 断章取义(*Duan zhang qu yi*) to indicate how the Chinese teachers take the fragments from the different texts (断章) and combine them together to develop a new set of meaningful texts as a whole.

Obtaining experiential descriptions from others means that we have to gather other people's experiences to enrich ourselves. Van Manen (2006) says:

The point of phenomenological research is to “borrow” other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience. (p. 62)

In Chapter One, I have borrowed Howard’s description in her reflection: “*The Look*” in *Teacher’s Performance Evaluation* to understand the feeling of becoming an object, as all parents’ eyes are on my teaching and monitoring what I do. In Chapters Two and Three, I have borrowed Xing Li’s pursuit of “The Tao of Life Stories” to express my eagerness to seek the truth of my experience as well as others. In Chapter Four, I have borrowed Oberg’s expression of cultural shock to explore how the Chinese teachers experience pedagogical shock when they are landing in a foreign place.

Hermeneutic conversations are also a way to gather and reflect on the lived-experience materials (van Manen, 2006). My initial conversations with other teachers and parents help me to arrive at beginning themes to open up my phenomenon. In Chapter Four and Five, my hermeneutic conversations with the Chinese teachers who are the participants of this study, provide a rich textual source for thematic rendering of the lived experience of teaching Chinese in America.

Art is also an important source of lived experience as well. Each artistic medium, such as painting, music, poetry and so on, has its own language of expression (van Manen,

2006). In Chapter One, I translate the famous Chinese ancient poet Li Bai's work, "Night Thoughts," to express my homesickness and loneliness in a foreign land. In Chapter Two, I also translate a famous poem written by the Tang dynasty poet Li Shen: "悯农" (The Peasants) to describe one of my cultural and ethical teaching experiences to explain one of my teacher roles as the Tao transmitter. In addition, I adopt the Chinese knotwork of Xin Li (2002) to express my experience of encountering cultural and pedagogical struggles poetically. The beautiful pictures of Chinese knotwork in her book, *The Tao of Life Stories: Chinese Language, Poetry and Culture in Education*, represent the breadth and richness of Chinese culture. They symbolize the lived Tao of our teaching stories in the United States. I continue drawing on such artistic sources throughout the study to help give meaning to lived experience accounts.

Finally, other phenomenological literature is drawn upon to help with deeper reflection on the themes. Hong Yu Wang's understanding of "a third space" in her book, *The Call from the Stranger on a Journey Home: Curriculum in a Third Space*, opens my heart to experience living-in-between and helps me to address the essence of teaching Chinese in the United States. Max van Manen's words in his book, *The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness* sparkles and inspires me to think deeper about the pedagogical meaning of teaching Chinese in America.

Reflecting on the Themes

According to van Manen (2006), the purpose of phenomenological research is to grasp the essential meaning of something. "The meaning or essence of a phenomenon is never simple or one-dimensional. Meaning is multi-dimensional and multi-layered" (p.

78). Therefore, we can't grasp the meaning in a single definition, but have to make explicit the structure of meaning.

"Phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of experience" (van Manen, 2006, p. 79). What, then, is a theme? "Theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point. A theme is not a thing; themes are intransitive. Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand" (p. 87). Reflecting on the themes means making sense of the structure of meaning. Van Manen (2006) claims several ways to uncover themes. He proposes the isolation of thematic statements through three approaches. The wholistic or sententious approach means we have to attend to the text as a whole and express that meaning by formulating a sententious phrase. The selective or highlighting approach means we have to listen to or read a text several times and circle, underline or highlight these statements. The detailed or line-by-line approach means we have to look at every single sentence or sentence cluster and ask for the meaning that resides there. In addition, he suggests that researchers may glean thematic descriptions from artistic sources, conversations, collaborative analysis, and lifeworld existentials as guides for reflection to determine incidental and essential themes.

Using lifeworld existentials as guides will be important to my research. According to van Manen (2006), there are four existentials that may prove especially helpful as guides for reflection in the research process: "lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communalism)" (p. 101). The lived experience of teaching Chinese in the United States involves all these four existentials. First, it is related to space. As a Chinese woman, I am living in the United States at present; I am living-in-between my home and a foreign land.

Second, I experience time between my past and future; I am living in temporality. Third, as a teacher, I experience my body in the class. I know what it is like to be observed and become an object, which makes me become sensitive to my body and feel I am no longer in charge of my self. Fourth, I am also living in relation with the students. “Mothering” and “fathering” pedagogies express my different experiences of relating with students during my teaching. In Chapters One and Two, I have explored my lived experiences as well as other Chinese teachers, in lived space, lived body, lived time and lived human relation in order to determine these initial themes. In Chapters Four and Five, I explore the lived experiences of the Chinese teachers in this study further to determine essential themes and significant meanings of the lived experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools.

Describing the Phenomenon (Writing and Rewriting)

Phenomenological research is an activity of writing because language and thinking are difficult to separate (van Manen, 2006). Gadamer (1975/2003) emphasizes that language is a way of being. He says:

The way in which a thing presents itself is, rather, part of its own being. Thus everything that is language has a speculative unity: it contains a distinction, between its being and the way in which it presents itself, but this is a distinction that is really not a distinction at all. (p. 432)

Language is a way human beings think and present themselves. For Gadamer, “Langauge is not just one of man’s possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a world at all” (p. 443); “Thought is possible only as the basis of language” (as cited in Moran, 2000, p. 269). Van Manen (2006) says: “It is a language that reverberates the world, as Merleau-Ponty says, a language that sings the world” (p. 13). Therefore, “To do

research in a phenomenological sense is already and immediately and always a bringing to speech of something” (p. 32). Writing is a way of thinking about being in the world.

According to van Manen (2006), writing develops our reflective attitude because objectified thinking stares back at us when we stare at the paper and what we have written. Writing teaches us what we know and exercises our self-consciousness. It separates us from the lifeworld and, yet, unites us more closely to the lifeworld. It calls us to do practical action and see something new. Writing *is* the research from a phenomenological point of view. When I am writing, I often feel I am “called” to think and write.

Silence shows the limits and power of language. It makes writing possible and necessary. According to van Manen (2006),

Silence is not just the absence of speech or language. It is true that in our own groping for the right words we sense the limits of our personal language. (p. 112)

To express the subtle sense beyond our personal language, silence offers us another language—art. Heidegger (1993c) says: “The artwork is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than what the mere thing itself is” (p. 145). Art is a special form of language, and says something beyond the thing itself. In Chapter Two, the beautiful Chinese knotwork helps me express my subtle feelings of struggling in-between different cultures and pedagogies. Silence also helps us begin listening and imagining.

Heidegger says: “To put it more precisely: we do not say what we see, but rather the reverse, we see what one says about the matter” (as cited in Moran, 2000, p. 234).

Listening opens more freedom for us to see and experience being in the world without words. Moreover, silence “requires imagination to be conscious of them [what we see around us], to find our own lived worlds lacking because of them” (Greene, 1995, p. 111).

Thus, sometimes when I write, I feel I have nothing to say, but leave the blank to think and imagine. In Chapter One, when I share my story of the “Chocolate Rose,” I write: “Sometimes I think I am that chocolate rose.” I can’t tell how I feel as a chocolate rose, but it describes metaphorically what it is like to be alone.

Anecdote is a “short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident” (van Manen, 2006, p. 116). Based on a phenomenological point of view, anecdotes can make comprehensible some notions that easily elude us. In Chapter One, I have told two famous anecdotes about bridges in China to make sense of teaching Chinese in the United States as bridging cultures. One is called the “Magpie Bridge,” which means building bridges to help bring about implantation at home. Another one is called the “*Nai He Bridge*,” which means crossing bridges of the heart to understand difference. In Chapter Two, I have shared a beautiful tale about the origin of the Chinese human. The goddess Nu-wa created people from the mud-covered rope. Two ropes are tied to a knot, which is the basic structure of Chinese knotwork. This story signifies the meaning of Chinese knotwork in Chinese people’s lives, and connects Chinese knots with our lived teaching experiences, closely and symbolically. In Chapters Four and Five, I continue using the rope and knotwork as metaphors to indicate the Chinese teachers’ Tao of teaching in American Chinese schools.

Based on van Manen (2006), varying the examples can help us to address the phenomenological themes of a phenomenon because every phenomenological description is an example that points at a “thing”—an “invariant” aspect of the phenomenon. In Chapter One, I describe my lived experience in different stories that happen at different times, places, relations and body experiences. For example, I describe my experience of

living-in-between in the story of the “Chocolate Rose.” I describe my feeling of being under the gaze in the story of being evaluated by parents.

Greene (1995) says: “Learning to write is a matter of learning to shatter the silences, of making meaning, of learning to learn” (p. 108). Writing is an important way to make meaning and understand in a phenomenological study. Van Manen (2006) also says: “To write is to rewrite” (p. 131). Writing is not a single process, but a complex process of re-writing with re-thinking, re-flecting, and re-cognizing. It is a circle involving a certain forward and backward motion. In addition, “To write means to write myself” (van Manen, 2006, p. 132). According to Heidegger, *Dasein* is essentially always unfinished. The circle is not closed (Moran, 2000). Writing is an unfinished process, searching for the meaning of being. Writing and rewriting are the way to phenomenology. Chapters One, Two, and Three are an opening for the phenomenon that gets developed further through the lived experience accounts and their rendering through writing and rewriting in Chapters Four and Five. A final chapter provides phenomenological insights.

Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Pedagogical Relation to the Phenomenon

Pedagogical understanding is the central thrust of my phenomenological studies. Van Manen (2006) says:

A researcher who sees himself or herself as educator and who wants to arrive at better pedagogic understanding...needs to inquire (reflect, speak, and write) in a manner that is both oriented and strong in a pedagogic sense. (p. 138)

To be strong in our pedagogical orientation will help us avoid the superficialities and falsities in our attempts to understand. To be driven by a pedagogical interest means that I seek to make things better for those affected by the insights of my study—Chinese teachers teaching Chinese in the United States. This is the focus of Chapter Six.

To be able to carry out pedagogy, we must live pedagogically. We can't have or possess a pedagogical theory, but can redeem, retrieve, regain and recapture it in the sense of recalling (van Manen, 2006). We need to be pedagogical in our orientation to study the pedagogical value of personal lives. As van Manen (2006) says: "Pedagogical theory has to be a theory of the unique, of the particular case" (p. 150). Therefore, our text needs to be oriented. Van Manen (2006) says:

A strong pedagogic orientation requires that one read any situation in which an adult finds himself or herself with a child as a pedagogic situation, as an answer to the question of how we should be and act with children. (p. 152)

Teaching Chinese in the United States is a pedagogical concern. In order to keep a strong pedagogic orientation, I must think about the pedagogical meaning of the lived experience accounts from my participants and question in a pedagogical way.

Balancing the Research Context by Considering Parts and Whole

From a phenomenological point of view, I consider the object of human experience to be studied and use the themes, exemplifications, or existentials as guides for writing to organize the parts and whole (van Manen, 2006). In addition, I reflect on the overall design constantly in writing in order to know where to go and what to do next.

A phenomenological study is open and unfinished. All the approaches of textually organizing one's phenomenological writing that van Manen (2006) has identified are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. Besides all of them, we can also invent a different organization. In Chapter One, I combine the "thematic," "exemplificative," and "existential" approaches to organize my writing. In the Chapter Two, I borrow Xin Li's "Chinese knotwork" as the guide to organize the development of my phenomenon. The different designs of Chinese knotwork express the different aspects of our lived

experience of encountering cultural and pedagogical struggles when we are teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools. In Chapter Four, I welcome all my participants and present their experiences of landing in an empty in-between space through expressing their cultural and pedagogical shock. In Chapter Five, I continue to explore how the Chinese teachers adjust their way of teaching in-between the different cultures and pedagogies through describing the dialectic shift between splitting (分) and splicing (合) the knots. And finally in Chapter Six I present the pedagogical insights this study has revealed for Chinese teachers teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools.

The Process for Gathering Textual Accounts

A cricket knows the limitlessness beyond the limit,
 —beyond the leaves of grass,
 —beyond the azure sky,
 —beyond the wings of the giant P'eng,
 —beyond the whirlwind of ninety thousand tricents high,
 —beyond her horizon,
 —beyond her vault of heaven. (Li, 2002, p. 4)

As a limited cricket who has been eager to understand “who I am” and find the meaning of her own experience, I know my limits. To explore the limitlessness beyond the limit, I have to explore “who they are” and make meaning of others’ experiences.

Who They Are: The Participants

Phenomenological research emphasizes authentic conversation. Aoki (2005c) says:

Essentially, then, authentic conversation is open conversation although not empty conversation. Authentic conversation is one in which the participants in the conversation engage in a reciprocity of perspectives. (p. 228)

I initially planned to invite six other Chinese teachers who teach in HCS or other Sunday Chinese Schools around the Washington D.C. area (see letter in Appendix A), but I ended up with seven. The last teacher joined us after the first round of individual conversations

by chance. Three of the participants come from a Hope Chinese School in Virginia. Three participants come from Hope Chinese Schools in Maryland. My seventh participant is a Chinese teacher who teaches in a different Sunday Chinese School in Maryland, having taught in a Hope Chinese School in Maryland before. Six of the participants are my former colleagues or classmates, so I know them personally and understand their backgrounds. I chose them because they share similar educational and cultural backgrounds with me. The last participant was chosen from a different context. We met in a conference and came to know each other well later. All seven of the participants have similar teaching or other educational experiences, as well as having studied in Normal Universities in China. They know Chinese educational culture and school pedagogy well. Moreover, they have taught Chinese in HCS more than three years. They understand this unique teaching environment and have rich teaching experiences in the United States as well. Those who agreed to participate reviewed and signed an informed consent form that articulates the details of participation and informs them of their rights as participants (see Appendix B: Informed Consent Form). Participants are identified by pseudonyms.

The Process of Engagement

I conducted two individual conversations with each participant (except the last participant) and one group conversation throughout one academic school year. Each conversation lasted approximately one and one-half hours. Our meetings usually took place in a quiet, mutually agreed upon location. I met four of them at the school on Sunday, after their school hours, two of them at my office on campus at their chosen times, and one of them at her house on the weekend. The group conversation took place in a secluded balcony of a Chinese restaurant. Since Chinese was the participants' and

my native language, we used Chinese in our conversations in order to communicate deeply and clearly. Each conversation was audio-taped, transcribed and translated to English.

I started the first round of conversations in March, 2007. I met each participant individually. Van Manen (2006) says: "To do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings" (p. 5). Gadamer (1975/2003) also says: "The essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities" (p. 266). To open up our conversations and create more possibilities for understanding and meaning making, I asked questions like the following during my initial conversation with each participant:

What drew you to teach Chinese in American Chinese Schools?

Can you describe a particularly vivid moment in your class when you felt your teaching was connecting well with students? Have you had any difficulties connecting with students? What were those situations like?

What is it like to teach Chinese in a foreign country? Have you encountered different cultural expectations?

Could you tell me about an experience in American Chinese School during which you encountered differences between Chinese and American cultures or pedagogies?

After each conversation, I gave the participants a copy of my instructions for writing samples (see Appendix C) and asked them to complete a narrative written account describing one of their most significant experiences of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools. They were given the option of writing in Chinese or English. This writing assignment was designed to take approximately half an hour. Four of the participants finished the narrative writing and gave it back to me when we met the next time. Two of the participants sent it back to me by email. Then, I began to interpret and

explore the meanings of essential themes that came from these individual conversations and narrative accounts.

Between the first and second round of individual conversations, I observed each participant's teaching at least once. I took notes about their teaching methods, classroom management strategies, conversations between teacher and students, and so on, to create a clear picture of their teaching. I combined these notes with other textual materials to engage them further in conversation about and to search for deeper thematic meanings.

When I finished my first exploration of essential themes, I invited all seven Chinese teachers to engage in the second round of individual conversations. I met with each conversant for at least one hour and again we conversed in Chinese. For the new participant who joined us after the first round of conversation, I spent two hours talking with her. To open our dialogue, I usually shared one or two themes from the first conversation. I also wanted to hear each participant's response and reflection on my interpretation of their teaching stories. These reflections helped to deepen our conversations and allow for richer exploration of meanings.

Finally, I set up a group conversation with all seven participants when I finished the second exploration of essential themes and meaning making. This conversation was audio-taped, transcribed and translated to English as well. During the group conversation, I shared with the participants the essential themes I had explored and asked for their responses and reflections. This group conversation created an opportunity for the participants to share similar experiences and discuss common pedagogical considerations. All of the participants took part in the conversation actively and shared more stories. All

their sharing provided additional textual sources to determine the major themes and pedagogical considerations in my interpretive writing.

In Chapters Four and Five, through phenomenological writing and rewriting based on all the textual materials from conversations, observations, descriptive accounts, etc., I generated the themes of Chinese teachers' teaching experiences in American Sunday Chinese Schools. In Chapter Four, I explore their lived experiences of encountering difference when landing in an empty in-between space—the shock of lostness and enjoyment. In Chapter Five, I explore their lived experience of seeking the Tao of teaching through adjusting their teaching practices and pedagogical dialogue—re-splicing the knots of this in-between space. I explore the cultural and pedagogical differences that the Chinese teachers encounter teaching Chinese in a foreign place, and how they negotiate in-between the differences and seek the Tao of teaching through adjusting their teaching practice. Finally, in Chapter Six I suggest pedagogical practices that might improve the teaching quality in American Chinese schools, and contribute to Chinese education in foreign countries.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE IN-BETWEEN SPACE OF DIFFERENCE

I was the rope, ready to meet the other...One side can take the initiative to reach out and can dominate. But the splicing won't happen until after both sides join forces. (Li, 2002, pp. 54-56)

We spliced with our openness
to our present and past;
we created interdependent exchange
in our narratives.

We untied with our closeness
to our present and past;
we developed independent centers.

We led when we talked;
we followed when we listened.

We talked when we closed;
we listened when we opened... (Li, 2002, pp. 95-96)

Teaching Chinese in the United States is a complex phenomenon, like the Chinese knots, which are “complex insofar as interlacement is concerned...they consist of two layers of cord, with an empty space in between” (Chen, 1996, pp. 90-91). The two independent “ropes” contrasting Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies are spliced in different knotted structures, as two independent cultures and pedagogies encounter and negotiate conflict in different situations. Moreover, the knots are spliced in form with an “empty space in between.” The Chinese teachers teaching Chinese in the United States have occupied an “in-between space,” where two different cultures and pedagogies are spliced together.

Many years ago, when my flight spiraled down upon the Los Angeles Airport in a summer night with many stars, I was shocked and confused by the star seas that were formed by the actual stars and the lights from the countless families living in Los Angeles. What a huge city! It was America! It was a foreign land; in which I would live for a long

time, perhaps the rest of my life. What kind of fate was waiting for me? What kind of experiences would I encounter? When I got off the plane after landing in this foreign place, my body couldn't help but tremble a bit. I felt excited, but also very nervous. So many years have passed, and I still can't forget that shocking and nervous tremble throughout my body. Landing involved a bodily "shock," an awareness of difference that surrounded me.

When my husband and I stood before a customs officer, he quickly reviewed our passports and visas. Then, he stamped something in them and smiled to us: "Welcome to America!" The word "Welcome" made me feel a little warm that cool night. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, welcome means to greet hospitably and with courtesy or cordiality, or to accept with pleasure the occurrence or presence of someone. So it suggests that the host expects to be a friend to you, and such was my anticipation when I landed in this foreign place. This new place was ready to meet me.

However, "welcome" also reminded me that I was Chinese, a foreigner, and a guest. As I was "well-comed," I had landed in a strange place as a "stranger-comer" with a good wish. I was ready to meet and make friends with the host as well. Therefore, landing in a foreign land also meant that we were ready to meet others in their difference. This chapter introduces the participants of the study and the way in which they encountered difference.

Meet the Participants

When I invited the seven Chinese teachers as participants in my research endeavor, I planned for how I might welcome them. I was ready to meet them. These seven teachers "welcomed" me as well. They generously shared their lived experiences

of teaching Chinese in the United States with me. They were ready to meet me as well, and now as readers you will meet them (their names being pseudonyms).

Chenxi

Chengxi was an experienced middle-school teacher in China who has taught advanced Chinese lessons in Hope Chinese School (HCS) for more than 10 years. She graduated from a Normal College, and taught Chinese in a Middle School in Hangzhou for eight years. Even though she didn't pursue her master's degree in education in the United States, she still enjoys teaching and continuing to develop pedagogically. She wrote this story in her personal writing narrative:

Once the principal planed to divide my tenth grade class into two because there were too many students in my class. However, lots of parents called the principal and complained. And some students even didn't want to walk into the new classroom. As a result, the school had to cancel the plan. I was so touched by what happened. It meant that my effort in teaching was appreciated by the parents and students. This recognition encouraged me to continue making a great effort to teach well.¹⁰

Chenxi told me that she began to reflect on her own teaching the first day she sent her daughter to the American public school. As an experienced teacher, she was sensitive to the teacher's teaching as she recognized a big difference between Chinese and American pedagogy. She began to learn more about the American education system and culture from her daughter and the other students in HCS, and she continues to adjust her teaching constantly.

Chenxi was the director when I taught 1st Grade Chinese at HCS. Although this School was a non-formal Sunday school, she tried to encourage and help the teachers to

¹⁰ All the conversations were conducted in Chinese. I attempted to translate them from Chinese as close as possible to the spoken exchanges to preserve the Chinese tone.

prepare formal lesson plans and set up classroom practices. Her devotion to Chinese education is very evident.

Lihong

Lihong is an experienced and professional Chinese Immersion Program teacher in a public school system. She has taught 1st and 2nd Grades in HCS for more than ten years. Lihong graduated from Beijing Foreign Language University and studied English Literature in China. She changed her major to Special Education in the United States and finished her master's degree thesis on gifted students. After that, she became a teacher in an elementary school. In 1997, when the local county created the first Chinese Immersion Program in a public elementary school, she was selected as the kindergarten and 1st grade teacher. Since then, she began to devote herself to Chinese education in the United States. Whether she taught in public school or Sunday Chinese School, she created her own curriculum, and developed her professional teaching style. She says:

I thought that I contributed something to the Chinese School. Lots of teachers came to watch my teaching and learn from it. In addition, I wouldn't know how to teach Chinese without these 10 years teaching experience in Chinese School. I also developed my own product: "Commonly Used Words Cards." The teaching materials I used in Hope Chinese School helped me as well. Especially, I got lots of opportunities to practice my teaching.

Moreover, she was very generous in sharing her teaching experience with the other colleagues, especially the new teachers. As my mentor during my first year of Chinese teaching in HCS, she taught me a lot. At that time, I was a new comer to the United States and knew nothing about how to teach Chinese in this strange land. It was she who helped me see the difference between Chinese and American systems of education. It was she who showed me how to teach in-between two different educational

cultures, and it was she who helped me reflect on what I should teach and how I could teach.

Liufang

Liufang is a former college teacher of mechanical engineering in China who has taught Chinese in HCS for more than five years. Her story of becoming a Chinese teacher in HCS was unusual.

Liufang's son was a 9th grade student in HCS. One day, his teacher was sick and had to rest for several weeks. It was so hard to find an appropriate teacher during the semester, and the principal was out of choices. At that moment, her son bravely recommended his mother: "My Mom would be a good Chinese teacher because she often taught me Chinese at home." After reviewing her background, the principal immediately hired Liufang as the 9th grade teacher. Since then, Liufang has taught kindergarten, 3rd grade, 4th grade, and 9th grades for more than six years. She became a lead teacher in the school. She tells me that she found "her-self" through her teaching:

I felt so wonderful to teach our next generation using our own familiar language. Although it is not a full-time job, but a kind of avocation, I really enjoyed teaching Chinese. I was so happy with the children. I found myself again.

My experience of meeting her was another unusual story. At the end of Spring Semester in 2007, The Board of HCS organized a "Spelling Bee" Contest. The students were selected from all six campuses and participated in the final contest based on their grades. I was invited to be one of the judges as the representative of the College Park campus. The woman sitting next to me was Liufang, who was the representative of another campus. I don't remember how we started talking exactly, but I do remember that as we talked more, we developed a friendship. After the activity, we couldn't stop sharing

our opinions about Chinese education in the United States. So I decided to invite her as one extra participant in my research even though I had finished my first round of conversations. Although she only participated in one round of individual conversations and the group conversation, Liufang showed her enthusiasm for sharing her lived teaching experiences and wanted to learn from others.

Moli

Moli is a former middle school teacher in China who has taught kindergarten in HCS for more than six years. She is a very passionate teacher, completing all of her preparation for teaching in China at a Normal College. She says:

The most unforgettable teaching experience is that I taught Kindergarten and Bilingual class for the first time. The students in these two classes were very young and had very few Chinese basics. In addition, I had no teaching materials from the school. I had to spend lots of time on preparing the lesson plans and developing the teaching materials. It often took me 4-5 hours to prepare the 2-hour lesson. Sometimes I even couldn't fall asleep at night.

Why would she give so much effort to a part-time teaching job? Moli says: "I like to be the teacher...I am fulfilling my dream."

In 2000, I began to teach 1st grade at HCS. All my students came from Moli's kindergarten class. Since we had to share some student information and keep the curriculum consistent, we came to know each other better. She was very serious about her teaching. Even though teaching Chinese in HCS was a part-time job, she designed her lesson plans and prepared the teaching materials very carefully every Sunday. Because my son Luke became one of her students, I came to know her as a parent as well.

Tanli

Tanli is a young undergraduate student at the University of Maryland. She is the only participant not graduating from a Normal College in China, and who hasn't taught

Chinese language in HCS, but she taught Chinese dance in HCS. Moreover, she taught Chinese in another language school in Washington D.C. for two years.

Tanli began to study Chinese traditional dance when she was 4 years old, and became a pre-professional dancer as a student in a department of dance in the United States. When she enrolled as a college student of modern dance in the United States, she also started her teaching experience as a Chinese traditional dance teacher. However, the two different teaching styles for dance totally shocked her at the beginning. She tells me: “When I entered into the classroom, I was shocked... Is it a dance class at the college?” The different teaching styles that she had experienced helped her realize the cultural difference in language and the meaning of Chinese dance. She began to connect her Chinese traditional dance teaching with cultural transmission, and attempted to build an “open” art education pedagogy. She says:

I would like to mix my educational experience in China and arts learning experience in the Untied States. Other Chinese dance teachers couldn’t have my personal unique experience. Actually I tried, and was welcomed by the children. I felt so wonderful. I would continue my studying and hard work.

In addition, as the daughter of a professor of Chinese literature and professional Chinese editor, she couldn’t give up her love of the Chinese language. She found a part-time job teaching 3-5 year-old children Chinese at a Foreign Language Center in D.C. Since she was the only Chinese teacher at the center, she was eager to get to know other experienced Chinese teachers and wanted to learn from them.

I knew Tanli through one of her teachers in college. She wanted to find an experienced Chinese teacher for the Foreign Language Center where she worked. So her teacher recommended me. Although I didn’t become her colleague, we became friends.

Wenhua

Wenhua is a young but experienced Chinese teacher who has taught Chinese in HCS and other Sunday Chinese Schools for almost five years. She graduated from a Normal University in China and studied education for a master's degree in the United States. She often mentions that her teaching method is "Non-Chinese, Neither-American." She says:

I should locate in-between. Actually, I had no real teaching experience and wasn't completely trained in China (although I studied in a Normal University). However, I didn't teach as a full-time teacher and wasn't completely educated in the United States either (although I studied education). When I observed in the American school, I thought that the students learned too little. But when I observed the class in China, I found that the students learned too much. I hoped I could find a medium balance point.

I came to know Wenhua through one of my good friends. We met at my friend's house for the first time. I only knew that she was an undergraduate student at the University of Maryland at that time. However, in 2005, when I came back to HCS to do my internship, I found that she was teaching Chinese in one of the kindergarten classes. The sudden meeting allowed the opportunity for us to develop a long-term friendship.

When Wenhua became a graduate student in the College of Education, we had more opportunities to know each other better, and we shared our opinions often. Long before I invited her to be one of my study participants, she had known about my research and was very interested in it.

Xuyun

Xuyun was a high school English teacher in China who has taught a kindergarten bilingual class in HCS for 6 years. She received two master's degrees in the United States: one in education, and another one in accounting. She chose to work as an accountant. She

says: "I love teaching, but I have to raise my family first...I will spend the rest of my life on teaching when I am retired."

As a Sunday Chinese School teacher, Xuyun has a very competent reputation. When I planned to create a kindergarten Chinese curriculum to fulfill my intern requirements in 2005, the principal recommended her to me: "She is a great kindergarten teacher. Although she is teaching a bilingual class, I think she will give you a lot of help." So I talked with her and stayed in her class to observe her teaching several times. After my observation and conversation with her, I became friends with her. As a teacher, she was confident and patient; as a friend, she was open and nice. In the following two years, I kept in touch with her, and even substituted in her class sometimes.

Through the individual and group conversations with the seven Chinese teachers, we shared stories of teaching Chinese in a foreign land—the United States. As Li (2002) says: "By sharing something (a certain thought, a landscape, a poem, or a story) we enter the shared world and we become this world" (p. 93). On the side, we shared similar landing experiences with each other and living in a common world. However, on the other side, each Chinese teacher encountered different conflicts and negotiations based on their different backgrounds and experiences. They experienced different bodily and spiritual shocks while landing in the "in-between space."

The Shock of Lostness and Enjoyment

When two ropes become enmeshed in order to make a knot, a new pattern is created. When people land in a foreign place and meet difference, they also become enmeshed in new patterns. People recognize how the environment and language are different, as well as friends, community, and even food. They experience "Cultural

Shock.” According to Oberg (1960), “Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p. 142). It may cause a crisis, as Adler (1975) says:

Culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one’s own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness; irritability; and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured or disregarded. (p. 13)

People may feel helpless, frustrated, angry, lost and anxious, like “a fish out of water.” But culture shock may also challenge and encourage people to reflect on their familiar cultural lives and ignite their love of the place called “home” as they come to know their “new home.” They might overcome the shock by being open to the new cultural environment and adjust accordingly. Finally, people may get along under a new set of living conditions (Oberg, 1960), and begin to enjoy their new lives in the new world.

As Chinese teachers in American Chinese Schools, we are foreign beings at first. Our lives are changed, whoever we are, wherever we are, and whatever we did before. We are shocked by the cultural difference. Moreover, we gradually learn that teaching is different from our previous experiences since we are teaching in a foreign land. The purpose of teaching is changed. The environment of teaching is changed. Beyond cultural shock, we experience “pedagogical shock” as well. Followed by feelings of frustration, lostness and anxiety, the teachers who are in a strange pedagogical situation begin to reflect on their past teaching and learn from their new pedagogical experiences. In addition, they come to recognize they love to teach Chinese because being a Chinese teacher becomes a way of being themselves and feeling at home in a foreign country. Finally, they come to enjoy their new lives and teaching in the new cultural and

pedagogical world as they begin to feel more “at home.” The Chinese teachers teaching in American Chinese schools experience the shock between lostness and enjoyment.

Was/Am I a Good Teacher?

Ted Aoki (2005c) writes: “When two strangers meet, indeed the two worlds meet” (p. 219). Some of participants told me that when they started to teach Chinese in the United States, they realized the cultural and pedagogical differences between Chinese and American teaching, which is called “cross-cultural awareness” by Aoki. They begin to challenge themselves as good teachers and feel lost. They question themselves: “Was I a good teacher before? Am I a good teacher still?”

What does being a good teacher mean? In Chapter Two, I also question myself: “Am I a good teacher?” Through exploring my own successful and failed teaching experiences, I found that being a good teacher means undergoing an experience, which “pertains to us, meets and makes its appeal to us, in that it transforms us into itself” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 74). Therefore, different past and present pedagogical experiences may give rise to different answers. Ted Aoki (2005) invites this question:

I ask you now to think of a really good teacher that you have experienced in your time. Allow him or her to be present before you. I believe that the truth of this good teacher of yours is in the measure of immeasurable. (p. 192)

These Chinese teachers’ experiences show their understanding about being “a good teacher” changed a great deal after they arrived in the United States.

“I am sorry!” Chengxi became a teacher when she was only 20 years old. She relates to me that she often brought her students on field trips during holidays since she lived in Hangzhou, one of the most beautiful cities in China. She was a teacher admired

by her students in China. However, she felt lost and guilty when she started to realize how teachers teach in the United States. She says:

When my daughter Nan was 4 years old, she went to school. I never forgot the teacher's voice and tone when she talked with my little daughter. It was so gentle and caring.

Before, I often spoke very loudly and even cried out to keep classroom-discipline in my class.

I started to feel shame about my teaching method in China. I wanted to try some new teaching ways and change myself. Previously, in China, I was pretty strict with my students. When I criticized them, sometimes my words were even humiliating. I didn't intend to do it. However, the result was insulting, or sarcastic. When I observed the American teacher's teaching, I felt guilty. I thought I should say "I am sorry!" to my former students in China.

Why does Chengxi feel guilty? What is the meaning of "guilty?" According to Heidegger (1962), guilty is a being of "*Dasein*." He writes:

"Guilty" turns up as a predicate for the "I am." Is it possible that what is understood as "guilt" in our inauthentic interpretation lies in *Dasein*'s Being as such, and that it does so in such a way that so far as any *Dasein* factically exists, it is also guilty? (p. 326)

Being-guilty becomes a way of being in the world. Then, what does being-guilty entail as it is experienced? Heidegger answers:

This "Being-guilty" as "having debts" (*Schulden haben*) is a way of Being with Others in the field of concern, as in providing something or bringing it along. Other modes of such concern are: depriving, borrowing, withholding, taking, stealing—failing to satisfy, in some way or other, the claims which Others have made as to their possessions. This kind of Being-guilty is related to that with which one can concern oneself...

"Being-guilty" also has the signification of "being responsible for" (*schuld sein an*)—that is, being the cause or author of something, or even "being the occasion" for something. In this sense of "having responsibility" for something, one can "be guilty" of something without "owing" anything to someone else or coming to "owe" him. (p. 327)

So being-guilty means “having debts to Others” and “being responsible for” something or someone.

When Chengxi feels guilty, she feels she owes something to her former students. So she wants to say: “I am sorry!” However, the sentence “I am sorry!” doesn’t only mean having debts, but also refers to being responsible for her teaching. She wants to reflect on her former teaching and makes changes she would now like to enact. Actually, when Chengxi became familiar with American pedagogy, she began to reflect on her past teaching in China through comparing the differences between the two pedagogies. She realized the shortcomings of her former teaching practices and felt guilty. Meanwhile, the hope of change was present in her mind. She says:

Therefore, when I started to teach in Hope Chinese School, I paid special attention to my voices. I found out that I didn’t have to use the loud voice at all if my teaching could attract the students. Actually, using this kind of gentle voice may be more effective than speaking loudly.

When Chengxi came to this foreign place—an in-between space, she experienced pedagogical shock. She began to challenge her past teaching experience, and re-think what it means to be a good teacher. The in-between space offered her a new place where she could reflect and be ready to change.

Teaching(教) and guiding (导). Moli thought that she was a good teacher in China. But when she realized the difference between Chinese and American pedagogies, she began to think about changing in order to teach well in the United States. She says:

I was a four-year Normal school student. I taught English in a Middle School after my graduation.

When I taught as a student-teacher for the first time, my advisor came to watch my teaching. She felt pretty good about it. As a result, when the officer from the local Educational Bureau came to evaluate our teaching, she and other school administrators asked me to teach this open class.

I felt I should be the teacher (this is my orientation). In China, when other teachers came to watch my teaching, they all thought that I taught well.

Obviously Moli thinks that she was a good teacher in China. But when she started to teach in HCS, she gradually found out that the criteria for being a good teacher were different in the United States than China. She says:

In China, it is important to make the students sit well and listen to me carefully. People emphasize the quality of teaching. The role of teacher is transmitting the knowledge. But in the United States, it is more important to guide the students to develop their interests than teach the knowledge.

She also shares with me one of her past teaching stories about “teaching” and “guiding.”

She says:

I might not have been patient enough before. I even criticized one of my students. At that time, I was very young and not much older than my students. There was a student who liked to sit on the basketball instead of the chair. I warned him not to do it many times, but he refused to obey. Then I just ignored him in the class. Once he wrote down some words to complain about it in his composition. He said: “There are some teachers who only care about teaching but ignore guiding.”

I knew he was talking about me. Right then I began to realize the difference between teaching and guiding. I wouldn’t do that anymore.

What is the difference between “teach” and “guide?” Based on the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, teach comes from Middle English *techen* to show, instruct. It also means to guide the studies of, to impart the knowledge of, to instruct by precept, example, or experience, and to conduct instruction regularly. So teaching includes guiding the study. “Guide” comes from Middle English *gide*, *guide*, from Anglo-French, from Old Occitan *guida*, of Germanic origin; akin to Old English *wītan* to look after, to know. It also means to lead or direct another’s way, to exhibit and explain points of interest, to direct another’s conduct or course of life, etc. So guiding indicates looking after and directing another’s way of living, as van Manen (1991) says:

The dual role of actively guiding the child and of letting the child find his or her own direction is a constant challenge to pedagogical reflection. (p. 63)

Why is the role of “guiding” a constant challenge to pedagogy? What is the relationship between “guiding” and pedagogy? Based on van Manen (1991), “Pedagogy is the excellence of teaching” (p. 30). He also writes:

To teach is to influence the influences. The teacher uses the influence of the world pedagogically as a resource for tactfully influencing the child. (p. 80)

Thus, from an etymological point of view, a pedagogue is a man or woman who stands in a caring relation to children: In the idea of leading or guiding there is a “taking by the hand,” in the sense of watchful encouragements. (p. 38)

Therefore, good teaching means being in a caring relationship with students, to influence the children besides imparting knowledge and instructing by precept. It includes “guiding,” which emphasizes leading the development of students’ interests and course of living. People “guide” children through “teaching,” as in “taking by the hand,” especially, at school.

Moli’s words show the change in her thinking about teaching. She doesn’t only regard “teaching” as “imparting knowledge,” but also as a way of “guiding” the students’ development. Beyond teaching certain knowledge, she has come to realize the importance of guiding students to develop their interests as a mark of being a good teacher.

Moli and Chengxi’s experiences show us that the Chinese teachers are shocked by the different culture and pedagogy when they experience this in-between pedagogical space. They feel lost and start to question their own past teaching: “Was I a good teacher before?” And they puzzle about their present teaching: “Am I a good teacher now?”

Learning a new voice. Shocked by her daughter's teacher's gentle voice in the class, Chengxi starts to reflect on her past teaching methods and attempts to change. She says:

When I knew how my daughter Nan's teacher taught, I started to feel shame about my former teaching way in China, so I wanted to try some new way, and change myself.

Since then, I learned to use a gentle and kindly voice and tone to teach. I gradually found out that it was better to teach in this kind of voice than speak out loudly. So now I teach in a gentle voice.

Chengxi chooses to learn a "new voice" when she recognizes her in-betweenness—"a third space" that I discussed in the first chapter. As Wang (2004) writes:

The polyphony of the conflicting double is resonant in a new voice of unity (of the third), a unity constantly displaced, in the transitional and the indeterminate. The new voice is not unitary, but multiple, like a symphony. The third space multiplies itself, too, constantly giving new birth in the borderlands, creativity unbounded, moving in countless directions. (pp. 137-138)

Therefore, the "new voice" is not a unilateral sound from one culture or pedagogy, but a symphony played by the multiple cultural and pedagogical instruments. When the teacher experiences conflict and negotiation between the two different pedagogies and looks for the resonant point, a "new voice" may appear. Chengxi experienced learning a new voice and was rewarded. Although she didn't study in any educational program in the United States, she is recognized as a good teacher in HCS. She thinks that learning a new voice really does matter for her successful teaching.

Learning by teaching. In his paper "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments," Oberg (1960) writes:

In addition to living in a physical environment, an individual lives in a cultural environment consisting of man-made physical objects, social institutions, and ideas and beliefs. An individual is not born with culture but only with the capacity to learn it and use it. (p. 144)

The teachers are not born with pedagogy either. They learn it. When these Chinese teachers experienced the pedagogical shock of being in a strange in-between place, they had to adjust to the new pedagogical environment by learning it in order to become a good teacher.

What does it mean to learn? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of learn is from Middle English *lernen*, from Old English *leornian*; akin to Old High German *lernēn* to learn, Old English *last* footprint, Latin *lira* furrow, track. It means to gain knowledge or understanding of or skill in by study, instruction, or experience. So, as Chinese teachers in Sunday Chinese schools, how do they gain knowledge or understanding of the skill of teaching Chinese in the United States? Since there are few specific training programs for this teaching, most of the Chinese teachers learn by teaching.

Lihong earned her master's degree in education in the United States and taught in a Chinese Immersion Program in a Public school. She learned new pedagogies from her program of study. However, the most important lesson that she learned was from other teachers' teaching and her own experience of more than 10 years of teaching Chinese. She tells me:

The student-teacher experience in an American School made me know what I should do and shouldn't do in the class exactly. I knew the standard line clearly. But in China, most of the teachers didn't pay attention to this issue.

I wouldn't know how to teach Chinese so well without these 10 years of teaching experience in Chinese School. I even started to develop my own product, like "Commonly-Used Words Cards" through my teaching. The curriculum of Chinese School also helped me.

Lihong's story emphasizes the importance of teaching practice, as she says: "Practice is the only criterion to examine your teaching." The Chinese teachers learn how to teach by teaching.

Experiencing Homecoming

Oberg (1960) mentions that one important phase of culture shock is "Regression:"

The home environment suddenly assumes a tremendous importance. To an American everything American becomes irrationally glorified. All the difficulties and problems are forgotten and only the good things back home are remembered. (p. 142)

"Home" becomes a place of nostalgia and is very important for the people who come to a foreign land. What is home? Casey (1993) writes: "The familiar place is prototypically a home-place" (p. 194). Actually, home means a familiar place. Any familiar thing related to home seems so glorified and becomes favored because it helps the people feel at home in a foreign land.

Being in an in-between place, these Chinese teachers feel that being at home is a most important issue in their lives. But how do they feel at home in the United States—a strange place? Their answers speak to familiar jobs, speaking a familiar language, and being surrounded by familiar faces.

Moli had been a teacher in China. She tells me:

The job that I most wanted to do was being a teacher in the United States, although I was working another kind of job first.

When I entered the classroom, I was changed to another person. I was coming home again.... When I was teaching, I felt very comfortable and confident.

Moli sees her past job of teaching in China as the primary priority in her life. She found out that teaching was her most favorite thing to do, and the classroom was her most familiar place to go in the United States. Tuan (1977) says:

Familiarity is a characteristic of the past. The home provides an image of the past. Moreover in an ideal sense home lies at the center of one's life, and center (we have seen) connotes origin and beginning. (pp. 127-128)

When Moli entered the classroom, she experienced coming home again because she felt familiar in this place of teaching. She spoke her familiar language, Chinese, and was surrounded by familiar faces, the Chinese students. In addition, feeling at home made her feel confident and comfortable in her class.

Moreover, according to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of familiar is from Middle English *familier*, from Anglo-French, from Latin *familiaris*, from *familia*. It means closely acquainted, or relating to a family, being free and easy, frequently seen or experienced, and so on. Being familiar with something or somebody means being closely related to it and feeling easy, comfortable, and at home. As Foong (1999) says in her article, "Finding Solace in the Familiarity of Myself."

Feeling at home will only come when I have found peace within myself.... Finding solace in the familiarity of oneself provides a welcome sense of permanence. (pp. 205-208)

When Moli is teaching, she feels very comfortable and easy. Through her most familiar place of teaching, she finds peace within herself.

Wenhua shares with me that teaching Chinese in the United States changed her understanding about living in a foreign country. She says:

At first, the reason that I chose to teach Chinese in Sunday Chinese school was that I needed the money. But now I couldn't give up teaching Chinese although I didn't need to make money through teaching Chinese anymore.

In China, when I heard that many people did something related to Chinese, such as teaching Chinese, I thought that they might be a loser (in the mainstream society) so that they had to hang out in the Chinese community. But now, I totally changed my mind.

When you are a foreign person living here, you have to save and keep some special things, which may benefit other people who will come here later.

Wenhua's words remind me of Casey's conceptions about homesteading and homecoming that I write about in Chapter One:

In homesteading, I journey to a new place that will become my future home-place. The homesteading place is typically unknown to me, or known only from accounts given by others who have preceded me. But I am determined to settle down for the long term in this novel place...In homecoming, the duration of this alliance is no longer of major importance. What matters most now is the fact of return to the same place. (p. 290)

Before Wenhua started to teach Chinese in the United States, she was on her homesteading journey. She planned to settle down in her future home-place, and the old home did not seem so important anymore. However, after she experienced teaching Chinese here, she changed her mind. She found out that the feeling of coming home was still very important in her new life, as she says: "You looked like this (Chinese), your language is this (Chinese), and you felt your root was still in China." So she re-identified herself and found her homecoming journey through teaching Chinese in the United States.

The "Love Knot" of Teaching

The "regression" from "cultural and pedagogical shock" inspirts the Chinese teachers to love what is familiar (teaching) in this foreign land. Xuyun, a former teacher in China, says:

I love to teach very much! Even though I am working as an accountant, I wouldn't give up my favorite job—teaching. So teaching in Hope Chinese School means a making-up for my life. I become an amateur of teaching.

"Love" is a very special word that is used cautiously by Chinese people. But it occurred in my conversations quite often. Most of the teachers expressed their love of teaching, so that they taught Chinese in Sunday Chinese schools for a long time.

In China, people think that the “Love Knot” is simply made by the two circle ropes that cross together that can’t be separated. It indicates that people stay together and never separate. “Love Knot” is also regarded as a symbol of the constancy of two lovers, called *lovers' knot, true lovers' knot*.



Figure 7. The Love Knot 情人结 (*Answer.com*)

It consists of two parallel strands of rope with an overhand knot in each strand. The way in which the overhand knots attach to the opposite strand is what differentiates them. This kind of “Love Knot” means that “Love” makes the two different, even opposite, ropes to be spliced together tightly. Its symbolic meaning is capturing the heart of the one you love or bringing back a lost love.¹¹ These teachers love to teach. They are making “Love Knots” of teaching by splicing their teaching and non-teaching lives together firmly.

The Chinese character of love is 爱 (*ai*). The top is “”, which means the house, shelter. The middle is 心—the heart. And the bottom is 友—the friendship. So 爱 indicates the shelter of the heart. It means belongingness. In addition, according to *Xiaozhuan*, a Chinese character written form created in 221 B.C., “love” is a meaningful word, which is used to express the warm movement of the Mom bird feeding the baby bird. It indicates the giving and loving of the parents to the children.¹² Therefore, love is

¹¹ It comes from the definition of Celtic Love knots @ www.calastrology.com.

¹² It is translated from Yahoo China at <http://ks.cn.yahoo.com/question/1409012401020.html>.

a kind of strong affection. Based on the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of love is Middle English, from Old English *lufu*; akin to Old High German *luba* love, Old English *lēof* dear, Latin *lubēre*, *libēre* to please. It means strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties, affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests, warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion, etc. So love is a complicated feeling based on admiration, belongingness, benevolence, enthusiasm, devotion, etc. People may desire to do something, or become devoted to doing something because of love.

Desire to teach. In her article “When a Child Feels Left Alone,” Anna Kirove (2002) writes: “The sense of isolation from the world sharpens our longing for loved and missed ones” (p. 164). When people feel lonely living in a foreign land, they will miss the lost love intensely and long for it. Living in the United States, the Chinese teachers feel isolated from their familiar place, lonely and lost. They miss teaching and want to bring their lost love of teaching back into their lives in the United States, so they desire to teach.

Moli was a middle school teacher in China. At our first conversation she says: “I like to be a teacher most.” Although Moli wasn’t a full-time teacher in the United States anymore, she continued to teach Chinese in HCS for more than 6 years. She says:

I have been a teacher in China. After I came to the United States, I found out that I wanted to be a teacher most, although I have another job to do. So I chose to be the Chinese teacher to extend my career.

Every time when I walked into the classroom, it seems that I was changed to another person totally. I started to teach very naturally...Teaching fulfilled my dream. My dream was to teach.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of dream is Middle English *dreem*, from Old English *drēam* noise, joy, and Old Norse *draumr* dream; akin to Old High German *troum* dream. It means a series of thoughts, images, or emotions occurring during sleep, something notable for its beauty, excellence, or enjoyable quality, and a strongly desired goal or purpose, something that fully satisfies a wish. So dream means that a person strongly desires to do something, which is beautiful, excellent, enjoyable, and satisfying.

What does Moli mean when she says “her dream is to teach?” Dream means desire, enjoy and satisfy. Then, does she have a strong desire to teach? Does she think teaching is a beautiful job? Does the teaching make her feel satisfied? Does she enjoy teaching? Yes, Moli desires to teach because she wants to be a teacher most. Moli enjoys teaching as well, because she feels that teaching makes her be herself naturally. Moli also feels satisfied because teaching fulfills her dream. What Moli says shows us how she loves to teach, and how this is her great desire.

All the teachers, in one way or another, express their love of teaching. Teaching in Sunday Chinese Schools has become a part of their lives, as Xuyun says: “I became an amateur of teaching.” Based on the *Merriam-Webste Online Dictionary*, amateur comes from the Latin word *amator*, lover, from *amare* to love. The etymology of amateur is “lover.” So to become an amateur of teaching in this context means to become a lover of teaching. As a lover of teaching, the Chinese teachers create the “Love knot” by splicing teaching with their lives, and they don’t want to be separated anymore.

Commitment to teaching. Love is a complicated feeling. It may arise out of kinship or other personal ties. But whatever its basis is, love means strong affection for another. People share a common feeling of love arising out of different relationships.

In her book *The Call from the Stranger on a Journey Home: Curriculum in a Third Space*, Hongyu Wang (2004) describes maternal love:

Holding mother's hand, the baby imagines reaching the star. Maternal love is the air the baby breathes, the food the baby eats, the clothes the baby wears, the pillow on which the baby sleeps, and the pillar to which the baby clings when learning how to walk. Without the power of maternal love, no freedom can be born. (pp. 135-136)

From her writing, we can see that love means responsibility. As I have mentioned that the Small Seal Script (小篆 *Xiaozhuan*) written form of the Chinese character for "love" means an unconditional giving from the parents to the children; maternal or parenting love is the air, the food, the clothes, and the pillow, which are essential elements for the baby. Parents are committed to existing for the baby's growth and development. Van Manen (1991) says:

Parenting and teaching derive from the same fundamental experience of pedagogy: the human charge of protecting and teaching the young to live in this world and to take responsibility for themselves, for others, and for the continuance and welfare of the world. (pp. 6-7)

Therefore, teaching shares the same fundamental experience and feeling of parenting in pedagogy. It also means protecting the youth and taking responsibility for them. Compared to parenting love, these Chinese teachers' love of teaching also provides the essentials for the students' growth who are studying Chinese in the foreign land. Their commitment to teaching is a pre-requisite of their "love."

Xuyun was the manager of the accounting department in a big company which has a lot of branches all over the country. Her job required her to travel a lot so that she would have to miss her teaching at Sunday Chinese School sometimes. She says:

My job was quite busy actually... Once I went to a conference in Las Vegas, which lasted three days through a Saturday. Most of my colleagues stayed one day more and spent Sunday there. I, however, went to the airport on Saturday night because I didn't want to miss my class in Hope Chinese School on Sunday afternoon. When my colleague got curious and asked me why, I told her: "Every Sunday I go 'nowhere.' You go to church, I go to Chinese school. It is my commitment."

What is the meaning of commitment? Its etymology is Middle English *committen*, from Anglo-French *committer*, from Latin *committere* to connect, entrust. Its several meanings include: to put into charge or, to carry into action deliberately, to pledge or assign to some particular course or use, to obligate or pledge oneself, etc. So commitment, an act of committing, means that people pledge to do something deliberately, and it also means an obligation to ourselves. The Chinese teachers commit to teaching as they capture their love of teaching.

Chengxi became a teacher in HCS when the school was established in 1993. Last year, she received a service award for her 15 years of diligent work in HCS. How did she persist in teaching at Sunday Chinese School for such a long time? In our conversation, she shares her thinking:

Sometimes when I get up Sunday morning, I can't help to moan: "Why do I have to get up so early on the weekend!" If I see that it is snowing, I feel happy because it means I can have a rest... Actually, I teach in two different campuses of Hope Chinese School. I have to leave home at 9:00 am and come back home after 4:00 pm every Sunday. But every time when I finish my teaching job, I feel very happy and satisfied although I am tired. Teaching at Sunday Chinese Schools is my commitment for fifteen years.

Chengxi's story explains that commitment means pledging to do something. However, beyond pledging oneself, commitment also means connection and an entrusting with something. It means that people work in earnest to complete their pledge and earn trust.

Xuyun tells me a story about being teased by her friend because of her earnestness in teaching:

Once the principal asked me to adopt a new set of textbooks, but I rejected it because it was not consistent with the current textbook for the 1st grader. The principal and other administrators were not happy about my response. So one of my friends teased me when she knew what happened: "It seems that you are 'really serious' about your teaching!" "Of course I am serious" I reply; "You can not just walk home and forget it after 2 hours teaching on Sunday. You have to be responsible to your students. If you do something, you have to think through all the cause and effect, especially for the teachers. You have to do your best, otherwise, do not do it. You should feel shame if you muddle through your teaching."

Xuyun's words make a mark on my mind. As a teacher, she was doing her job earnestly and seriously to fulfill her commitment to teaching Chinese well. Actually, to teach well, most Chinese teachers spend lots of time and energy in preparing their lessons. Since there is no curriculum outline, master teaching room, or school supplies in Sunday Chinese School, the teachers have to pay extra attention to curriculum design and lesson preparation. Moli says:

Every Friday, I have to prepare my teaching materials for my teaching on Sunday... Our working situation is bad. I have to prepare everything by myself... Sometimes I even think of it when I am doing my day-time work. On Saturday night, I have to go through all my teaching processes again before sleeping.

What motivates these teachers to spend so much time on their part-time teaching at Chinese schools? They say they commit to teaching, but why do they commit to teaching Chinese in the United States? What really is that they love about teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools? What does teaching mean to them really?

Actually, landing in an empty in-between space means uncertainty and possibility. People often feel shock. However, teaching one's home language in this foreign land means a return to that which is at the root of one's being. People feel a sense of being at home and find peace within their heart. As a way to go back home, teaching becomes these Chinese teachers' commitment and love. Moreover, to teach is to take responsibility. To fulfill their dream and commitment of teaching, they work hard and earnestly. Moli, Xuyun and Chengxi's stories tell us how seriously these Chinese teachers treat their part-time teaching job in Sunday Chinese School. Even though they come to an empty in-between space with strangeness and uncertainty, they are committed to teaching Chinese in Sunday Chinese School as well as possible, and they become home for themselves as well as their students.

Love as worlding. Every time when I think about love, I recall a song, which touched me when I was a teenager. The song is called: “让世界充满爱”---“Let the World Be Filled with Love.”

轻轻地捧着你的脸
为你把眼泪擦干
这颗心永远属于你
告诉我不再孤单
深深地凝望你的眼
不需要更多的语言
紧紧地握住你的手
这温暖依旧未改变
我们同欢乐
我们同忍受
我们怀着同样的期待
我们共风雨
我们共追求
我们珍存同样的爱
无论你我曾相识
无论在眼前在天边

gently holding your face
drying your tears
the heart belongs to you forever
telling me you never feel lonely
staring at you deeply
we don't need any more words
holding your hand tightly
the warm is never changed
we share the joy
we share the tolerance
we share the same expectation
we share the wind and rain
we share the same pursuit
we cherish the same love.
whatever we know of each other
whether you are here or there

真心的为你祝愿
祝愿你幸福平安

praying for you sincerely
may you be happy and peaceful

Wherever I am here or there, whatever this or that, I may fall in love with something.

Love is a feeling of “worlding.” As Heidegger’s says: “Living in an environment, it means to me everywhere and always, it is all of this world, it is worlding” (as cited in Safranski, 1998, p. 95). So worlding means a feeling of sharing the same experience.

When we fall in love with teaching in a foreign land, we share the same love of teaching as in our homeland. As Moli says: “I like to be the teacher most. In China, I also want to be the teacher most.” When we are “gently holding” the students’ face and “drying” their tears, we share the feeling of caring and being cared for. When we tell the students, “The heart belongs to you” and “you never feel lonely,” we share belongingness. Whatever we are teaching in China or America, we share the “joy,” “the tolerance,” and “the same expectation.” We experience the same feeling of difficulty, frustration, success and happiness. With love of “teaching as worlding,” we won’t feel lonely anymore. We are at home forever.

“Worlding” also invites us to reflect on our love that we perhaps did not recognize before. Georgina Gemmill (1999), a foreign national from South Africa, writes her love story in “Changing Stencils of the Past:”

For although I still love my country dearly, it is a love based on a deeper and reserved understanding, rather than that of a newborn baby’s unconditional love of its mother. It is a love open not just to the voice of my own selfish desires or those of my family and my white, upper-middle-class heritage, but open also to the voice of the land and the people—all the people. (p. 107)

The Chinese teachers still love teaching, but their love experience with teaching is different. As Chengxi learns a gentle voice from the American teacher, the Chinese

teachers are open to study and adjust their own teaching. The “Love Knot” of teaching splices the Chinese teachers’ former and current experiences of teaching as worlding.

Being “Hugged”

Oberg (1960) writes that the last stage of Culture Shock is enjoying the culture:

Your adjustment is about as complete as it can be. The visitor now accepts the customs of the country as just another way of living. You operate within the new milieu without a feeling of anxiety although there are moments of strain. With a complete adjustment you not only accept the foods, drinks, habits, and customs, but actually begin to enjoy them. (p. 144)

When these Chinese teachers re-experienced Chinese roots through their teaching, they came to enjoy their teaching much more.

When I ask my participants how they feel about their teaching, most of them tell me how satisfied and happy they are. Xuyun used the word “enjoy” many times in our talk about her teaching, and she feels the reward of the students when she connects with them. She says:

I do my accountant job for living during the week day. Teaching is what I really want to do... I enjoy it very much. Every child would hug me before they leave the classroom. It means that they admire me and I do a good teaching job. “Hug” is the best reward for me.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of hug is perhaps of Scandinavian origin; akin to Old Norse *hugga* to soothe. Actually, although hug and being hugged are a kind of physical experience, to soothe, it also transfers a spiritual feeling with love and appreciation. In addition, The Chinese character of hug is “抱.” The left side is a “扌,” which means hand or arm. The right side is “包,” which means cover. So “抱” means to cover something or someone by hands or arms. The etymology of cover comes from Middle English, from Anglo-French *coverir*, *covrir*, from Latin *cooperire*, from *co-* + *operire* to close, cover. It means to guard from attack, to hold

within range of an aimed firearm, to afford protection or security to, to protect by contrivance or expedient, etc. Therefore, hug also means being close and affording protection.

What is the significance of “hug” for Xuyun? Why is being hugged the only reward she looks for in her teaching? Xuyun says that teaching is what she really wants to do. She loves to teach. She commits to teach. She devotes herself to teaching. Finally, she enjoys teaching because teaching brings her homecoming, respect and admiration from her students. “Hug” is the most direct way of reflecting the children’s appreciation and love. The student’s “hug” soothes her and makes her happy. Moreover, “hug” also means being close and affording protection. Do the students want to be close with their teacher? Do the students think of protecting their teacher? With the students’ “hug,” the teacher experiences both physical and spiritual touch. The teacher and students become close in both body and mind. Actually, although the students are younger and weaker physically, their “hug” has the power to protect the teacher’s confidence and joyfulness. It may be another reason why the teacher treats “hug” so importantly, like Xuyun.

Other teachers also express their happiness related to their teaching in Chinese schools. Wenhua says:

I am pretty happy. You get to know lots of people because you teach in Chinese school. Sometimes when you go shopping in the Chinese grocery store, you may meet the Chinese people who know you. You will feel that you come back to your own place—a feeling of being at home.

Through teaching in Chinese schools, Wenhua became one part of a big family—the Chinese community. She enjoyed her teaching when she felt she was sharing something special with her family members.

In addition, Chengxi compares her teaching experiences in China and the United States and tells me how joyful she feels about her teaching now. She says:

I have taught for eight years in China. I didn't know what I was doing then. I had no special feeling about my teaching... But I enjoy my teaching in Hope Chinese School. When I pay special attention to my teaching and make some adjustments, I will enjoy it more. I also enjoy my relationship to the students and the parents. So I persist in my teaching in Chinese school for so many years. It has become a part of my life.

Chengxi's effort helped her go through the lostness due to cultural and pedagogical shock. Finally, she came to enjoy her teaching by overcoming barriers due to cultural shock.

Landing in an in-between empty space, the Chinese teachers experience cultural and pedagogical shocks. What do these shocks bring to them? The shocks challenge and encourage the Chinese teachers to re-flect on their familiar world in the past. The shocks awake the Chinese teachers' love of teaching and initiate their way to go back home. The shocks inspirit the Chinese teacher's efforts to experience and adjust to the difficulties and differences in pedagogy. Hong-yu Wang (2004) shares the same experience. She writes:

Finally I am home, in a third space. Dancing home, through the body, down to the psyche, in the boats traveling along the river, the river of memory, the river across borders, the river lowing to unfamiliar shore. In a third space, I am no longer at home. Endless homecoming lands in the stranger's kingdom, the queendom of homeless singing. The journey continues, at the interminable beginning through a "complicated conversation" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995) that is curriculum. (p. 151)

This chapter has brought us into the pedagogical differences experienced by Chinese teachers teaching in Chinese schools in the United States—a place of foreignness, yet familiarity as well, encountered in this in-between space. The "complicated conversation" that teaching is for these teachers is explored more in depth in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

RE-SPLICING THE KNOTS OF THE IN-BETWEEN SPACE

We controlled when we were seeking autonomy;
 we risked when we were striving for attachment.
 We separated to obtain that privileged centralized position.
 We united to decentralize those singular units of mastery and control.
 We wove backwards into the past
 with our lived experience;
 we live forward into the future
 with our spliced stories;
 and we continuously splice
 in our chapters to come. (Li, 2002, pp. 95-96)

The Emptiness of the In-Between Space

When two ropes collide, they are entangled in order to make a stable Chinese knot.

As Chen (1996) says, Chinese knots are symmetrical in form with an “empty space in between” (p. 91). Therefore, in-between space provides an opportunity for that space to be filled. It exists when two different ropes meet.

Based on traditional Chinese culture, the empty space is built for beauty and wholeness of the structure. It is called “留白” (Liu-bai) in Chinese. “留” (Liu) means leaving something behind; “白” (Bai) means “空白” (Kong-bai), a blank or vacant space. Based on Chinese aesthetics, “留白” means leaving a blank or vacant space in the art work in order to give the audience a space of imagination.¹³ The secret empty in-between space “留白” allows the Chinese knotwork to have an imaginative aesthetic, imbued with love and other significant meanings.

However, “留白” may cause a looseness of the knot. “空” (Kong) means “无” (Wu)—nonbeing. The nonbeing being becomes a space full of uncertainty, yet full of

¹³ Translation is from *Baidu* Online Encyclopedia.

possibility. Therefore, the empty “in-between” space “留白” also creates instability, full of uncertainty and possibility. It may lead to transfiguration of the knotwork. Extending this metaphor of the empty in-between space to the experience of Chinese Sunday school teachers allows for the possibility of seeing the transformation of the participants through their teaching as they find meaning in the in-between.

I am Pink

During our conversation, Wenhua tells me that she has been changed since she studied teaching practices in the United States. She starts to reflect on the value of both Chinese and American education and thinks of her unstable in-between status. She says:

I don't know whether in-between is best status. But I think it is unsafe for me. Because you may look like this, but you may not; you may look like that, but you may not either. You can't be accepted by either side completely. So at the beginning, I wish I could be invisible by others.

Being invisible is her wish when Wenhua begins to realize her differences from other American teachers. Why does she want to be invisible? Is it possible to be invisible living in this in-between space? Can being invisible help her feel safe? Can being invisible help her overcome the difference she feels? Wenhua uses a metaphor of color to describe her feeling of this in-between space. She says:

There are a bunch of balls. Most of them are white. Why are you red? Or no, if you are in-between, you are not red. We have to say that there are some white here, and some red there. You are pink. Because you are not red, neither white, you will be picked up very quickly. So you can't feel safe. I can't find my belongingness. There is no place for me. I am pink.

Wenhua's words bring out a similar feeling for me. We, the Chinese teachers teaching in the United States, are the pink balls among a bunch of white and red balls. What does being pink look like? Based on the color mixing theory, pink is made by mixing red and white. So pink is a color embodying both red and white. According to the *Merriam-*

Webster Online Dictionary, pink is any of a group of colors bluish-red to red in hue, of medium to high lightness, and of low to moderate saturation. It means that pink may belong to the red group if it becomes darker, or belong to the white group if it becomes lighter. Pink is in-between. Pink is a color experiencing both red and white and not-belonging to either of them. The Chinese teachers are like the pink color. We experience both Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies, but we don't belong to either one of them. We are not in a place where we feel safe.

Pink also means the very embodiment of possibility: paragon, one dressed in the height of fashion: elite, highest degree possible: height, in the pink means in the best of health or condition (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). So pink is a shiny and prominent color. It means the highest degree possible of something. As pink balls, we are outstanding among a bunch of balls. So we can't be invisible as pink balls. We may feel unsafe and that we don't belong, but we know the white and red groups are a mixture of them. We are in the pink—in the best of condition for understanding both of teaching worlds.

A Third Eye—I Can See What Others Can't See

Wang (2002) writes:

My cross-cultural and intercultural encounters and conversations both within the self and with others and with texts have given me a new eye, a “third eye” (Tyler, 2001) enabling me to see both worlds differently. This third way of perceiving East and West is necessary in order to create new spaces of individuality, subjectivity, and relationality, spaces in which curriculum and education can be envisaged differently. (p. 73)

As I have written in Chapter One, “three” is a magic number; it means an unlimited being.¹⁴ So “a third eye” is a magic eye, which helps people see what others can’t see.

¹⁴ Taken from *Tao Teh Ching*, 1987.

People with a third eye can see the world differently. Even though Wenhua is worried that living in the empty in-between space is not safe, she thinks that she benefits from it. She says: “I have the opportunity to see what the others can’t see.”

What does “see” mean? What does she see? How can she see? Based on the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of “see” comes from Middle English *seen*, from Old English *sēon*; akin to Old High German *sehan* to see, and perhaps to Latin *sequi*, to follow. It has rich meaning as a verb, such as to perceive by the eye, to perceive or detect, to have experience of, to come to know, to be the setting or time of, to form a mental picture of, to perceive the meaning or importance of, to be aware of, to imagine as a possibility, to examine, to watch, to read of, to attend as a spectator, to take care of, to make sure, to regard as, to prefer to have, to find acceptable or attractive, to call on, etc. So “I can see” carries a lot of meanings, like I perceive, I experience, I understand, I recognize, I observe, I am aware of, and so on. As Fenstermacher (2000) writes: “Perhaps we cannot define quality teaching, but we know it when we see it” (p. 2), the Chinese teachers may know what good teaching is in both Chinese and American pedagogy when they see it.

But why can’t others see if I can see? In-between is a unique place. On the one hand, it makes the Chinese teachers feel uncertain and unsafe; on the other hand, it creates a mixed space where the Chinese teachers can see both the American and Chinese cultures and pedagogies. Wenhua says:

I was born in Hainan province, and then moved to Chaozhou in Guangdong province, and then came to the United States. I haven’t stayed in a place for a long time. My father says: “Actually, America is your second hometown. You have stayed there long enough.”... I feel that my root is in China. But I get lots of education in the United States. I am affected by it.

As a Chinese teacher living in the United States, Wenhua sees Chinese culture and pedagogy as her root. However, she also sees American culture and pedagogy because she is living in the United States, which is her second home. So she has “a third eye” beyond her regular sight. She can see both sides as she stands in the empty in-between space. But people without the experience of living in-between do not have a third eye, so they can’t see both in the same way.

In addition, we mention the image of “bridge” during our conversation. Wenhua admits that she might be the bridge: “I never think of it before. But I think it exists now.” As a bridge, she not only sees the view from both banks, but also shows people the different views from either end. She says:

I have the opportunity to show some American teaching methods to the Chinese parents, and some Chinese methods to the American people.

Standing on the “bridge” gives her “a third eye,” so she can see the difference between both and experience the re-understanding they bring from a special perspective. As Garrod (1999) writes:

We are invited not only to appreciate the courage, resilience and insight of their changing perspectives but also to re-examine the United States as these young writers see it –with a freshness and precision that is sometimes unnerving. (p. xx)

The new perspective is a fresh and precise way to re-examine the world. But people without the experience of standing on the in-between of the “bridge” can’t feel the same way. They can’t see this special perspective.

The Knot May Be Unstable

During the group conversation, Liufang raises her question quickly before other Chinese teachers talk:

I have an urgent question for all of you. I wonder about the answer for a long time, but I can't get it yet. The question is: "How should I deal with the out of control behavior in class in the United States? Should I let it go or use time out? Can I allow the children to talk in class?" I often struggle with how to deal with classroom management since the children are so different from my students in China.

As a Chinese teacher from China, I totally understand what Liufang is worried about. In China, the teacher has the authority and can punish students with bad behavior without any hesitation. However, when we teach in American Chinese schools, we hesitate to use our Chinese classroom management practices, because although most students are second-generation Chinese, they are still American children and growing up in American culture. Can they get used to the Chinese way of teaching? How do they study in their American schools? Do their American teachers punish them? How do the American teachers handle classroom management issues in the class? Can my students accept punishment in the Chinese way? Can their parents accept it? What should I do to keep good classroom management and help students and parents be satisfied?

In response to the topic that Liufang initiates, several teachers share their own teaching stories of how they maintain their classroom management. Some talk about how they create games to involve their students; some talk about how they observe the children and find their interests, and some talk about how they make teaching meaningful. However, nobody answers Liufang's first question directly: how to deal with the out-of-control students? The question indicates an important but controversial message for them: "Should I punish American children using the Chinese way?"

It is a difficult question for the teachers living in this in-between space. As Chinese teachers teaching in the United States, we stand in the empty in-between space and often feel shaky and unsafe. When we encounter any problem, we are worried about

whether our Chinese ways conflict with American ways, because we want to be safe rather than causing any trouble. So when we have to “splice” the Chinese and American ropes to solve our teaching puzzles, we become less confident and hesitate, a fact that may lead to an unstable knot.

However, it is important to tie the knots correctly for stability. As somebody writes in “Knotblog: All About Knots.”¹⁵

We need to find a knot that will match the requirements in this special rope used in demanding applications and perhaps under adverse conditions. We will be looking for a suitable hitch, fixed loop, or adjustable loop that is to be used in a fixed installation such as some parts of a ship’s rigging but also a knot that can be quickly and easily tied and untied several times during a climb or rescue operation.

So we have to find a suitable knot and tie it correctly to make the knot stable. What is a suitable knot? What can we do to tie it correctly? What is the meaning of a stable knot in pedagogical practice? Can we tie a stable knot through adjusting our teaching?

As pink balls, we do not belong to red or white, but we look for a stable place, a home, and belongingness. Wenhua says:

There is no place for you. You have to create a place for yourself...In the safe place, you will be free to teach. It may not be the best teaching, but at least, it may be the most appropriate.

Why is it so important to feel free to teach? What does appropriate mean? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, free means not determined by anything beyond its own nature or being; relieved from or lacking something and especially something unpleasant or burdensome; not bound, confined, or detained by force, not obstructed, restricted, or impeded. So to be “free to teach” means that we can teach based on our own nature or being, beyond the restriction from other forces or burdens. In addition, according to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, appropriate means especially

¹⁵ Taken from <http://allaboutknots.blogspot.com/>.

suitable or compatible: fitting. Therefore, to fulfill the wish of teaching appropriately, we have to be free to teach—to choose suitable knots and tie them correctly based on our own nature and being. This is a significant part of creating a safe place. However, do we have the capability to create a stable knot? As Wenhua says: “This is what I have to attempt to do.” We have to work on it through re-splicing the knots constantly.

Splitting and Splicing the Knots

As Chinese teachers teaching in America, we land on this empty “in-between space.” Our being is unstable. The knots that we make by splicing the two ropes of Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies may be unstable if we don’t splice them tightly or correctly. Then we have to re-splice the unstable knots to make them stable and find balance by adjusting the “tao” of our teaching.

What does splice mean? The etymology of splice is the obsolete Dutch *splissen*; akin to Middle Dutch *splitten* to split (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). Why does splice come from split? Split means “分,” to divide, rend apart, or separate, while splice means “合,” to unite, link, combine, or insert. So re-splice implies a dynamic action of untying and re-tying, actually, a circulated action of splitting and splicing. The Chinese teachers adjust their teaching knots through splitting and splicing the two ropes representing Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies all the time.

Moreover, in Chinese culture, split(分) and splice(合) are the two dialectic sides, which work together as *yin* and *yang* to fulfill one purpose. They are present in the *Yin-Yang Eight Diagrams*.

Yin-Yang Ba-Gua Tu (*Yin-Yang Eight Diagrams*) seem simple, but they embody the simplest and truest principle: one is split to two, and two are spliced to one.

The diagram tells us, everything is dialect... You are in me, I am in you. Each can be combined and mixed with another for the same purpose...¹⁶



Figure 8. *Yin-Yang Ba-Gua Tu* (*Yin-Yang Eight Diagrams*)
(<http://laiba.tianya.cn/laiba/CommMsgs?cmm=14161&tid=2699044759049974883>)

As *yin* and *yang*, the two dialectic sides of one being, splitting and splicing work together and can't be separated easily. To fulfill the same purpose, people have to balance both sides rather than separate them. The Chinese teachers have to adjust and balance their Tao of teaching in-between two different cultures and pedagogies to help their teaching practices be stable.

What is the Tao of teaching? I have answered this question in Chapter Two: Tao is the way of origin. When we explore the way by which all things work, we are looking for the Tao in our lives. So when we explore the way by which all Chinese teachers work, we are looking for the Tao of their teaching. Greene (1973) says:

The problems are inescapable, wherever the teacher is assigned to teach, because he is asked to function as a self-conscious, autonomous, and authentic person in a public space where the pressures multiply. Unlike an artist or a scholar or a research scientist, he cannot withdraw to the studio, study, or laboratory and still remain a practitioner. He is involved with students, colleagues, school board members, and parents whenever and wherever he pursues his fundamental project; he cannot work alone. (p. 290)

Therefore, the Tao of teaching involves all the work with students, colleagues, school administrators, and parents. When these Chinese teachers teach, they have to confront all kinds of inescapable problems related to teaching and solve the problems through

¹⁶ The reference is translated from “one two, Yin yang and evolution” by Shanyin at http://www.centuryearth.com/_d269834697.htm.

adjusting their Tao of teaching. In fact, the following section is an exploration of the Tao of other Chinese teachers' teaching stories in the empty in-between space through presenting the struggles they encounter when they teach in American Chinese schools. Also, it draws on their experience of compromise, adjustment, and change living in-between Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies.

Fish and Water

Most American Chinese schools were developed by the first-generation Chinese immigrants. Their purpose is to transmit Chinese culture and language to their Chinese born children growing up in the United States. Parents are the original resource. Without these Chinese parents, there would be no Hope Chinese School, or other American Chinese schools. So parents are like the water. In addition, at Chinese Sunday schools, most teachers come from the parent-pool. They are identified as the parents of the students at the Chinese school in the first place, then as the teachers, such as Liufang, who becomes a teacher because her son recommends her when his teacher is sick. Without the parents, there would be no Chinese teachers in American Chinese schools. So while the parents are like the "water," the teachers are like the "fish." Fish can't live without water. Water can't be fresh without fish. Spliced together, the "water" and "fish" live together in one united world, in one common big family. Split by the boundary of identity, the water and fish represent two different existences, independent but interacting with each other.

An essential support system. Xuyun tells me a story about one of the parents in her Chinese bilingual class:

It is a heavy snowing Sunday. Even though Chinese school is not closed yet, it is understandable that some parents and students can't come to the school. However,

there is a mom, who lives in Frederick, at the end of 270. She drove her three daughters to my class in Fairfax on time. I was touched because she drove three hours in the snow in order to take my 2 hour lesson. I said: "Katy, you don't have to do this." She said: "I don't want to miss your class." I said: "That's O.K. I can email you, or call you on the phone about the lesson." But she said: "No, I want the children to take your lesson in person." That night, they couldn't drive back home because of the heavy snow. They had to stay in a hotel. I invited them to live in my house, but she rejected it. She said: "I don't want to bother you." I was so touched by this mom that I almost cried. So, think about it, can you teach casually?

The answer of course is "No!" When I hear the story, I am touched by the mom too. She drives three hours in the snow for the Chinese lesson. She tries her best to support her children to study Chinese. Her support shows teacher appreciation, and encourages Xuyun to teach as well as possible. Moreover, her support for Xuyun's teaching makes her relationship with Xuyun very close. The parent becomes the water surrounding the fish, and the teacher becomes the fish living in the water. They are spliced together as one big family because they share the same purpose—to help their children study Chinese. Therefore, it is very important for the teacher to communicate with the parents to receive their support.

What is the meaning of support? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of support is Middle English, from Anglo-French *supporter*, from Late Latin *supportare*, from Latin, to transport, from *sub-* + *portare* to carry, to promote the interests or cause of, to uphold or defend as valid or right, to assist, help, to hold up or serve as a foundation or prop for, to keep from fainting, yielding, or losing courage, to keep (something) going. Therefore, support means to transport, to carry, to promote, and to keep going. With the support system from parents, teachers will promote students' interests, not lose courage or have other negative feelings; they carry on their teaching as well as possible.

One of the reasons Wenhua enjoys teaching at the Chinese school is that she gets to know a good number of Chinese parents. The parents' enthusiasm often makes her feel at home and as part of a big family. So she thinks that it is easier to teach well if you have the parents' support. She says:

If the parents agree with your teaching, they will influence their children. I can't tell which one between the school and parents is more important. If you communicate with the parents well and win their support, they will go to great effort to help their children study and support your teaching.

Why is the communication between parents and teachers important? Is the purpose of communication to develop an essential support system for teaching and learning? What role does the parents' support play in helping the teachers teach and students study Chinese enthusiastically? Xuyun shares her experience:

Every time at the beginning of a semester, I will pass the information to all of the parents through the school's website. I tell them how I will teach for each lesson, what is my lesson plan, etc....The second step, I will ask for the parents to support me. They have to trust me and understand why I do this or that... For example, at the first or second week, I often play lots of games with the children to make the students interested in my class. I want the parents to understand why I do that so they don't misunderstand that I did not teach a lesson the first week.

The parents' understanding and trust are very important for the teachers. Through Xuyun's words, we can see that she asks for the parents' support openly and clearly, and she does win their appreciation and support as well. When I conducted the observation in her bilingual class, I saw a number of parents sitting with their children and listening to her teaching very carefully, showing their admiration and appreciation. Xuyun's effort helps her connect with the parents and to relate as a big family. But if the teacher can't communicate with the parents well, the knot becomes strained and may split. The fish and water become separated in their existence.

Support breakdown: A parting of the water. One of Tanli's unforgettable teaching stories reveals parents' lack of support and understanding due to a miscommunication with the parents at her traditional Chinese dance class several years ago. She says:

At the first semester when I taught traditional Chinese dance in an American Chinese school, I taught the children a “*Xinjia*” dance and guided the children to perform it at the school’s end-of-year party. The children’s performance was so successful that the principal asked the children to perform at a big community new-year party. Actually, it was a big challenge to guide a group of 5-7 year-old children to perform on a formal stage in less than three weeks. I had to think of lots of things, such as increasing practice times, seeking the appropriate costume, etc. It happened that a parent was in the clothing business. So she helped me to design the costumes and contact a clothing store. The clothing store would charge \$20 for each dress including the delivery fee. When I announced this notice in the class, there was no parent objecting to this plan. So I took it for granted that all the parents supported it and I didn’t have to communicate with them anymore.

But only three days before the big event, I got a call from the principal at night. She told me that some parents from my Chinese dance class signed a petition to complain that I charged the money without the right reason. Their children would not participate in the performance if I did it.

I felt so upset because I thought that my effort wasn’t supported and appreciated by the parents. The principal told me that I was too naïve. Even though I wanted to do something good, the result might not be good. As a teacher, I had to get along with the parents and communicate with them more.

This experience gave me a big lesson for my future teaching. I began to deal with my relationship to the parents more carefully as I continued teaching in American Chinese schools.

Why did some parents complain about Tanli? Does the complaint of the parents mean that their support breaks down? In what way is Tanli acting on good faith for the children but missing the parents’ view of the situation? In what way are the parents looking for more communication but the teacher is ignoring them? It seems that parents view the situation differently and misunderstand Tanli’s intentions. Then, what does a lack of support mean to her person as a teacher?

Tanli's story brings to mind a similar experience for me. As I have mentioned in Chapter One, one parent complained to me that I didn't respect her once. Actually, she didn't feel comfortable because I didn't accept her suggestion to reduce my teaching materials. I told her that some other parents might not feel happy if I didn't teach the students based on the lesson plan and guidelines. At that time, as a young and fresh teacher, I felt upset and angry. However, when I look back now, I admit that I made a mistake by not communicating better with that mother. I could have used a more kindly voice and reasonable attitude when I talked with her. I could have explained more about my lesson plan to get her understanding and support.

We are the fish; the parents are the water. When we are split, the water may create a wave to disturb the direction of the fish's running. The fish may also feel uncomfortable and want to be out of the water. As a professional Chinese teacher in an American public school, Lihong has high expectations for her teaching experience in HCS. But sometimes she feels disappointed about it. She says:

When Hope Chinese School was established a long time ago, I pretty much enjoyed my relationship with the parents. At that time, all the administrators and teachers were parents. Actually, HCS was established by the Chinese parents to teach their American-born children Chinese...But now, the parents don't want to enter the class anymore. They don't appreciate the teacher's teaching anymore. The administrators don't appreciate it either. You may feel that you are only an employee. They pay you, and you have to work for them. I feel very bad about it.

What does being an employee mean? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, employee is defined as someone employed by another, usually for wages or salary and in a position below the executive level. It means that someone else holds power over you and pays for your work as it meets their expectations. What does being

seen as an employee do to the sense that Lihong has of her teaching? What does being a teacher mean? Greene (1973) answers:

No matter how the teacher conceives the human being, his primary task is to teach the young person to know. (p. 99)

The teacher is once again charged to think about what he is doing, even in a situation where traditional restrictions are removed. The issue of self-direction and autonomy, for instance, opens questions each teacher needs to clarify. (p. 153)

Therefore, the purpose of being a teacher is to teach students to know. It requires the teacher to seek self-direction and autonomy. The teacher has to be an autonomous thinker, rather than an employee powered over by others, as Greene (1973) says:

If the teacher agrees to submerge himself into the system, if he consents to being defined by others' views of what he is supposed to be, he gives up his freedom "to see, to understand, and to signify" for himself. (p. 270)

In HCS, the administrators are voted into their position by the voluntary parents. Like the teachers, they are other "fish" coming from the parent-pool. Lihong believes that a teacher is supposed to be a part of the school and a member of the school. Instead, she sees herself as someone employed below the administrator level, working *for* rather than *with* the parents. When she feels she has become an employee in HCS, she recognizes that she loses her freedom to understand and change. She feels disconnected from the parents, as well as controlled by them. She seems like a fish out of the water.

Therefore, Lihong quit her teaching job in HCS three years ago. But an amazing thing happened. Some parents realized that they didn't want to lose a great teacher such as Lihong. So they had their children quit HCS too and convinced her to create a small family-based Chinese school herself in order that their children could continue to study Chinese with her. One parent offered his big house for the school location. Another parent picked up and dropped off Lihong every Sunday afternoon. When she taught, all

the parents stayed outside the classroom waiting for their children. After the class, they would talk together like families. They were re-spliced with the essential supporting system back in place.

The story about “fish and water” is still ongoing in American Chinese schools every weekend. When the Chinese teachers feel split from the pool of parents, they may be treated as employees instead of autonomous people and lose the freedom to understand and change. Without the support of parents, the teachers may lose their interest or courage and cannot carry on their teaching anymore. To teach Chinese in American Chinese schools “so far so good,” the Chinese teachers have to deal with their relationship to the parents very carefully. Teaching requires the teacher to feel free “to see, to understand, to signify” for himself or herself. To be a free fish in the water, the teacher needs an essential support system.

The Knots Between the Teachers and the Texts

All the Chinese teachers I have talked with feel dissatisfied with the texts they are required to adopt for teaching in American Chinese schools. The kindergarten and bilingual teachers complain that they can’t find any published textbooks for their teaching so they have to develop their own texts by themselves. The other teachers complain about their teaching texts as well, although there is greater availability of textual sources at a more advanced level. For the past several years, the market for Chinese language teaching materials for overseas students has been growing at a very fast rate. Fifteen years ago, there was only one choice available. Currently, there are at least four sets of texts adopted in HCS. However, why do so many Chinese teachers feel dissatisfied with these teaching texts? Lihong says: “Most of the textbooks do not fit the oversea students’

experiences.” What does it mean for teachers if the texts they use do not fulfill the students' needs? Does the teachers' disappointment mean that the texts are disconnected from the teachers? What does it mean to be disconnected from the text? Can the knot between teachers and texts be re-spliced? How can the teachers help re-splice the disconnected knot? What kind of role do the teachers play to develop the texts?

The etymology of text is Middle English, from Anglo-French *tiste*, *texte*, from Medieval Latin *textus*, from Latin, texture, context, from *texere* to weave. A text is a written or printed work, such as the textbook in this context that attempts to weave together meanings of words. Usually, the textbook is a book used in the study of a subject, one containing a presentation of the principles of a subject, or a literary work relevant to the study of a subject based on the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Therefore, in this context, the text means the textbook used in Chinese language teaching, which attempts to weave together meanings of words. The written text contains the meaningful words that indicate the principles of subject matter and the voices of the authors, editors, and teachers. Aristotle (as cited in Heidegger, 1977) says:

Now, whatever it is (that transpires) in the creation of sound by the voice is a showing of whatever affections there may be in the soul, and the written is a showing of the sounds of the voice. Hence, just as writing is not identical among all (human beings), so too the sounds of the voice are not identical. However, that of which there (sounds and writing) are in the first place a showing are among all (human beings) the identical affections of the soul; and the matters of which there (the affections) form approximating presentations are likewise identical. (pp. 400-401)

Based on Aristotle, the written text transpires whatever affections there may be in the soul. It is a showing of the sounds of the voice. Heidegger (1977) also says:

Letters show sounds; sounds show affections in the soul; affections show the matters that impinge on us. (p. 401)

Therefore, the words and letters in the texts show sounds of authors, editors, and other contributors and reveal the affections in their souls.

In addition, the voices of teachers are an important part of the teaching texts.

Greene (1973) says:

Clearly, no matter what his chosen orientation, the teacher must know the subject matter he is teaching. He need not have mastered it as a specialized scholar; but he must understand the fundamental concepts involved, their organization, and the methods used to validate them.... Choosing to be more than a technician, not only must he be committed to an ideal of truth, he must be concerned about his students' taking truth as seriously as they search for being. And he must act on this concern without enforcing a particular kind of reality. He must know somehow that, too frequently, the norms of his society determine what is real for its members. (p. 169)

To teach the texts, the teachers must understand the fundamental concepts, the organization of the texts, and the methods used to teach them. When they teach the texts, their understanding and teaching show the sounds of their voices and the affections in their souls. So how the Chinese teachers choose and use their teaching texts show what they believe is the soul of Chinese language. The knot between teachers and texts will be spliced when the teachers feel they can connect with this soul; however, it will be split when the teachers feel disconnected from the soul of their teaching.

The chaos: 盲人摸象 (Mang Ren Mo Xiang). During the past 15 years, the choice of teaching texts in American Chinese schools has been a very controversial topic. The teachers and even the parents complain about them. So the administrators are conflicted about what to do. The controversy among teachers, administrators, and parents leads to a confusing and difficult situation in the evolution of overseas Chinese texts. I call this situation “chaos.”

According to *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, chaos (derived from the Ancient Greek Χάος, *Chaos*) typically means a state lacking order or predictability. In ancient Greece, it meant the initial state of the universe, and, by extension, space, darkness, or an abyss. In modern English, it is used in classical studies with this original meaning. Moreover, based on Greek mythical stories, chaos is the original dark void from which everything else appeared: First came Earth and Eros (Love), then Erebus and his sister Nyx (Night). These siblings produced children together, including Aether, Hemera (Day), and Nemesis. Other cosmogonies, such as the lost *Heptamychos* of Pherecydes of Syros, also have the gods being born from Chaos, but in a different way. There is a poet that describes chaos:

Rather a rude and indigested mass:
 A lifeless lump, unfashion'd, and unfram'd,
 Of jarring seeds; and justly Chaos nam'd.
 No sun was lighted up, the world to view;
 No moon did yet her blunted horns renew:
 Nor yet was Earth suspended in the sky,
 Nor pois'd, did on her own foundations lye:
 Nor seas about the shores their arms had thrown;
 But earth, and air, and water, were in one.
 Thus air was void of light, and earth unstable,
 And water's dark abyss unnavigable. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaos>)

Therefore, chaos means the initial state of the universe: darkness, unpredictability, confusion, and void. In chaos, things are unorganized, the future is unpredictable, and mood is dark. However, things are born from chaos. Chaos also means a state of things in which chance is supreme; the confused unorganized state of primordial matter before the creation of distinct forms (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). When the evolvement of Chinese texts in HCS is in chaos, a great opportunity appears for the text developers and us, the Chinese teachers.

To describe this chaos and express our lived experience of seeking the appropriate Chinese texts in American Chinese schools, I adopt the traditional Chinese idiom 盲人摸象 (*Mang Ren Mo Xiang*) as a metaphor. 盲人 means a blind man. The translation of 盲人摸象 (*Mang Ren Mo Xiang*) is “the blind men touching an elephant.” It comes from a story in the *Nirvana Sutra*, *Long Nikaya Sutra*, originating in India, sometimes attributed to Sufism and Hinduism. According to the story:

A group of blind men gathered around an elephant, trying to find out what the creature looked like. One of them happened to touch one of the tusks, and said: "An elephant is just like a turnip." Another touched one of the elephant's ears, and said, "It is like a big fan." One put his arms around one of the beast's legs, and said: "It is like a column." One who happened to place his hands on the body of the elephant said, "It is like a wall." But the one who got hold of the tail said, "It is like a snake." They then fell to arguing with each other....

This idiom is used to satirize those who know only part of a thing and not the entirety or essence. (<http://history.cultural-china.com/en/38History960.html>)

Therefore, the story of 盲人摸象 (*Mang Ren Mo Xiang*) reveals how people may only see one part of a whole picture due to their own standpoints and perspectives. Such is the case of textbook adoption in Chinese Sunday schools.

Xiang Zhang (2006) divides the teaching materials into four categories based on the different teaching environments in the United States. He writes:

There are four kinds of teaching materials: 1. CNL: which is designed based on Chinese small environment, Chinese big environment; its characteristic is lots of words, glossary, idioms and ideology. 2. CHL: which is designed based on Chinese small environment, big non-Chinese environment; its characteristic is application, emphasizing practice and memorization. 3. CSL: which is designed based on non-Chinese small environment, Chinese big environment; its characteristic is activities, culture guide, and local culture communication. 4. CFL: which is designed based on non-Chinese small environment, non-Chinese big environment; its characteristic is activity and culture guide.¹⁷

¹⁷ It is translated from Zhang Xiang’s conference presentation “海外中文教材评估的几个原则,” which is linked at <http://www.csaus.org/archive/6thConf/C-13.pdf>.

Although I don't agree with Zhang in his division of teaching materials based only on language or culture, I agree with him that the current teaching materials have their special focus and may only emphasize one or two aspects. In addition, how the text developers think of the purpose of teaching Chinese in the United States is another key point that divides the Chinese textbooks. Gadamer (1975/2003) says:

In the form of writing, all tradition is contemporaneous with each present time. Moreover, it involves a unique co-existence of past and present, insofar as present consciousness has the possibility of a free access to everything handed down in writing. (p. 390)

Every teacher's unique living and teaching experience will influence his(her) written texts. Actually, the development of overseas Chinese textbooks is deeply affected by the publisher, editors, or authors' personal perspectives, in addition to the political, cultural and economic environments. Therefore, I sort the several sets of Chinese texts by both the developer's different understanding of overseas Chinese teaching purposes and the specific language and cultural environment, while comparing them to the five blind men in the story of 盲人摸象 (*Mang Ren Mo Xiang*).

Touching tusks: “Biao zhun zhong wen.” When the first blind man tried to touch the elephant, he happened to touch one of the tusks. Tusk is an elongated greatly enlarged tooth (as of an elephant or walrus) that projects when the mouth is closed and serves especially for digging food or as a weapon (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). As a weapon and tool of digging food, the tusk indicates the bravery of an elephant. As the first set of textbooks at HCS, “*Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*” also means the brave attempt of developing appropriate text.

“*Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*” (Standard Chinese) is designed by People's Education Publishing Press, the most authoritative Chinese publisher, which develops and

distributes all the textbooks for grades 1-12 students in China. The translation of “*Biao zhun*” is “standard” in English. The etymology of standard is Middle English, from Anglo-French *estandard* banner, standard, of Germanic origin; akin to Old English *standan* to stand and probably to Old High German *hart* hard. It means something established by authority, custom, or general consent as a model or example: criterion, something set up and established by authority as a rule for the measure of quantity, weight, extent, value, or quality (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). So it is obvious that the purpose of the publisher and editors is to develop a set of criteria for all the overseas Chinese textbooks, to be used by all of the students in American Chinese schools. Is it possible that one set of textbooks will fit all of the students? Can teaching texts be standard? And what is the standard behind this authoritative source?

Although the authors and editors of “*Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*” live in China and developed the texts in China, their goal is to develop a set of texts for students outside China, so it fits into Zhang’s (2006) CHL category based on Chinese small environment and non-Chinese big environment. Its characteristic emphasizes application. Each lesson is built around a set of conversations, which are related to practical functions, such as greeting, introducing family, discussing something, etc. It is a good set of texts for the beginner. However, as Lihong says,

Biao Zhun Zhong Wen is far away from our real life in the United States... The content doesn’t progress from the first lesson to the last one.

The set of textbooks emphasizes practicality but misses parts of the culture and real life experience. When the first blind man happens to touch one of the tusks, he stops the exploration and says: "An elephant is just like a turnip." Similar to him, the developers of *Biao Zhun Zhong Wen* stop further attempts and leave the texts “as is.”

Touching ears: Ji nan Chinese text. The second blind man happens to touch one of the elephant's ears. The ear is the characteristic vertebrate organ of hearing and equilibrium consisting of the typical mammal of a sound-collecting outer ear separated by the tympanic membrane from a sound-transmitting middle ear, that in turn, is separated from a sensory inner ear by membranous fenestrae. It also means the sense or act of hearing, attention, awareness, or a person who listens (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). As an organ of hearing, the ear means listening to others. The second text—*Ji Nan Chinese text* is really a result of listening to others.

When the administrators and teachers of HCS realized the shortcomings of “*Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*,” they wanted to change. But 10 years ago, there were only a few choices in published Chinese texts. It so happened that *Ji Nan* University Publishing Press wanted to cooperate with American Chinese schools in order to develop a new set of Chinese texts. After listening to the opinions of some American Chinese school teachers, they developed *Ji Nan* Chinese text, which became the second set of texts that HCS adopted.

Like the authors and editors of *Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*, the authors and editors of the *Ji Nan* Chinese text also live in China, where they developed the texts. In addition, in order to correct the disadvantages of “*Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*” after listening to the American Chinese schools, their purpose emphasized the transmission of culture, as Lihong says:

The authors of *Ji Nan* Chinese textbook don't understand us. They take it for granted that the purpose of studying Chinese overseas is to maintain Chinese culture. They ignore the communication and application of the language.

Actually, the *Ji Nan* Chinese textbook fits into Zhang's (2006) CNL category, wherein the design is based on Chinese small environment and Chinese big environment. There are lots of words, glossaries, idioms, and ideology in the set of texts. It emphasizes cultural transmission and ignores the application. The developers of *Ji Nan* Chinese text listen to some American Chinese schools' complaints about other texts, but they forget to question why schools complain about them, ignore what the teachers and students really want, and stop the further exploration, like the second blind man who touches one of the elephant's ears, then stops searching and says: "It is like a big fan."

Touching legs: Ma Liping Chinese text. The third blind man put his arms around one of the beast's legs. The leg is a limb of an animal used especially for supporting the body and for walking, a pole or bar serving as a support or a branch or part of an object or system, according to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. The leg is a basic part used for supporting for body and for walking. It means base and foundation. The third text—*Ma Liping* Chinese text is trying to satisfy the basic requirement of American Chinese schools.

Almost five years ago, the *Ma Liping* Chinese text suddenly became popular in American Chinese schools. There is a big controversy about whether we should adopt it in HCS. Finally, the school decided to set up a pilot class to try the new set of texts. Now it has become the primary set of texts for the lower level students at HCS.

Ma Liping is the principal of Stanford Chinese School, an American Chinese school in California. She has a great deal of first-hand teaching experience in American Chinese schools, so her texts are specifically designed for students in American Chinese schools and to satisfy the basic requirements of American Chinese schools, such as class

period, place, amount of homework, and so on. However, the *Ma Liping* Chinese textbook primarily is developed by only one person, so the consistency and reliability of the text is difficult to ensure. Lihong says:

Ma Liping Chinese textbook is pretty good for the lower level students. There are lots of funny stories in the book. The number of words is huge. But after some certain level, the quality decreases fast. After 5th grade, the teaching texts become more and more rough....In addition, the text has a very high requirement for the parents. The parents have to spend lots of time on studying with their children together to finish the assignments everyday. I think only 5-10% of parents can fulfill the requirement....The texts are short on practice and application.... The author knows nothing about teaching Chinese in any other schools, like the public school in the United States.

The *Ma Liping* Chinese textbook is especially designed for the American-born Chinese students in American Chinese schools, so it fits into Zhang's (2006) CSL category, wherein the design is based on non-Chinese small environment and Chinese big environment. It emphasizes activities, culture guides, and local cultural communication, but it is short on application, and the structure is short on consistency. Actually, until now, the highest grade adopting the *Ma Liping* text is the 5th in HCS. The developers of *Ma Liping* text seek to cover the basic requirement of studying Chinese in American Chinese schools, but they ignore the whole structure and consistency of the text, as the third blind man, who puts his arms around one of the beast's legs, then stops seeking the whole and says: "It is like a column."

Touching body: “Zhong hua zi jin.” The fourth blind man happened to place his hands on the body of the elephant. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, body is the main part of a plant or animal, especially as distinguished from limbs and head. It means the main, central, or principal part, the main part of a literary or journalistic work, a group of persons or things, fullness and richness of flavor (as of

wine), denseness, fullness, or firmness of texture. The fourth text—“*Zhong Hua Zi Jin*” is a kind of text with fullness and richness of traditional Chinese culture.

Besides the three primary textbooks adopted in HCS, there are several new textbooks published in recent years, such as “*Jue Se Zhong Wen*,” and “中华字经” (*Zhong Hua Zi Jin*). The latter was adopted by the Fairfax campus of HCS as a pilot program this semester. “*Zhong Hua Zi Jin*” is a special Chinese text, which copied the format from a traditional ancient Chinese text: “三字经.” “三” means three, “字” means word, and “经” means scripture, classics. So it is very obvious that “三字经” is a classic text composed of three-word sentences. The text looks simple, but it covers many Chinese historical and cultural stories. In “中华字经” (*Zhong Hua Zi Jin*), every sentence is composed of four words, which are also related to culture and nature topics. Actually, “中华” (*Zhong Hua*) is the old and traditional name for China, which embodies specific cultural meanings. “中华字经” (*Zhong Hua Zi Jin*) is a set of Chinese texts with a fairly large amount of cultural information. The purpose is to transmit Chinese culture besides teaching Chinese knowledge. But the texts ignore the glossary and other applied aspects. The developers attempt to seek the richness and fullness of Chinese culture, rather than the openness and application of language, as the fourth blind man, who happens to place his hands on the body of the elephant, then stops searching and says: "It is like a wall."

Touching tail: “Jue se zhong wen.”

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of tail comes from Old English *tægel*; akin to Old High German *zagal* tail, Middle Irish *dúal* lock of hair. It means the rear end or a process or prolongation of the rear end of the body of an animal, one (as a detective) who follows or keeps watch on someone, or the blank space at the

bottom of a page. So the tail indicates something following others. The fifth text—“*Jue Se Zhong Wen*” is a set of Chinese textbooks drawing a large number of opinions from American texts.

The set of texts is composed of Chinese vs. English. It emphasizes learning from activities. Its kit includes the activity book, CD, online teaching guide, and other resources. It also offers online long-distance lessons and teaches students how to input Chinese characters using “*Han Yu Pin Yin*” on the computer. It fits into Zhang’s (2006) CFL category, wherein the design is based on non-Chinese small environment and non-Chinese big environment. The text emphasizes activities and a culture guide but ignores local communication and applications in real life. The developers attempt to design the text following other modern ideas, such as media, online courses, and so on, but they ignore planting the seed of language in real life, as the fifth blind man, who gets hold of the tail, then stops seeking and says, "It is like a snake."

Through exploring the evolution of Chinese texts in HCS, we can see the chaos that has surrounded the development of overseas Chinese texts. The controversy doesn't cease. The administrators, teachers, and parents are yet to achieve an agreement about the adoption of texts. In HCS, four sets of texts are used currently. The different grades choose different texts. Even in one school, different classes adopt different texts. For example, one student studies *Ma Liping* Chinese text in 5th grade, but he has to study *Biao Zhun Zhong Wen* in sixth grade. He may have to re-study the words or text that he has studied before. Otherwise, he may not catch up to the new text because there is a big gap between the 5th grade text of *Ma Liping* Chinese text and the 6th grade text of *Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*. What does the chaos of the development of overseas Chinese texts

look like? What does the chaos mean for the teachers and students? What can we learn by comparing these different texts with the five blind men touching the elephant? The texts are developed based on specific purposes and environments so they do not fulfill all of the students' needs. What, then, contributes to the Chinese teachers' dissatisfaction with the texts? What contributes to this lack of fit with these adopted texts?

Chaos also means unpredictability and possibility. Supreme chances are born from chaos. So in the future, what will the chaos lead to in HCS? What kinds of roles do the teachers play in the chaos? What kinds of opportunities do the teachers have in the chaos? Lihong says:

We are touching the elephant's legs. Every person only talks about one little part, and sees only one leg of the elephant.

Every teacher has her own perspective and purpose for teaching Chinese in the United States. Like Chengxi and Lihong, some think the purpose of teaching is the application of Chinese as a language. Chengxi says:

I wish that my students can read some short article in the newspaper, can hear and communicate well....currently, my goal is to help them to pass the SATII.

Lihong also thinks that application is more feasible than cultural infusion when the children are young. She says:

The young children only know if it is fun and meaningful. It may not work to make the children learn to love China or love Chinese culture to infuse their language learning with culture when they are young. They may not understand the culture or start to enjoy and love it until they are high school students.

But Wenhua and Xuyun think that it is important to share Chinese culture with the students. Wenhua says:

I feel that I have the responsibility to let the people who live away from China to know China, let the Chinese children who don't visit China like China, know China, and enjoy what I have enjoyed in China before.

Also, Xuyun often talks about Chinese stories in her class and shares the culture explicitly. She says:

I often tell the Chinese stories... I tell them that culture is different. If you come back to China, you may feel a little shock. I tell them what these shocks may be and we have to realize the difference... and how to realize it, treat it, understand it, and accept it.

From the conversations with the Chinese teachers, I realize that every teacher has her own view of teaching Chinese in the United States, a fact that influences her understanding and use of the texts. So if the opinions of teachers are different from those in the texts, they may feel uncomfortable or alienated from the texts. Their mood may be pessimistic. Their alienation from the texts may lead to chaos. Then, is it possible for the teachers to lessen the chaos? Would that be a good thing? How might the Chinese teachers play a part in the development of the texts?

闭门造车 (*Bin men zao ju*). Chengxi shares with me one of her experiences of participating in text development:

The editors of “*Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*” came to visit Chinese schools in the United States specifically. They were supposed to meet us, the teachers. But they didn’t meet any of us, but some principals, the leaders. They even didn’t know that we taught Chinese 2 hours per week. But anyway they published the texts after they went back to China. So I would like to say that they are 闭门造车 (*Bin men zao ju*).

闭门means closing the doors, and 造车means making the cars. So 闭门造车 (*Bin men zao ju*) means making the cars inside the house with the door closed, also called “Behind closed doors.” It is actually a negative word in China, which often means that people do something blindly, ignoring the reality and the experiences of others.¹⁸

¹⁸ Translated from *Tian ya wen da* at <http://wenda.tianya.cn/wenda/thread?tid=056deff416381191>.

From the story, we can see that the developers of “*Biao Zhen Zhong Wen*” solicit opinions from the principals and administrators but ignore the teachers’ opinions. In fact, teachers are the most important resources who know the reality of teaching Chinese in the United States. Greene (1973) says:

The teacher, then, must confront and assess more than the facts of the case. Becoming as conscious as he can of his situation, clarifying what he understands (and feels and imagines) human nature to be, he must decide what to take as fact, what to treat as operationally useful, and what to take as serious belief. (p. 60)

The teacher has to confront the reality of teaching and learning, know, and decide what kind of knowledge to teach and what kind of information to share. So the teacher knows about teaching in American Chinese schools much better than others. When the developers met the principals and administrators, rather than teachers, they missed the opportunity to know the reality of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools, consequently developing the texts blindly.

Lihong also complains that the teachers’ voices aren’t heard by the school. She says: “I want to help develop the texts, but the school doesn’t support it. I feel very disappointed.” The result is that the texts do not fit the teachers’ intentions, as Chengxi says:

The object of the text is not clear. The developers don’t know who the teaching objects are and how old they are. So there are still such stories as “Little Red Hat” and “Cinderella” in the 10th grade texts. In addition, the content is too much for one semester, but not enough for one year because the developers don’t know how long one semester is in the United States. All these make us, the teachers very passive.

However, the teacher is the person most closely related to the texts, as Wang (2004) says:

The teacher plays the pedagogical role of a third party which orients students to the alterity of the text, while the teacher persistently “holds” students in their encounter with the newness of the text. (p. 107)

The teacher's teaching itself has the most direct impact on the students. Teachers play a significant role in developing, experiencing, and sharing the texts with students. Their teaching may be compromised if the text does not fit the teachers' pedagogy and purposes. Greene (1973) also says:

A great deal depends on how the teacher adjusts his perspectives on human beings and the institutions they have made. Much also depends on how he chooses himself as a teacher, how he decides to act on what he has come to know. (p. 65)

The perspectives of teachers influence what they teach and how they teach. Their teaching depends on their personal experiences and understanding of society and human beings, important factors that may lead to different understandings of texts and pedagogical practices.

However, the teachers themselves may also be behind closed doors—“闭门造车 (*Bin men zao ju*)” if they just follow the texts developed by others and ignore the reality of teaching and the special needs and interests of their students. Gadamer (1975/2003) says:

A written tradition is not a fragment of a past world, but has already raised itself beyond this into the sphere of the meaning that it expresses. The ideality of the word is what raises everything linguistic beyond the finitude and transience that characterize other remnants of past existence. It is not this document, as a piece of the past, that is the bearer of tradition but the continuity of memory. (p. 390)

The text doesn't only express the experience of the past, but also the continuity of the present. The teachers have to consider their current teaching experiences and the needs and interests of their students when they engage them with printed texts or in developing their own texts.

断章取义(Duan zhang qu yi). The Chinese teachers share their stories of how they endeavor to develop their own appropriate texts since they feel dissatisfied with the textbooks adopted by the school. Xuyun says:

I realize that I can't be limited to the textbooks. I can't only follow and teach this today, as the Chinese teaching way. We have to be flexible.... When the administrator encourages me to use this or that textbook, I reply: "I won't adopt all of them. But I will 断章取义(Duan zhang qu yi) find out the appropriate texts for myself.

断(duan) means cut, 章(zhang) means the paragraph, 取(qu) means get, receive, and 义(yi) means the meaning. 断章取义(Duan zhang qu yi) means cutting one paragraph or one sentence from the text and making the meaning by ignoring the content of the whole piece.¹⁹ Actually, 断章取义(Duan zhang qu yi) is often a negative word in Chinese, but I was compelled by the meaning Xuyun gave it as a way to make the texts more appropriate here. Gadamer (1975/2003) says:

Texts, on the other hand, always express a whole. Meaningless strokes that seem strange and incomprehensible prove suddenly intelligible in every detail when they can be interpreted as writing—so much so that even the arbitrariness of a corrupt text can be corrected if the context as a whole is understood. (p. 390)

Therefore, it is possible for the teachers to take fragments from the different texts (断章) and combine them together to develop a new set of meaningful texts as a whole (取义).

Moreover, in the article “Classroom Conversation,” Li (2002) writes:

But teachers know that lessons do not always proceed according to plan. The students bring their own personal histories, feelings, interests, and preoccupations to the classroom. These personal dimensions always form the context for the instructional and curricular framing of the classroom. (p. 91)

So the teachers know what they need for their teaching and how to choose the right texts based on their own personal experiences and understanding of their students. Xuyun

¹⁹ Translated from the *Online Phrase Dictionary* in Chinese.

takes the best parts from the different bilingual textbooks (断章) and creates new texts to become more meaningful for the students (取义) fitting into her teaching purposes, environment, and her students' needs/interests.

Lihong develops her teaching texts based on the characteristics of her students in American Chinese schools. She says:

The students don't like to study Chinese, but their foundation is good. They can understand what you say. So they have to learn the "commonly used words," instead of all the words in the textbook....If they study Chinese 6 hours everyday, we don't have to emphasize it, but they only study Chinese 2 hours per week. So we have to emphasize studying the "commonly used words." Actually, the students can read a general article when they recognize 200 most commonly used words.

So Lihong develops her special texts based on commonly used words. In addition, she develops one set of "Commonly Used Words Cards" in order to help her students review the words effectively. She takes the most significant common words (断章) from all the texts and develops meaningful texts (取义) with repeatedly used common words.

Chengxi also develops her own texts according to her understanding of teaching purposes. She says:

I emphasize the usefulness, like how to prepare SAT... The content of *Biao Zhun Zhong Wen* is not enough for one year, so I add the extra reading parts to extend the content to be one year in length. I cut out the useless parts from the textbooks and emphasize the useful common words...but there some questionable styles similar to the SAT question in the set of texts, so I keep them in order to help the students to take the SAT...I have tried some other sets of texts, but they are even worse than *Biao Zhun Zhong Wen*. I love to use a set of multiple choice question texts developed by the principal, Fan. I often adopt it to check if my students have learned or not in class.

Through Chengxi's words, we can see that she adopts the useful parts from the different texts (断章) to develop a set of practical texts (取义) based on her purposes—helping her students use the language and pass the SAT II.

To splice the knot with the texts, the Chinese teachers work diligently to develop the appropriate texts through *断章取义* (*duan zhang qu yi*) based on their understanding of teaching. Gadamer (1975/2003) says:

Thus written texts present the real hermeneutical task. Writing is self-alienation. Overcoming it, reading the text, is thus the highest task of understanding. (p. 390)

断章取义 (*duan zhang qu yi*) requires the Chinese teachers to read, re-read, and re-write the texts. It makes the work of teachers the highest task of understanding. Their specific texts become the real hermeneutical task. The knot between teachers and texts is re-spliced to make it more stable.

The Way to Dialogue

Chengxi teaches 10th grade students in HCS. The students are old enough to communicate well with the teacher in both Chinese and English. However, Chengxi tells me that her students don't talk much in the class. She says:

The children don't ask questions a lot. They listen to my teaching, like listening to the story telling. But I find that they often laugh in the class. Because their parents are Chinese, they may understand what I say, but their conception is hugely different from what I teach. They can understand what I teach, but can not accept it, so they are "laughing."

The students' "laughing" makes Chengxi reflect on her dialogue with her students. She finds that the knot between her and her students is split because they don't accept the others' ideas in the dialogue. The students' "understanding" surfaces at the language level. At the ideology level, they cannot accept what the teacher says at all. However, the discourse between teacher and students is an essential element of education, as Ellsworth (1997) says:

Soon after coming from communication arts to work in education, I couldn't help seeing education as a field filled with materials, discourses, and practices that

addressed their audiences as if they were simply reflecting the world the way it was. (p. 79)

What does discourse mean? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, discourse means the capacity of orderly thought or procedure, verbal interchange of ideas, especially, conversation. Dialogue means a conversation between two or more persons, an exchange of ideas and opinions. So discourse is a conversation, a kind of dialogue with the exchange of ideas and knowledge. Teaching is the dialogue between teachers and students as a way of exchanging ideas and opinions. What happens when the dialogue is not understood?

Ellsworth (1997) says: “Communicative dialogue is education’s Hollywood, its dream factory” (p. 82). What does communicative dialogue mean? Why is it the teacher’s dream? Ellsworth (1997) says:

Communicative dialogue is not a neutral vehicle that simply carries those subjects’ ideas and understandings back and forth, unmediated, between student and teacher. Nor, as we’ve seen Donald and Felman argue, is the space between the two participants in a dialogue an empty space. It is populated by “diverse and frequently conflicting sign systems” that “coincide, and collide” (Cook, 1985, p. 246). (p. 83)

Therefore, dialogue involves dynamic conflict and coincidence. It happens in the space between the two participants—the teacher and the student. The knot between teachers and students will be re-spliced if they can achieve an effective communicative dialogue. Then what happens to the dialogue when teacher and students are trying to communicate from different cultural contexts? Ellsworth (1997) says:

Like a film, communicative dialogue in education is not static. It offers a series of views from constantly shifting positions within its premapped territory. Like realism in film, dialogue requires a delicate balancing act between too much change and not enough change.... But communicative dialogue as advocated by educators is not supposed to be about stasis, fixity, or a compulsive repetition of a back-and-forth call and response. Advocates argue that dialogue across

differences of opinion, background, culture, knowledge, or experience can result in positive transformations in its participants. Dialogue is supposed to enable me to encounter different points of view and differing ways of seeing and knowing, leading me to reflect on my own ways of seeing “in light of” the opinions and perspectives of others. Through this self-reflection, I will be changed by my encounter with others; and as a result, learning, or in other words, a difference, will have taken place. (pp. 87-94)

Therefore, in order to improve the communicative dialogue between teacher and student, the teachers have to balance the different points of view and ways of seeing and knowing that arise from different backgrounds, culture, knowledge, and teaching experience. It is the way to dialogue.

In our conversations, the Chinese teachers share many stories of how they balance the conflict between Chinese and American pedagogies and cultures, reflect on, and change their own teaching in order to teach “so far so good.” Their actions are ways to improve communicative dialogue. Through the dialogue, the split knot between teacher and students is re-spliced.

Don't talk too much. Lihong tells me when she feels good and when she feels bad about her teaching. She says:

When the students understand what I teach, feel excited about it, or follow my activity, and their works show that they have really learned, I feel so wonderful...But when I realize that I have talked too much, I feel terrible and have to stop talking immediately.... I have to do something else.

When teacher talk dominates, how do the teachers see themselves? What happens to the students? What does Lihong experience in her talk? Lihong says:

Students' participation is the fastest way to learn something. The teachers in Chinese schools often talk too much. I don't think I talk much in the class, but I still find that some of the students may draw or do something else when I talk a little bit more.

According to Lihong, when the teacher talks too much, he or she has to pay much attention to his or her own performance and, as a result, ignore the students' needs and participation. She also emphasizes that the Chinese teachers usually talk too much in class, a fact that contributes to a silencing of the dialogue.

I have written in Chapter Two, "The model for teachers in China is that of the virtuoso" (Paine, 1990, p. 54). Being a teacher as a virtuoso means that a lecture is the primary teaching approach. The teacher talks too much instead of inviting the students' participation in the class. Wenhua shares one of her experiences of visiting a friend's class in China:

Last time when I came back to China, I visited one class of my friend. She is the # 1 English teacher in Chaozhou and often teaches for the public. She can lecture following the lesson plan exactly. When she walks into the classroom, she throws all the knowledge to the students without the break...She asks me: "How is my teaching?" But I don't think she is teaching. It seems like she comes and works on something official, and then leaves.

All the Chinese teachers in American Chinese schools come from China. They all have experienced the pedagogy of "teaching as virtuoso" in China. However, when they teach in the United States, they can't avoid the influence of American pedagogy, and are seen as a "midwife." As I have written in Chapter Two, the metaphor of midwife means that the teacher is not the center, but an assistant or helper as in the Socratic Method. The Socratic Method is a dialectical method, often involving an oppositional discussion in which the defense of one point of view is pitted against the defense of another; one participant may lead another to contradict herself in some way, strengthening the inquirer's own point of view (*Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*). Socratic dialogue illustrates a version of the Socratic Method.

Therefore, when the Chinese teachers teach in the United States, they have to confront the pedagogical conflict between dialogue and lecture. Some teachers may recognize this conflict and make the necessary changes in order to accomplish good teaching. “What is teaching?” Lihong asks the question and answers it herself:

It can’t be called teaching that you infuse something to the students. Only when the students have learned something, can it be called teaching.

For Lihong, real teaching happens only when the students accomplish learning.

According to Ellsworth (1997), communicative dialogue in education also needs the interaction of the teachers and students. She says:

Educators frequently associate dialogue with democracy. They summon dialogue as a means of ensuring that when students and teachers interact, they are being open-minded (as opposed to dogmatic), and that they are open to being changed (as opposed to being dictatorial) by the rational understandings (as opposed to unreasonable passions and self-interests) they eventually arrive at. (p. 48)

To achieve communicative dialogue, the teachers and students have to interact with an open mind and willingness to change. As Lihong says, when the teacher realizes that she talks too much and has to move to another activity, she is changed. When students accomplish learning, they are changed as well. Finally, when communicative dialogue is accomplished, the knot is re-spliced.

Teaching as improvisation. Xuyun shares one of her most successful teaching experiences in HCS. She says:

Once I taught the “four seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter.” At the “Show and Tell” unit before my formal teaching, many children showed me the pictures they had drawn. I found that they drew very well. Suddenly I brainstormed and got a new idea. So I changed my lesson plan improvisationally. I told the children: “Let’s draw all the seasons!” When the children drew the pictures, they were saying: “What does the spring have? Sun, the green grass, the flower, the bird...” Later, I taught them how to read and write what they had drawn in the picture in Chinese

When this class was over, I think it was a genius idea. All the children liked drawing, and tried their best to draw the seasons. When they talked about their drawing, they were very excited. One boy drew the snow and somebody skiing, and said: "In the winter, I like to ski." The children drew the different pictures about seasons based on their own interests.... Since then, I changed my original "four seasons" lesson plan to this new mode. At that moment, I realized that it may become a new teaching style besides a successful teaching experience.

When Xuyun talks about her story of teaching as improvisation, she looks very satisfied with an excited expression in her eyes. What does improvisation mean? Why does improvisation help teachers feel satisfied and excited? How might improvisation help dialogue in education?

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, improvisation is the act or art of improvising. The etymology of improvise is French *improviser*, from Italian *improvvisare*, from *improvviso* sudden, from Latin *improvisus*, literally, unforeseen, from *in-* + *provisus*, past participle of *providēre* to see ahead. It means to compose, recite, play, or sing extemporaneously, to make, invent, or arrange offhand, to make or fabricate out of what is conveniently on hand. So improvisation is the act of making, playing, or arranging offhand with unforeseen results. What happens when people improvise? Does improvisation happen from nothing?

Benson (2003) discusses the characteristics of improvisation, compared to composition and performance in his dialogue with the music. He writes:

On the one hand, improvisation seems at least to be a kind of extemporaneous composition in that it does not seem to be an "interpretation" of something that already exists. In this sense, it differs from performance, which we normally take to be a kind of re-presentation—the presentation of something that has already been present and is made present once again....

On the other hand, improvisation fails to meet the requirements of a "true" composition. First, it does not seem to have the kind of premeditated or decided character that we think of musical works as having....second, improvisations lack permanence, something that works are expected to have... in fact, recordings

clearly change the status of improvisations. For what was once a momentary phenomenon—never to be shared again, no matter how much one attempted to “duplicate” it—because a phenomenon can be repeated over and over... But the actual existence of an improvised solo does not have the same status as the written existence of a musical work.... (p. 25)

Through Benson’s description in his musical dialogue, we can see that improvisation is a kind of free performance, without interpreting the composition that already exists. It cannot be duplicated. If the curriculum might metaphorically be seen as a composition and teaching as performing, by comparing our pedagogy to musical dialogue, teaching as improvisation means that the teacher doesn’t teach something based only on the prepared curriculum, but rather on new ideas in a new way, off hand. And it can’t be copied again.

Pinar (2005) says:

“Improvisation” is a powerful notion that not only allows us to emphasize the creativity of teaching, but enables us to “hear” the relation between theory and practice. (p. 82)

Therefore, improvisation is actually the creativity of teaching. It connects the planned curriculum with practical pedagogy. When Xuyun improvises the lesson on “four seasons,” she is creating her teaching based on the planned curriculum. She feels excited and satisfied. However, when she changes her original curriculum of “four seasons” to the new mode, she may not feel as satisfied and excited if she only treats the new mode as a new curriculum instead of an improvisation. But as an improviser, Xuyun really finds the new teaching practice a way to make her teaching richer and more successful. In addition, Benson (2003) writes:

It is precisely this characteristic of being between composition and performance that makes improvisation particularly well suited to thinking about both, as well as their relation to one another. On my view, both composition and performance are improvisatory in nature, albeit in different ways and to differing degrees. Composers never, create *ex nihilo*, but instead “improvise.” sometimes on a tune,

that already exists, but more frequently and importantly on the tradition in which they work. (p. 25)

Performers—even when performing music that is strictly notated—do not merely “perform” but also “improvise” upon that which they perform. Thus, there are many senses or levels of improvisation, probably so many as to make firm distinctions impossible. (p. 26)

Like composition and performance, both curriculum and teaching are improvisatory in nature too. When the teachers design their curriculum or lesson plan, they can't create *ex nihilo*. They have to improvise sometimes. Actually, it may also be a kind of improvisation when Chinese teachers develop their own appropriate texts through 断章取义 “*Duan zhang qu yi*”. In addition, when the teachers teach, they may improvise upon that which they teach in nature, even when they teach their curriculum strictly. It is called “curriculum improvisation.” Aoki (2005h) writes:

What “curriculum improvisation” does for me is twofold. First, it reminds me more clearly that curriculum implementation asks teachers to be mainly installers, primarily interested in fidelity to the curriculum to be installed. The danger lies in the possibility of indifference to the lives of teachers and students in the situation. Second, “curriculum improvisation” rings differently. In curriculum improvisation teachers are asked to shift from being installers to being improvisers, sensitive to the ongoing life and experiences of themselves and students in the situation. The quality of the curriculum-as-lived becomes a leading concern. “Curriculum improvisation” so understood helps us move beyond the hold of instrumentalism of curriculum implementation. (pp. 369-370)

As curriculum improvisers rather than curriculum installers, the teachers have to be sensitive to the “ongoing life and experiences of themselves and students.” Greene (1973) says:

Teaching is purposeful action. It must be carried on deliberately in situations never twice the same. The teacher must personally intend to bring about certain changes in students' outlooks; he must mean to enable them to perform in particular ways, to do particular tasks, to impose increasingly complex orders upon their worlds. (pp. 69-70)

Since teaching cannot be carried on in situations twice the same, the teachers have to sense the changes and perform as improvisers in order to teach well, as van Manen (1991) says: “To teach is to improvise” (p. 159).

In summary, for both curriculum and teaching, the teachers cannot stop improvising. Improvisation becomes an important essential of dialogue in education. It may help the Chinese teachers accomplish a teaching experience as delightful as that of Xuyun. Li (2002) writes:

To live, we hope;
 To hope, we dream;
 To dream, we imagine our improved future.
 To imagine, we act;
 We make constant effort to realize our dream.
 To realize our dream, we improvise our realities. (p. 47)

The Chinese teachers are improvising their teaching to realize their dream of teaching Chinese “so far so good.”

“Sour lemon”—meaningful teaching I. Xuyun received her Master’s Degree of Education in the United States. One of the most significant conceptions of American pedagogy for her is teaching meaningfully. She says:

When I study education in the United States, my instructor teaches us to teach meaningfully... When I teach “apple,” I ask the children to taste an apple in order to make teaching meaningful. I show the students something substantial to help them understand the knowledge and meanings.

One day I taught the four different tastes: “sour, sweet, bitter, and spicy.” I just brought some food to the classroom and asked the students to taste themselves. I remembered that the lemon was so sour that everybody cried out.

What an interesting class! When the students tasted the lemon, what did they think? Did they find it funny, interesting, or attractive? Did they understand the conception of “sour”

after the class? Would they remember the taste of “sour” in the future? Does it sound like meaningful teaching? What does meaningful teaching mean?

In the article, “Three Dimensions of Meaningful Teaching,” McKeough (1973) writes:

Meaningful teaching is a process by which something to be taught is awakened in the student as something of interest and value to him. (p. 221)

To make their teaching meaningful, the teachers may use provocative examples as the tool to attract the interest of their students and show them value. For example, the “sour lemon” helps the students become aware of the taste of “sour.” Their sucking, crying out, and laughing evolve into what the teacher teaches, as Xuyun says: “Your body and senses have to be involved in teaching and learning.” The students come to understand and remember the conception of “sour” through their teacher—Xuyun’s meaningful teaching.

“Talking to your dog”—meaningful teaching II. McKeough (1973) writes:

Used as a teaching guide, this facet would urge the teacher to show the uses and applications of a concept in a wide variety of settings. In these settings, the proposition or idea draws new meaning and added dimensionality. (p. 221)

To help teaching be meaningful, McKeough encourages teachers to use and apply concepts in different settings. In addition, he also writes:

The student’s ability to apply concepts to cases unforeseen even by the teacher or in ways novel to the teacher may also be appropriate standards in some cases. (p. 221)

So the involvement of the students is also key to meaningful teaching. Li (2002) writes:

But good teachers also know when to let go of control, such as when meaningful learning is taking place. To teach is to let learn... (pp. 89-90)

Good teachers have to know when to let their students go and how to make meaningful learning happen. Xuyun shares one of her meaningful teaching stories about “talking to your dog.” She says:

Once I taught the concept of “dog.” I searched and downloaded a picture of an accurate image of “dog,” and found a children’s poem: “Talk to Your Dog.” Not all the children had a dog, so I made a “dog” for everyone. I spent lots of time making a little “dog” by wrapping the paper and writing the poem “Talking to Your Dog” by *Han yu pin yin* on it. I told them: “This is supposed to be your little dog, and you have to talk to it, like ‘you have two eyes, one nose, your name is Alice, and I love you,’ in Chinese. Then you have to talk to your dog everyday.” Therefore, everybody had one little dog, which was the one made by me. When I emailed the project topic “Talk to Your Dog” to the parents, some parents responded: “We don’t have a dog at home.” I replied: “Yes, they do, now.”

Xuyun lets her students go play with the “dog” and “talk to dog” themselves. Through talking to this “play dog,” the students applied their oral ability in Chinese and came to understand the concept of “dog.” Meaningful learning then happened. Moreover, the unforeseen result was that the children developed a friendly relationship with the “little dog.” The children told Xuyun, “I have to talk to my dog when I come back home everyday, otherwise, he will be lonely.” “Talking to the dog” really made the teaching meaningful.

Bohm (1991) discusses meaningful dialogue in this way:

The word "dialogue" derives from two roots: "dia" which means "through" and "logos" which means "the word", or more particularly, "the meaning of the word." The image it gives is of a river of meaning flowing around and through the participants.²⁰

Dialogue means the flowing of meaningful words between two participants. So dialogue in education contributes to meaningful teaching and learning between teachers and students. To help students understand and apply knowledge meaningfully, the Chinese

²⁰ The reference comes from *the informal education archives*. It is cited from infed site: http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/bohm_dialogue.htm.

teachers attempt to make their teaching engaging and fun. Through meaningful pedagogical dialogue, the teachers made their teaching “so far so good,” and their students came to learn.

Being authentic. Wenhua tells me that the images of the teacher and student may be different between Chinese and American pedagogy. She says:

At that time, I didn’t see the teacher as a general person, not the student as a general person either. The relationship between the students and teachers is a kind of relationship of the transmitter and acceptor. Actually, there is no personal relationship. I can teach this class and that class by the same way without any difference. My teaching is universal for this or that class.... But here, I have learned that the teacher is important as an individual. S/he has to influence the students in person. For the children, the teacher has to be a lived and sentient person.... Actually, when I try to recall my former teachers, I won’t remember how s/he teaches me to write or read, but may remember something s/he did which influenced the development of my personality.

Based on her own educational and teaching experiences, Wenhua realizes the different personal images of a teacher in Chinese and American contexts. She thinks that the teacher has to be an engaged person if he or she wants to influence the development of the students. In addition, the teacher has to treat the student not as an object, but as a specific individual. She says:

There is a groping period for every class. Each person has a different expectation. Their interesting points are different.

Therefore, the teachers and students both have to be unique individuals engaged in pedagogical dialogue.

“Dialogue,” Freire (1972) says, “is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (p. 61). So dialogue happens between persons who want to share something of the world in order to name it. Gadamer (1975/2003) says:

Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his

point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says. What is to be grasped is the substantive rightness of his opinion, so that we can be at one with each other on the subject. Thus we do not relate the other's opinion to him but to our own opinions and views. Where a person is concerned with the other as individuality—e.g., in a therapeutic conversation or the interrogation of a man accused of a crime—this is not really a situation in which two people are trying to come to an understanding. (p. 385)

The purpose of conversation or dialogue is to come to an understanding. Each person has to open himself or herself to others and accept their opinions as valid. They can't treat the particular individual as an object, but as a person who has something important to contribute. Moreover, teachers have to relate the others' opinions to their own opinions and views. Therefore, the particular individuals in the dialogue have to regard the others and themselves as persons with an open mind and opinions to come to an understanding. No doubt the individuals who engage in pedagogical dialogue should be authentic.

What is the meaning of authentic? Heidegger (1962) says:

The Self of everyday Dasein is the they-self, which we distinguish from the authentic Self—that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way. (p. 167)

And because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it can, in its very Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only 'seem' to do so. But only in so far as it is essentially something which can be authentic—that is, something of its own—can it have lost itself and not yet won itself. (p. 68)

So the authentic self is something of its own, an essential being, and a real existence. Being authentic means being real and essential, and living in its own way. To be authentic, teachers have to see students as real persons rather than objects of teaching and realize themselves as lived individuals as well. Then, what does it look like when the teachers experience being authentic in the class? Greene (1973) initiates these questions:

What does he see when he looks at a child, at a young person of any age? A spiritual creature? A social organism? A half-civilized barbarian? A potentially rational being? Does he see a case sitting before him, an instance of cultural deprivation, an IQ, an underachiever or an overachiever, a kid, a pupil, a fellow creature? What does he mean when he says someone is only human, deeply human, not even human? What does he mean when he discusses self-concept, identity, individuality? What does he mean by man? (pp. 52-53)

To answer these questions, I would like to share the views of some Chinese teachers.

Moli says:

You have to know the children in person in your class. Your teaching plan has to fit their ages. Each year, the students' situation may be different. So even though I have prepared the syllabus, I may have to re-prepare it based on the new students' situation...The teaching is changing all the time.

Moli's words tell us that the Chinese teachers attempt to adjust their teaching based on the students. They treat the students rather than the teachers themselves as the center of teaching. They regard the student as an engaged individual in the pedagogical dialogue.

Greene (1973) says:

As we have seen, the individual exists within a continuum of experience: what he observes cannot be divorced from his observing; what he knows cannot be divorced from his knowing. Therefore, instead of talking about an individual coming face-to-face with an independent world of brute fact, Dewey stressed the situation, where individual and environment are involved in interactions. (p. 158)

As an engaged person, the student comes to the class with his own knowledge and experience. The teacher has to consider their special situations, needs, and expectations.

Besides the students, the Chinese teachers start to reflect on and see themselves as engaged teachers as well. Xuyun says:

I wish that the children could like me as a real person...If they open their heart for me, then they can learn anything I teach. But if they close the door, then it is very hard to learn.

Xuyun mentions that the teacher has to be a real person to win the heart of the students.

He or she cannot be seen as an object by the students. Greene (1973) says:

If the teacher agrees to submerge himself into the system, if he consents to being defined by others' views of what he is supposed to be, he gives up his freedom to see, to understand, and to signify for himself. If he is immersed and impermeable, he can hardly stir others to define themselves as individuals. If, on the other hand, he is willing to take the view of the homecomer and create a new perspective on what he has habitually considered real, his teaching may become the project of a person vitally open to his students and the world. Then he will be in a position to define himself as "admirable" in Merleau-Ponty's sense. He will be continuously engaged in interpreting a reality forever new; he will feel more alive than he ever has before. (p. 270)

Therefore, in order to become "admirable," the teachers have to regard themselves as viable persons instead of allowing other views to define them. They have to become open to their students, reflect on themselves as "homecomers," and create a new perspective on what and how they practice pedagogical dialogue. Ellsworth (1997) says:

They offer dialogue to teachers as a strategy capable of being more democratic than lectures and other one-way determinations by the teacher of the student's understandings.... When we enter into dialogue, we agree to be open-minded and open to being changed by the process of hearing and coming to understand another's arguments, experiences, viewpoints, and knowledge. (p. 82)

When teachers begin to initiate dialogue with students, both of them have to see themselves as engaged persons and be willing to learn and change with an open mind. The Chinese teachers adjust their understanding of teachers' and students' images between Chinese and American pedagogies and attempt to initiate a dialogue with the students to come to an understanding of what they teach. Ellsworth (1997) says:

When someone initiates a dialogue with me, s/he calls me into dialogue's structure of relations. When I enter into a dialogic structure of discussion, or learning, I am constituted as a subject of dialogue. (p. 83)

As subjects, instead of transmitting or accepting objects, the teacher and student can enter into a dialogic structure of teaching and learning. Greene also says:

The teacher can conceive his personal perspective on his students to be part of his "insertion into the world-as-an-individual." He can discover, at appropriate moments, what it is to meet his students' gaze and become aware of their

existence as his own gaze comes in contact with theirs. An encounter of this sort—an “I-Thou” encounter—occurs always in a present moment, in a domain apart from the object-world. In such a dialogic relation, the teacher can experience being a learner; he can become, in a distinctive fashion, a learner himself. (p. 94)

The “I-Thou” encounter of teachers and students happens in a present moment, a real situation, and between authentic individuals. The teachers become aware of their own existence and being learners themselves. This encounter is an authentic dialogue.

“If our classroom was the Zoo...”—the rules I. When Liufang asks the following questions during our group conversation: “How should I deal with the out of control behavior in the class in the United States? Should I let it go or use time out? Can I allow the children to talk in the class?” the other Chinese teachers, including me, share stories of managing our classes in American Chinese schools. However, we don’t come to any agreement on the specific answer to Liufang’s questions.

Liufang shares one of her experiences first:

Once when I taught, there was somebody talking in the class. I found out who was talking soon, but I didn’t criticize him directly. To the contrary, I asked him to host a discussion. The topic was “If our classroom was the zoo.....”

Why does Liufang compare the classroom with a zoo? What is the meaning of “zoo”?

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, zoo means a garden or park where wild animals are kept for exhibition, or a place, situation, or group marked by crowding, confusion, or unrestrained behavior. I believe that zoo indicated a place of crowding and unrestrained behavior for Liufang at that moment. She uses “zoo” as a metaphor to express a place without rules. She wants to remind her students that the classroom is different from a zoo where everybody can talk and play freely. The classroom is a place of rules.

What is the meaning of rule? “Rule” comes from Middle English *reule*, from Anglo-French, from Latin *regula* straightedge, rule, from *regere* to keep straight, direct. It means a prescribed guide for conduct or action, laws or regulations, an accepted procedure, custom, or a usually valid generalization. So a rule is a guide. In the classroom of American Chinese schools, what are the rules? Are there rules for both teachers and students? Who is the authority—the rule maker? How do the Chinese teachers play the rules in the classroom? What does it look like when teachers guide students by rules? Is there a disconnect between Chinese and American pedagogy in this regard?

The Chinese teachers seriously consider the classroom rules in American Chinese schools, as Moli says:

It is a very important problem to manage the students.... we have to communicate with them more and consider how to lead them.

Lihong also says:

We have to let the students know the rules at the beginning of the semester. The students have to monitor their own behavior and know the consequences.

However, the Chinese teachers may initiate a different dialogue with the students since they have a different understanding and practice of the rules in the class. Lihong tells me one story about how the Chinese teachers conduct the rules differently in HCS. She says:

One of my students in my second grade class moved up to a third grade class. His 3rd grade teacher is regarded as a good teacher in HCS. Once, the boy forgot to finish his homework, and then he was thrown out of the classroom by the teacher. Since then, the boy hated the Chinese school and didn't want to go back to school anymore....In China, I may not be a good teacher because I am not strict enough. But anyway, the teachers have to respect the students.

What happened to this boy in Lihong's story reminds us how the teacher's understanding or application of the rules may lead to different pedagogical results in the class—they

may or may not improve communicative dialogue between teachers and students.

Actually, based on Bohm (1991), there is no strict rule in pedagogical dialogue. He says:

Because the nature of Dialogue is exploratory, its meaning and its methods continue to unfold. No firm rules can be laid down for conducting a Dialogue because its essence is learning - not as the result of consuming a body of information or doctrine imparted by an authority, nor as a means of examining or criticizing a particular theory or programme, but rather as part of an unfolding process of creative participation between peers. (http://www.infed.org/archives-e-texts/bohm_dialogue.htm)

Rather than a means of importing information and criticizing others, the real function of rules is to help dialogue occur between teachers and students and to help learning really happen. Although the classroom is not a “zoo,” and the students cannot talk or play without rules, the classroom is not only a place with firm rules either. When Liufang asks the student to host a discussion instead of punishing him, she breaks the traditional Chinese classroom rules. She has learned from other pedagogy and adjusted her understanding and practice of classroom rules. Actually, the Chinese teachers apply the rules differently based on their different backgrounds, teaching and learning experiences.

Writing Chinese character in “田字格”(tian zi ge) –the rules II. The Chinese teachers understand and conduct the rules differently. How do they present the rules in the class? What are the factors influencing their application of rules? Ellsworth (1997) says:

Dialogue as a form of pedagogy is a historically and culturally embedded practice. It is a socially constructed tool with intentions built into its very logic. (p. 49)

Therefore, when the teachers initiate dialogue in the classroom, they bring their own historical and cultural backgrounds into the conversation. For different teachers, the rules are different. Indeed, the rules are not neutral for teachers, as Ellsworth (1997) says:

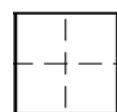
The point I want to make here is that when teachers practice dialogue as an aspect of their pedagogy, they are employing a mode of address. The rules and moves and virtues of dialogue as pedagogy are not neutral—they offer very particular “places” to teachers and students within networks of power, desire, and knowledge. (p. 49)

The Chinese teachers in American Chinese schools live in-between two different “places” with particular rules. They conduct the rules embedded in their personal experiences and understandings of the cultures and pedagogies in-between China and the United States.

Xuyun adopts the rules of writing Chinese characters as the metaphor to describe her understanding of the classroom rules in American Chinese schools. She says:

When you write the Chinese character, you have to write it in 田字格 (*tian zi ge*). You can not write the characters disobeying the rules. For example, you have to follow the stroke order, such as writing “—” before “|” always. You will be wrong if you reverse the order. This is the “culture.” Chinese people are very strict with the rules.

What Xuyun says is true. When Chinese people learn to write Chinese characters, they have to fit the character into 田字格. Actually, 田字格 means a square with a cross “十” inside. It just looks like the Chinese character “田.”



田字格 (*tian zi ge*)

The cross “十” divides the square into the four parts: “top-left, top-right, down-left, and down-right.” So when you write one Chinese character, you have to try to fit it into the four parts of the square based on the rules. For example, “粒” is the left-right structure: you have to put the “米” on the left part, and “立” on the right part:



The strict writing rules show us that Chinese classroom culture and rules may be different from American ones. Bohm (1991) says:

Dialogue is a way of observing, collectively, how hidden values and intentions can control our behavior, and how unnoticed cultural differences can clash without our realizing what is occurring. It can therefore be seen as an arena in which collective learning takes place and out of which a sense of increased harmony, fellowship and creativity can arise. (http://www.infed.org/archives/e-texts/bohm_dialogue.htm)

The unnoticed different rules embedded in the different cultures and pedagogies may clash with regard to teaching and learning in American Chinese schools. So the teachers have to consider the differences in rules carefully. Xuyun says:

You can not say the culture is good or bad. It is only different...we have to realize it, regard it, understand it and then accept it...

I try to melt the cultural difference. At first, I tell the children that one of the purposes that they come to study Chinese in American Chinese schools is studying Chinese culture. But it doesn't mean that we have to follow totally Chinese way....For example, I explain to them that when the teacher talks, the students can't talk in China. But here, we can adjust a little bit. The students can talk if they raise their hands.

Based on Xuyun, writing Chinese characters in 田字格 is a special rule in Chinese pedagogy; we have to accept and follow it. But it doesn't mean that we have to keep all the Chinese rules without adjusting. We can realize the differences between Chinese and American rules in pedagogy and then make the appropriate adjustment in order to teach Chinese well in the United States. Wenhua also says:

I have to find the balance point of managing the class....we don't want that the children study too hard with the heavy competitive pressure like the children living in China... but we don't' want that the children play too much either...I am not located by the two different pedagogies, so I think I can find the in-between point.

When the Chinese teachers teach Chinese in the United States, they have their own unique experience of living in-between the two different cultures and pedagogies. Most of them look forward to realizing the differences in pedagogical rules and adjusting them into a balanced pedagogy so that they can initiate a communicative dialogue with their students. Can they achieve this goal? What does it look like when the Chinese teachers adjust the rules in their classrooms?

“Time out?”—the rules III. In the group conversation, the question “Can we use time out?” becomes the focus topic of our dialogue. What is time out? According to *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, a time-out involves temporarily separating a child from an environment where inappropriate behavior has occurred, and is intended to give an over-excited child time to calm down. It is an educational and parenting technique recommended by some pediatricians and developmental psychologists as an effective form of child discipline. What is the meaning of discipline? The etymology of discipline is from Anglo-French and Latin; Anglo-French, from Latin *disciplina* teaching, learning, from *discipulus* pupil. It means punishment, instruction, control gained by enforcing obedience or order, orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior, or a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). Therefore, time out, as a form of discipline, is a way of controlling behavior to help teaching and learning. Actually, the concept of time-out was invented, named, and used by Arthur Staats in his extended work with his daughter (and later son), and was part of a long-term program of behavioral analysis beginning in 1958 that treated various aspects of child development (*Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*). It is an American rather than a Chinese way of punishing students. When the Chinese teachers start to discuss their

conception of “time out,” they have already realized the differences in rules and adjusted their pedagogical understanding of punishment in-between Chinese and American pedagogies and cultures. They begin to practice the pedagogical rules in a mixed way.

During the group conversation, Liufang claims her opinion in the first place. She says:

If the students can't obey the rules, we have to use time out... At the first class of the semester, I will claim the rules in the classroom. I often emphasize two points: 1. The classroom is borrowed. We are the guest so that we have to follow the guest rules. 2. The students have to follow the teacher's direction. If the student breaks the rules once or twice, s/he will get the warning. But at the third time, s/he has to be in time out... we can not allow the bad behaviors of some students to influence other students' study.

For Liufang, the students have to obey some classroom rules to avoid interrupting other students' study. She says: “The class rhythm is very important.” It means that the rhythm of teaching cannot be interrupted, and the teachers have to control it through the effective classroom management. Van Manen (1991) says:

The term discipline is related to the notion of disciple (someone who follows a great teacher or a great example), and also to the notion of docere (meaning to teach), and to the term doctor (a learned person). A disciplined person is prepared to learn and to be influenced toward order. To create discipline in students or in oneself is to create conditions for real learning. (pp. 198-199)

So the purpose of using “time-out” as a discipline is to create conditions for real learning. If Liufang’s use of “time-out” creates a good class rhythm, the students may study in a good environment for real learning. Does Liufang achieve this purpose by using “time-out” in her class? What do other Chinese teachers think of “time-out” or other disciplinary actions?

Most teachers do not answer this specific question directly. Lihong tells us that she claims the rules at the first class as well. But her purpose and method are different. She says:

I claim the rules in order to make the students know how to monitor their own behavior and what they should do step by step in the class, such as reading after finishing assignments, etc... In addition, I design the “Score Table” for each student. In the table, any work deserves some credit, like homework, reading, recognizing the common words, and so on. But you may lose some points if you break the rules, such as speaking English instead of Chinese in class.... If the students accomplish 100 points, then they can take a prize from the treasure box.

Compared to Liufang, Lihong adopts a more American way to conduct the rules. She uses a “Score Table” instead of “Time out” as the discipline to manage the class. Chengxi agrees with Lihong. She says:

You can not be too strict with the students in American Chinese schools. They may just ignore you. You can only convince and encourage them to keep studying.

Although Xuyun tells her students that “Chinese people are strict,” she doesn’t adopt the strict Chinese rules in her class. She says:

I let my students know that I can accept their different behaviors and questions if they can follow the basic rules. For example, if they raise their hand, then I will let them talk.

From their words, we can see that most Chinese teachers don’t treat time out as a primary form of discipline to manage the classroom. Rather than punishing their students, they emphasize encouragement. Tanli says:

In my Chinese dance class, there are some naughty children. But you can’t hurt their pride. You have to respect them. I may say: “You dance pretty well, but if you are talking, you may affect other people.”... If there are 1-2 students breaking the rules in the class, I will talk to them after the class.

Tanli also reflects on her own learning experience in China and emphasizes the importance of encouragement instead of punishment in education. She says:

When I studied dance in China, I heard very few praise words from the teachers. They often criticize the students: “How can you do this incorrectly? Why do you kick the left leg when other children kick the right feet?”... I think encouraging words are a good way to develop the student’s creativity.

From Tanli’s words, we learn that her negative study experience helps her realize the importance of encouragement in her pedagogical dialogue today. Van Manen (1991) says:

The teacher who relies on formal discipline tends to fail to be personally present for the youngsters he or she teaches. Such a teacher is experienced by the students as a mere “instructor,” a taskmaster—someone who may have excellent knowledge of the subject matter and who may teach this subject matter with praiseworthy clarity and effective and efficient procedures. But the teacher who needs the discipline of fear (like certain animal trainers) is a mere instructor of subject matter, not an educator of children. (p. 200)

So rather than make students fearful, the teachers use the rules or discipline to create a good study environment. The Chinese teachers attempt to adjust the different rules from Chinese and American pedagogies to create a helpful learning environment for their students. They are on the way to pedagogical dialogue.

In this chapter, I attempt to make meanings of how Chinese teachers re-splice the split knots due to the emptiness of the in-between space, and what they do to seek the support of parents and administrators, develop their own appropriate texts, and improve their pedagogical dialogue with their students in HCS—an in-between space. As a closure, I have written a poem following Li’s (2002) format:

To teach Chinese in the Hope, they dream,
 To dream, they reflect,
 To reflect, they explore the past and present,
 To explore, they improve the dialogue,
 To improve the dialogue, they come to understand,
 To understand, they live in-between,
 To live, they teach Chinese in the Hope....

In the next chapter, I address the broader meanings discovered in pursuit of my study’s question: what is the meaning of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools?

I also describe my personal journey of writing this phenomenological process, provide pedagogical recommendations, and suggest further research directions for continued study of the American Chinese School experience.

CHAPTER SIX:

MOUNTAINS ARE MOUNTAINS AGAIN: A RE-CALLING TO TEACH CHINESE “SO FAR SO GOOD”

Zen Master Qingyuan-weixin in the Song Dynasty (960 A.D. —1279 A. D.) is known for this transformative statement regarding his study of Zen²¹:

Before I started studying Zen, mountains were mountains and rivers were rivers; while I was studying Zen, mountains were no longer mountains and rivers were no long rivers; after I attained Enlightenment, mountains were mountains again and rivers were rivers again. (as cited in Nakov, 2008, p. 44)

This description divides the learning of Zen into three phases. The first phase is “见山是山, 见水是水 (Mountains are mountains, rivers (or water) are rivers (or water)).” “见” means to see, to observe using the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. Mountains and water represent nature and all kinds of things in the physical world. So with this phase, people start to touch something, somebody or some place, but do not explore these things deeply yet. Their understandings are simple and superficial. People often see the surface of a phenomenon. When Chinese teachers, including me, started to teach Chinese in American Chinese Schools, we landed in a new in-between space and encountered the differences between Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies immediately. We saw that “differences are differences, sameness is sameness.”

After studying Zen, Master Qingyuan-weixin entered the second phase of Zen: “见山不是山, 见水不是水 (Mountains are not mountains, rivers are not rivers).” “不是 (Not be)” is the opposite of “是 (be).” What does the opposite mean? It means suspicion and criticism. With this phase, people cannot help questioning the world when they know it more deeply after studying it. The world becomes complicated rather than simple for

²¹ This description comes from *Baidu to Know*; the link is <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/5546798.html>.

them. However, “not be” does not have negative a meaning; Rather, It means exploring the essence and wholeness of things through questioning and thinking, so people may see the world from a deep and comprehensive, but subjective perspective. Through teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools, Chinese teachers come to know both Chinese and American pedagogies and cultures gradually. We start to question: Does our past Chinese way fit in with our current teaching? Can the American way help us solve the conflicts that we encounter while teaching Chinese in the United States? With reflection and questioning, we adjust our way of teaching, attempt to seek the Tao of teaching in-between, and bridge the gap/differences between the two different pedagogies and cultures. We see that “differences are not differences, sameness is not sameness.”

When Master Qingyuan-weixin attained Enlightenment, he entered the third phase of Zen: “Mountains are mountains again and rivers are rivers again.” It is an ideal phase of Zen. In this phase, 还是 (again) means that mountains and water are not the mountains and water in the first phase. People go back neither to the simple and superficial level, nor to the suspicious and critical level in the second phase. They see the essence of things beyond the simple or complicated understandings. For them, things go back to themselves. It is an ideal level we seek to attain through our teaching or research.

At the beginning of my dissertation, I quoted an expression from one of my friends: “So far so good” and questioned whether or not my teaching Chinese in an American Chinese School could really be “So far so good.” “So far” means at or to a considerable distance in space (wandered far from home) (*Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*). The distance means difference. “So far so good” means that I feel good in my teaching or study place so far from home (in difference). I experience dwelling in this

place so far. It is the ideal phase of teaching Chinese in a place outside of home. After encountering and experiencing the in-between of two different pedagogies and cultures, Chinese teachers expect to attain the level of teaching Chinese “So far so good.” And I expect to finish my dissertation study “so far so good” as well. Finally, can we see that “differences are differences again, sameness is sameness again?” This chapter addresses the pedagogical insights from this study that might be used to help prepare Chinese teachers for teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools, and the transformations brought forward in this endeavor. “So far so good” might be transformed into a different pedagogical understanding.

Landing-Bridging-Dwelling

Teacher Z, a former math teacher in China, taught Chinese to my son Luke in his first and second grade in HCS. Although she did not participate in my dissertation study, we shared many experiences and ideas about teaching Chinese together since we met each other every Sunday. Unfortunately, one year ago, she got sick and had to quit her teaching in HCS. The principal and parents were worried about finding another experienced teacher within a short time. When I talked to her about it, she replied:

Why did they not give the chance to the new teachers? When I came to the US, I didn't know what I could do. I had to thank HCS, which gave me the chance to start my teaching again. When I had enough experience teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools, I found a full-time Chinese teacher position in a private school. So the Chinese school should provide more chances to the new teachers.

Teacher Z's reply reminds me of a question I hadn't asked yet: What is the purpose of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools for the teachers themselves? We had held a lot of discussions on the purposes for students in American Chinese Schools, such as learning about the Chinese culture, applying Chinese language, etc. However, we had

neglected to ask what the teachers might learn through their teaching in American Chinese schools yet we arrived there as their experiences showed such insight. Is the Chinese school their first landing place to start their teaching career? Does teaching in Chinese schools give Chinese teachers the first lessons about how to bridge the gap/differences between the two different cultures and pedagogies? Is the Chinese school a place to help them bridge the gap/differences between their personal lives and teaching lives? What is the goal of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools? Is it possible for teachers to feel dwelling when teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools?

Beginners' Landing

Throughout my dissertation, I have written about landing. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, landing is an act or process of one that lands; or a going or bringing to a surface (as land or shore) after a voyage or flight. To land means to set or put on shore from a ship, to set down after conveying, to cause to reach or come to rest in a particular place, to catch and bring in (as a fish). So landing means an act or process of setting down in a particular place after transition. When people land, they are going to or bringing in something to a surface. They are at the first phase of understanding this new place. When we start to teach Chinese in American Chinese schools, we are landing on the surface of the phenomenon. We see the different school buildings and classroom settings, hear the different languages, and sense the different interactions among students, parents and teachers. We are shocked by the differences between American and Chinese cultures and pedagogies.

However, each Chinese teacher experiences a different landing. When I began to teach Chinese at HCS, I felt excited and safe because I saw the same faces, spoke the

same language, and taught the same subject matter with which I was familiar. But I also felt frustrated because I saw the different responses from the students, who spoke a different language from me even in the class. My landing reminded me that I taught my home language in a non-home place. When Lihong shared her first experience of teaching Chinese in an American Chinese school, she says:

At the first class I taught Chinese in HCS, when I asked the students to line up, nobody followed my words. I repeated my order again, but no students did it yet. The children just stood on the original spot and looked puzzled. Later I realized that they didn't understand my words about the orientation.

At her first class in HCS, Lihong realized that teachers and students might misunderstand one another in their use of language. The students did not understand the basic Chinese words about place orientations, such as 东 east, 西 west, 北 north and 南 south. In addition, Lihong came from Beijing. She was used to giving directions as follows: go east or west, rather than go left or right. So the children did not understand her, even though they knew the words. It was a cultural misunderstanding.

When we begin to teach Chinese in American Chinese schools, we land in-between two different languages and cultures—a third space, as Aoki (1999) says. “It is a space of doubling, where we slip into the language of ‘both this and that, but neither this nor that’ . . .” (p. 181). Landing brings us to the surface of the third space. By standing on the land, we find the sameness and encounter the difference as well.

Landing also means an act or process of setting down. Where do teachers want to land? Among the Chinese teachers in American Chinese schools, there are professionals (full-time Chinese teachers), semi-professionals (part-time but experienced Chinese teachers), and novices (inexperienced Chinese teachers). Teaching Chinese may have a different meaning for the different groups, such as a career, a dream to fulfill, a job, a

feeling of being at home, a way to participate in a community, something new to try, etc. Every teacher has his or her own destination—a place to settle down, so he or she has a different experience of landing. In the first place, the reason Wenhua teaches Chinese in American Chinese Schools is that she needs money. However, during her process of landing, she changes her mind. She wants to find her career. So she begins to pursue her degree in education and keeps increasing her experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools. Finally, she becomes a full-time teacher in a public Chinese immersion program. Xuyun's experience of landing is different from that of Wenhua. From the beginning, Xuyun just wants to settle down as an amateur of teaching Chinese. During her landing, she enjoys teaching and appreciates the pedagogical experience.

Each Chinese teacher has been a beginner, landing on the surface of the third space. Hongyu Wang (2002) says:

Leaving home, beyond the limit, crossing the river, the self lands on a new shore carrying home with her. Only through her efforts to reach out can the deep connection within be touched, felt, and transformed in a third space. (p. 129)

Chinese teachers leave teaching in China and land in a new experience of teaching Chinese in the United States. After their beginners' landing, they have to reach out for the connection to cross the river and go beyond difference and sameness through great effort. I call this effort bridging.

We Are Bridging

In my dissertation, I have written about the meaning of bridge as a noun, meaning a structure crossing over the earth or water. It is the bridge that locates the two banks, which exist across from each other. As Heidegger (1993f) says:

The bridge gathers to itself in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals.... The bridge is a thing; it gathers the fourfold, but in such a way that it allows a site

for the fourfold.... The bridge is a locale. As such thing, it allows a space into which earth and sky divinities and mortals are admitted. (pp. 355-357)

So, bridge is a metaphor of gathering things and locating sites. Then, what is the meaning of bridge as a verb? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, bridge means to make a bridge over or across, to join by a bridge, to provide with a bridge. Therefore, bridge (verb) means gathering things, going across, and locating sites for gathering.

Teaching Chinese in a foreign land is an act of bridging. It gathers Chinese and English languages and Chinese-born and American-born people. Moreover, teaching Chinese in a foreign land locates the two banks of the bridge through encountering cultural and pedagogical differences. The differences push Chinese teachers to go across to know each bank and even connect the two banks through understanding, adjusting, and changing. Therefore, Chinese teachers are not only landing in-between differences but also bridging differences through teaching in American Chinese schools. Many teaching stories in chapters two, four, and five have revealed this to be the case. We are trying to understand, question, reflect, criticize, and adjust our teaching. We are in the second phrase of Zen—trying to seek the Tao of teaching. Bridging, beyond landing, helps us see difference differently.

Additionally in relation to bridging, Heidegger (1993f) says: “Building puts up locales that make space and a site for the fourfold...” (p. 360). The verb bridge also means building a bridge. We see the special meaning of build that Heidegger has in mind:

To preserve the fourfold, to save the earth, to receive the sky, to await the divinities, to initiate mortals—this fourfold preserving is the simple essence of dwelling. In this way, then, do genuine buildings give form to dwelling in its essence, and house this essential unfolding. (p. 360)

Building thus characterized is a distinctive letting-dwell.... The essence of building is letting dwell. Building accomplishes its essential process in the raising of locales by the joining of their spaces.... (pp. 360-361)

Building for Heidegger means letting-dwell. When people build a bridge, they are raising the bridge in a located site, which gathers spaces and things. These spaces and things, such as the earth, sky, divinities and mortals, are preserved in the bridge. A bridge becomes a dwelling place. Building a bridge becomes a process of letting-dwell as Aoki (2005k) says: "Any true bridge...is a clearing—a site—into which earth, sky, mortal, and divinities are admitted. Indeed, it is a dwelling place..." (p. 438).

Heidegger (1993f) says: "Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build" (p. 361). Building a bridge is a process of letting-dwell; it is a way to dwell. Without dwelling, building cannot be completed. As Chinese teachers in American Chinese schools, we are capable of dwelling and building if we let ourselves bring together different cultures and pedagogies so that we can teach Chinese "So far so good." What is the meaning of such dwelling? Can we really dwell in a foreign land? What does such dwelling look like?

Can We Dwell?

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of dwell is from the Old English *dwellan* to go astray, hinder; akin to the Old High German *twellen* to tarry. It means to remain for a time, to live as a resident. Heidegger says:

Dwelling, however, is the basic character of Being, in keeping with which mortals exist.... (pp. 360-361)

When we are hindered by something in the world, we remain in or stay in a place to understand what keeps us back. When we remain, we live the questions of being in the world. To dwell means living in a place that allows a fresh look from our engagement.

When Chinese teachers are hindered by something in American Chinese schools, they remain teaching as long as they are so called. We are living our teaching, and teaching Chinese becomes a way of our being-in-the-world. We dwell as we remain teachers in American Chinese schools, seeking to dwell meaningfully in this foreign land. However, each Chinese teacher has a different experience and expectation of dwelling. So what do our experiences of dwelling look like? Where do we expect to dwell?

Homecoming or homesteading. To dwell is to be be-in-the-world. To dwell, we have to be set down in a place. There are two different ends of journeys during the process of building bridges: the new bank or the beginning bank. Based on the two ends, I call the two journeys “homecoming” or “homesteading.” In Chapter One, I cited Casey’s (1993) words to define homecoming and homesteading, where he says:

Ends of journeys fall into two extreme exemplars: homesteading and homecoming. In homesteading, I journey to a new place that will become my future home-place. The homesteading place is typically unknown to me, or known only from accounts given by others who have preceded me. But I am determined to settle down for the long term in the novel place...In homecoming, the duration of this alliance is no longer of major importance. What matters most now is the fact of return to the same place. (p. 290)

When we dwell in a new and unknown place, we are home “steading.” When we dwell in the same beginning-place, we are home “coming.”

American Chinese schools are unique educational cultures in the United States. They were established by first-generation Chinese immigrants for the purpose of preserving their American-born children’s interest in Chinese culture and language, as well as improving their capabilities to read and write Chinese. When we teach Chinese here, we often feel like we are going back home, to a familiar place, a big family, or community. American Chinese schools are the beginning place for most Chinese teachers

who want to teach Chinese in the United States. We can call them “娘家” (niang-jia). 娘 means mother. 家 means home. So 娘家 means mother’s home. In China, “娘家” (niang-jia) is a very special place for daughters who get married. It is an “eternal home” in their minds. Each year, on spring festival day, or other important dates, daughters bring their husbands and children back to “娘家” (niang-jia) to celebrate. Sometimes, when they experience disagreements with their husbands, many women may go back to “娘家” (niang-jia) for help. Mother’s home is their shelter, a safe place where they can complain, rest, and find peace.

Through teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools, some Chinese teachers find their careers and become professional teachers, such as Teacher Z, in public or private American schools. Moli also mentions that she wants to become a full-time Chinese teacher if possible. Once, I received an email from one of my friends who wanted to find a Chinese teacher for an afterschool program in a public school. When I talked about this teaching position with Moli, she was very much interested in it. She said:

I am glad to have a chance to teach Chinese in American schools. If it is possible, I am willing to quit my current job.

Liufang shares with me her career plans as well. She says:

In one or two years, I will quit my current job in the lab. I would like to establish a daycare or preschool, and become a professional educator.

Besides teaching in American Chinese schools, some Chinese teachers would like to extend their careers of teaching to other forms of American schools. They want to dwell in a new place. They are “homesteading.” For other Chinese teachers who enjoy teaching in American schools as amateurs, like Xuyun, they dwell in their beginning place. They experience “homecoming.” Or like me, I have returned to teach Chinese in HCS after

leaving it for three years. I am coming back to my “mother’s home,” which is a homecoming.

Whether “homecoming” or “homesteading,” these Chinese teachers remain teaching Chinese in the United States and dwell fully in this place. American Chinese schools are always their “娘家” (niang-jia), the mother’s home. Even for the Chinese teachers who leave teaching Chinese in the United States, American Chinese schools still may be their “home”—a familiar place to see the similar faces, speak the same language, and share common experiences.

Dwelling as lingering in a third space. Building a bridge is letting-dwell. When we teach Chinese in the United States, we encounter difference and conflict between Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies. Actually, we live in “an ambivalent space of both this and that, of both East and West” (Aoki, 2005e, p. 319). We call the ambivalent space of “Chinese and American” the third space. To teach “So far so good,” we experience dwelling in a third space.

Aoki (2005h) expresses his understanding of dwelling poetically:

What does it mean to dwell poetically? To dwell poetically is to be in the dwelling place of mortals where one may hear the inspirited beat of earth’s measure. So inspired, in the sounding forth, may echoes of geo-metron sound and resound. (p. 375)

To dwell, we have to be be-in-the-place and listen to it with our heart. To dwell in the third space, wherein we teach native language in a non-native place, we have to listen to the difference or sameness in-between the native and non-native languages and cultures. We dwell in the midst of “interculturalism.” According to Aoki (2005i),

Now I slide away from the crossing, and sink into the lived space of between—in the midst of many cultures, into the inter of interculturalism. In-dwelling here is a dwelling in the midst of differences, often trying and difficult. It is a place alive

with tension. In dwelling here, the quest is not so much to rid ourselves of tension... but more so to seek appropriately attuned tension, such that the sound of the tensioned string resounds well. (p. 382)

Dwelling in the midst of two different cultures and pedagogies brings a lot of difficulties and tension. To dwell, we have to relieve our tension at an appropriate level, seek peace in such resolve, and make the attuned string resound well. For us, the Chinese teachers, dwelling means teaching Chinese “So far so good” in American Chinese schools.

In addition, Chinese teachers are bridge-building when teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools. Therefore, Chinese teachers are engaged in bridging to let themselves dwell on the bridge. The bridges they are building encourage them to linger on it. Aoki (2005e) says:

On this bridge, we are in no hurry to cross over; in fact, such bridges lure us to linger. This, in my view, is a Heideggerean bridge, a site or clearing in which earth, sky, mortals, and divine, in their longing to be together, belong together. (p. 316)

Based on *Dictionary.com*, linger means to remain or stay in a place longer than is usual or expected, to remain alive; continue or persist, to dwell in contemplation, thought, or enjoyment, to walk slowly; saunter along. So linger means to stay on, or walk slowly in a place with thought and contemplation. Heidegger (1993f) says: “Building and thinking are, each in its own way, inescapable for dwelling” (p. 362). To dwell, we have to linger as in Heidegger’s bridge, wherein, the difference and sameness belong together, as well as our struggles, reflections, and changes.

Standing on the bridge, we want to cross over it, but we are in no hurry. When we linger and think of it, we are crossing over it. As Chinese people teaching Chinese in America, we are lingering on the in-between bridges all the time. Concurrently, without

crossing over the bridge physically, we are crossing over differences that exist in-between. We are dwelling as lingering in a third space.

Therefore, we can dwell as Chinese teachers in the United States as we think of what and how to teach, reflect on our prior teaching experiences, recognize differences and conflicts we encounter, think of the Tao of teaching in-between and how to adjust our way of teaching based on it; and consider how to teach Chinese "So far so good" in the future. Thinking and building belong together. When we think of teaching, we are bridging.

Landing, bridging and dwelling express the general experiences of Chinese teachers teaching in American Chinese Schools. However, what are the significant meanings of these experiences? What is the real picture under the surface of this phenomenon? To explore the essence and wholeness of things beyond the surface, I chose the phenomenological inquiry to help me question and study the lived experiences of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools as entering the second phase of "Zen."

My Journey in the Mountains

There are mountains hidden in treasures. There are mountains hidden in swamps. There are mountains hidden in the sky. There are mountains hidden in mountains. There are mountains hidden in hiddenness. This is complete understanding. An ancient Buddha said, "Mountains are mountains, waters are waters." These words do not mean mountains are mountains; they mean mountains are mountains. Therefore investigate mountains thoroughly. When you investigate mountains thoroughly, this is the work of the mountains. Such mountains and waters of themselves become wise persons and sages.

(*Mountains and Waters Sutra* by Eihei Dogen Zenji, translated by Arnold Kotler and Kazuaki Tanahashi)²²

²² Coming from a Buddhism web site: <http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/C%20-%20Zen/Ancestors/Dogen/The%20Mountains%20%20and%20Waters%20Sutra/Mountains%20and%20Waters%20Sutra.htm>.

Mountains are full of secrets and treasures. There are a lot of beautiful views and cherished memories hidden in mountains. To investigate mountains, we investigate things in mountains. To search things in mountains, we have to enter the mountains and live in them. However, after lingering in the mountains, we may be lost in them. Only when we climb up the mountains and look back again after investigating, may we know the mountains thoroughly. When I started to study phenomenology, I was entering a phenomenological mountain. I was eager to know everything in it, but I often felt lost in it. Can I walk away from the mountain and know its real picture again? What is the first picture of a phenomenological mountain? What do I look for in this mountain? What do I feel when I am lost in it? What can I do to walk away from the mountain, from the lost way?

进山：Entering the Phenomenological Mountain

It has been many years, but I can still remember my special feelings on my first day attending the “Phenomenological Inquiry” class. As a foreign student, I am always concerned about whether I can understand what others say and whether I can make myself understood since I am not a native speaker of the English language. I often tend to feel nervous and uncomfortable in a seminar class. However, after the first lesson of “Phenomenological Inquiry I,” I felt relaxed and joyful.

Dr. Hultgren started her lesson with one of her life stories. Then the classmates began to share their life experiences as well. At that moment, I forgot my concern about whether I could understand them. I was just listening and feeling. In my *Written Reflection on the First Class*, I wrote:

My heart was full of joy, and my mind was relaxed. I knew I didn't understand every word they said. However, I believed I understood the meanings of their words and their stories. Isn't it amazing?

Many of the class members had just met one another in this first hour of class. I was so impressed that people would share their life experiences so openly and honestly. For me, an Eastern person, I was used to hiding my true feelings and expressing a polite but distant attitude to people at first meeting. But inspired by others, I could not help telling my own stories and feelings as well. Sharing lived experiences during this first class initiated my communication with myself as well as class members. I started to rethink my past and future life.

Before I took "Phenomenological Inquiry I," my life experience looked like a combination of some different numbers (time) and letters (place), and the degrees I had achieved. However, when I re-thought my life experience in the "Phenomenological Inquiry" class, I found these numbers and letters to come alive with more meaning. They revealed to me and others the stories of my growth and changes on my life road. Time and place had made lived memories on my mind. My childhood, school life, college life, and international student life shaped my current personality and beliefs. Not only do the degrees mean the outcomes but also the process and experience of my study life. Each change of time and place brought about different life experiences and transitions. Even the yesterday-I is different from the present-I.

What I learned and experienced in the "Phenomenological Inquiry I" class inspired me to begin my climbing of the phenomenological mountain. In the "Phenomenological Inquiry II" class, I turned my eyes to the phenomenon of "teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools," since it was my only pedagogical practice in the

United States. The lived experiences of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools for me calls forth what I have learned about pedagogical theory and practice in both China and America, and what I have experienced about encountering differences, feeling frustrated and lost, struggling, studying, adjusting, changing and being joyful. After turning to the phenomenon of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools, I entered the phenomenological mountain formally.

游山： Lingering in Mountains

After starting my phenomenological study of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools, I lived in a world with many dimensions, such as time (past, present, and future), and place (east and west). To figure out these dimensions, I reflected on my teaching self before and after coming to the United States and studied the differences between eastern and western cultures and pedagogies. During this stage, I lingered alone to find the views and directions in the mountain.

After lingering alone in the phenomenon by studying my own lived experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools, I invited other Chinese teachers to participate in my phenomenological study. They joined me in my lingering, and together we sought the Tao of teaching Chinese in a third space. Their teaching stories provided me richer and deeper perspectives of the phenomenon and helped me make significant meanings of the themes. Other Chinese teachers and I lingered together to seek the views and directions in the mountain. They showed me hidden paths I didn't find, beautiful views I didn't see, and secret treasures I didn't have. Other Chinese teachers' lived experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools helped me to see many new things. However, can I see the wholeness of a mountain through lingering in it?

Su Tung-P'o (1037 A.D. -1101 A. D.) is one of the most famous poets in Chinese history who has written about the experience of the mountain. Lu-shan is a famous mountain Southeast of China. The West Forest Temple is located in the northern side of Lu-shan. After observing the view from the southern side of Lu-shan, followed by the view from the north, he was inspired to write this famous poem: “題西林寺壁” (Written on the Wall at the West Forest Temple).

横看成岭侧成峰，
远近高低各不同。
不识庐山真面目，
只缘身在此山中。

From the side, a whole range; from the end, a single peak;
Far, near, high, low, no two parts alike.
Why can't I tell the true shape of Lu-shan?
Because I myself am in the mountain.
(Translated by Burton Watson, 1965, p. 108)

This poem indicates that people see different views from different sides, but they cannot see the whole picture and true shape of a thing because they are within it. I have discovered many meanings and significant themes through listening to and understanding other Chinese teachers' and my own teaching experiences. However, where am I within the mountain? Where am I going? Am I sure that the view I am watching is the real shape of the mountain? What am I looking for lingering in the mountain? How can I view its whole picture and true shape? The following section reveals where I stand with those questions.

出山： Going Out of the Mountain

At the third stage of Zen, people see the essence of things beyond the simple or complicated realms of meanings. Things go back to themselves. If we want to see the real

shape of the mountain, we have to see its essence beyond the views from any particular side. We see it as a mountain, not as the views from different sides. So we have to “出山,” which means leave the mountain.

The literal meaning of “出山” is going out of the mountain. However, in Chinese, “出” indicates many other meanings, such as to get out 出去, to go back to the world 出世, to graduate 出师, to be outstanding 出色, to go beyond 出类, etc. 山 means mountain. So 出山 may also indicate a variety of meanings, such as to go beyond the mountain, to graduate from the mountain, to go back to the mountain, etc. Therefore, to view the real picture of the phenomenon of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools, I have to leave the mountain and go back again. To go back, I begin to see the stories in new ways, and uncover insights from the larger picture of the themes together. To teach Chinese in American Chinese schools and experience “so far so good,” I revisit the essence of the phenomenon revealed and provide pedagogical recommendations that will help other Chinese teachers teach in American Chinese Schools. These insights are drawn from experiencing enlightenment in the third phase of “Zen.”

Drawing the Stable “Knot:” Pedagogical Recommendations

According to Niu (1989), the original meaning of the word “knot” is to take two pieces of rope and tie them together. Why do the ancient Chinese people make the knot? He writes:

It is said that at the time when the Yellow Emperor regulated clothing there was no such thing as buttons. One had to tie a belt around one’s clothes to keep them secure. (p. 6)

Therefore, the original purpose of making a knot is to secure something or somebody. When two ropes representing Chinese and American cultures and pedagogies meet,

Chinese teachers experience splicing, splitting, and re-splicing to make the stable “knot.” The stable knot indicates not only a successful pedagogical experience, but also a secure feeling of living in-between two different cultures and pedagogies. To draw a stable “knot,” Li (2002) writes:

We controlled when we were seeking autonomy;
we risked when we were striving for attachment... (p. 95)

It is not easy to provide the appropriate pedagogical recommendations to help Chinese teachers feel secure and experience “So far so good” teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools. I have to control and take risks to seek the new pedagogical “Tao.”

“抛砖引玉” is a story coming from the Tang Dynasty (618 A.D. —907 A. D.). It is said that poet Chang Jian heard that famous poet Zhao Gu would visit “Lin-yan Temple” in Suzhou. To invite Zhao Gu to write a poem, Chang Jian posted two lines of his own poem on the wall of the temple. When Zhao Gu saw them, he could not help but write some of his own lines and finish the poem. And his writing was much better. Later, people called this behavior “抛砖引玉,” which means to throw a brick to attract jade. It becomes a metaphor for how one invites the poetic by offering some rough ideas first, in order to arouse other people's better or more mature ideas to complete the poetic endeavor²³. Now, I would like to “抛砖引玉”—post some of my pedagogical recommendations based on my study, to invite other ideas from teachers or scholars, all in the interest of helping Chinese teachers to make a stable knot—to feel confident and secure, experience the successful pedagogical practice, and teach Chinese “So far so good.”

²³ From Babylon Chinese/English Dictionary. The Link is <http://www.babylon.com>.

Building a Community

When the group conversation was over, Liufang sighed and said: “It is so great to meet other Chinese teachers and have good conversations with each other. Can we do it more?” We all nodded. We were eager to have a group to share our joyful as well as frustrating teaching experiences, and to give or receive care and ideas from one another. We wanted to build a community, a place where people could interact with one another. The word community is derived from the Latin *communitas* (meaning the same), which is in turn derived from *communis*, which means “common, public, shared by all or many”²⁴. *Communis* comes from a combination of the Latin prefix com- (which means “together”) and the word *munis* (which has to do with the exchange of services), probably originally derived from the Etruscan and *munis-* (meaning “to endow”, or “to have the charge of”)²⁵. Therefore, community means that people share common things together, exchange opinions, and endow meaning with one another. In a community, people contribute and learn from one another.

In the past three years, I have participated in quite a number of conferences on Chinese teaching, such as the Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA) annual conference, the Chinese Language Teachers Association—National Capital Region (CLTA—NCR) annual conference, the Hope Chinese School Chinese teachers conference, etc. At these national or local conferences, I listen to the others’ sharing of teaching experiences or pedagogical research. It is very helpful to learn from others’ presentations. However, I always felt I was missing something at these conferences, until I figured out the importance and meaning of community. Something that was missed in

²⁴ Harper, D. 2001, *Online Etymology Dictionary*.

²⁵ Etruscan Etymological Glossary.

these presentations was the personal exchange and endowment with emotion. In our group conversations for the study, not only did we share our knowledge, but also our feelings and emotions. We shared our lives in and beyond our teaching experiences. Therefore, even though we often either volunteered to participate in conferences or attended them to meet specific requirements, we still looked forward to meeting one another as friends and sharing experiences without any burden, as we have done in the group conversations. “Can we do it more?” We would like to build a real community to share lives and support one another emotionally.

To build a community, we have to be 志同道合. 志 means interest, 同 means same, 道 means the path, approach, 合 means identical. 志同道合 means to cherish the same ideas, and follow the same path. First, we have to have a group of people who share the similar ideas and interests of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools. Through regular group conversations, we can share the ideas, opinions, and all kinds of teaching experiences. We talk, listen, understand and help each other. We become friends beyond being participants. Through class observations at least once a year, we can know each other’s teaching more fully. We share authentic perspectives beyond evaluations. Through Facebook or other email-list servers, we can build a virtual community online. Chinese teachers can post questions, provide answers, share experiences and news without facing each other in person. Wherever we live and teach, we can communicate and learn from each other. A community is a place wherein people share things, exchange opinions, and contribute to one another’s personal and professional lives. Living in this community, Chinese teachers will learn a lot

pedagogical practices from one another and improve their teaching in American Chinese Schools.

Do We Need a Certificate?

In 2009, the University of Maryland established the Center for Chinese Language Teacher Certification and Development (CCLTCD) to prepare certified Chinese teachers for all kinds of schools from K to 12. Some of my colleagues in HCS asked me about the news. Even though some of them have a different full-time job besides teaching, I thought they may be interested in the program. So I tried to provide as much information as I could. However, nobody followed up. I was curious and asked them why. Besides the tuition and the issue of time, they asked me: “Do we need a certificate to teach Chinese in Sunday Chinese school?” This question prods me to think of the significant differences between teaching Chinese in Chinese heritage schools and American public or private schools.

At HCS, students are usually second-generation American-born Chinese children. They are born in a Chinese-speaking family even though they live in the United States. They come to a Chinese heritage school because they are expected to study the Chinese language and culture transmitted from the Chinese ancestors by their parents, the first-generation Chinese immigrants. In the classes, the students can talk to you in Chinese most of the time. So, when Chinese teachers teach in Chinese heritage schools, the familiar faces and language often cause them to feel as if they were teaching in China. The homecoming feeling is sweet. However, it may also lead Chinese teachers to be attached to the familiar, but conservative Chinese teaching way. Actually, many Chinese teachers are still used to standing in front of all students, who are seated at their desks

quietly, and to teaching their lesson as if they were lecturing. Some teachers, such as Teacher Ding, a senior 3rd grade Chinese teacher, even think that teaching Chinese should be kept in the traditional Chinese way. She says: “The students have to ‘安 (An) sit and 静 (Jing) listen.’” It means that the students have to sit upright, look at and listen to the teachers quietly in the class as I shared in Chapter Two.

However, teaching Chinese in American public or private schools means a different language and cultural environment. Three years ago, when I invited Chinese teachers to participate in my dissertation study, I called Teacher T. I had heard her name a number of times from other Chinese teachers, so I thought she would be a very experienced Chinese teacher at HCS. But her response surprised me. She said:

I am sorry I can't help you because I do not have the experience of teaching Chinese in Chinese school. I teach Chinese in a private high school. But I teach English Reading lesson in Chinese school.

Teacher T. realized the difference between teaching Chinese in Chinese heritage schools and American schools. So she rejected my invitation. It is true that she could not help me since she had no experience teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools. However, at that time, I did not realize the difference and felt uncomfortable with her rejection until the day I got the opportunity to teach a Chinese lesson in a private high school as a trial. When I look at the different faces and become concerned about whether they can understand what I say in Chinese, I realize the difference clearly. The different faces and language environments challenge our familiar way of teaching. We are not supposed to keep the traditional Chinese teaching way anymore. On the contrary, we have to learn a new way of teaching that fits with the new environment and change.

Therefore, the experiences of teaching Chinese in Chinese heritage schools and public or private schools are different. This study can shed some light on the preparation of Chinese teachers for public or private schools. But the question remains, do we need any special training and preparation teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools?

Last January, at the beginning of the spring semester in 2009, Teacher Z, my son Luke's 2nd grade Chinese teacher in HCS was very sick, so she had to quit her teaching. In a short time, the school found a new substitute for her. Teacher J. taught middle school in China, but she did not have any teaching experience in the United States yet. After several weeks, one day Luke came to talk to me. He said: "I do not want to go to Chinese school again. It is so boring." This was the first time that Luke showed disinterest in a Chinese lesson. I was shocked and wanted to find out the reason. So I observed Teacher J.'s lesson with her permission. Actually, she worked very hard to teach the lesson. However, her teaching reflected the traditional Chinese way. It seemed that she taught regular Chinese children in China. But Luke and his classmates were not Chinese children in China. They were American children. Even though they looked like Chinese and could speak Chinese, they were still American children who went to an American school every day. Therefore, we do need change. We need to study new pedagogy, find out new teaching ways to fit with American pedagogies in the public school.

Several years ago, George Mason University offered a Chinese Language Licensure Program to prepare prospective Chinese teachers in schools that serve preschool through grade twelve in North Virginia. At the CLTA—NCR annual conference last November, I met some graduate students from that program. They told me that some of them taught Chinese in public schools as student teachers, and some of

them kept teaching in Chinese schools on weekends. The systematic training does matter to help Chinese teachers improve the quality of teaching in American Chinese schools.

Yes, we do need a certificate if it is possible.

In addition, as Chinese teachers in heritage Chinese schools, we do have a different pedagogical environment from that of other public or private schools, so we may need different pedagogical training. Therefore, the courses designed for the certificate of teaching Chinese have to consider the special needs of Chinese teachers teaching in American Chinese schools as well, such as understanding the different pedagogies in the United States and China, the strategies of balancing differences, psychological adjustment, and so on.

Moreover, with the popularity of learning Chinese globally, more and more universities in China offer the Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL) program, which prepare many Chinese teachers to teach foreign people living in China or other countries Chinese. Since most of the Chinese teachers in American Chinese Schools come to the United States after graduating from Normal colleges, is it possible for Chinese universities to provide courses in TCSL to prepare Chinese teachers for teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools? Such courses may provide information and knowledge about the different cultures and pedagogies, and help the student teachers to understand cross-culture classroom environments, purposes and curriculum of teaching Chinese in overseas schools. However, TCSL programs are usually under the department of Chinese language, rather than colleges of education in Chinese universities. So it may be difficult for them to provide qualified pedagogical courses. Then, is it possible that TCSL programs cooperate with teacher education programs in colleges of education so

that the qualified pedagogical courses may be offered for the potential Chinese teachers who may teach Chinese in overseas schools, such as American Chinese Schools? The question also arises as to whether or not Chinese pedagogies would have the understandings to teach American pedagogies. What bridging might be possible here?

Besides the academic training at a university level, there are also other training systems. When I landed in HCS as a novice teacher, I met Lihong. She became my mentor and helped my teaching a lot. She told me that it is different teaching Chinese in a foreign land, what the differences are, how to overcome the boundaries, and so on. For a newcomer to the United States and Chinese schools, it was wonderful to have somebody to share with me her understanding and experience. Every novice teacher could benefit from such mentorship. The question becomes, how to create that possibility in American Chinese Schools?

According to Huang and Lynch (1995), the term mentor originates in classic Greek mythology. They write:

Mentor, a wise teacher, was asked by his friend Odysseus to watch over his precious son, Telemachus, as he embarked on a lengthy voyage. As a surrogate parent, Mentor gave support, love, guidance, protection, and blessing to the young child until the return of his father. Thus, we have come to know mentors as those who gently guide and nurture the growth of others during various stages of their development. (p. xi)

Therefore, mentor means support, love, guidance, protection and blessing. As novice teachers to a foreign place, they need the mentor's support, guidance and caring to help them to understand differences, overcome the challenges, and become good teachers. Moreover, as a means of sharing wisdom and learning, mentoring benefits both the mentors and mentees. Huang and Lynch (1995) write:

Tao mentoring is a two-way circular dance that provides opportunities for us to experience both giving and receiving without limitations and fears Every relationship is invited to enter this exciting journey of mentoring with the Tao along the Watercourse Way (Tao Fa, in Chinese), water being the ever present Chinese image of flowing transformation. According to the Tao, the best relationships are like water; they benefit all things and do not compete with them. Water is a natural element that ultimately changes the shape of whatever it touches; Tao mentoring changes the lives of the people it touches in a satisfying, positive way. (p. xii)

Through mentoring other novices, the experienced teachers may change their lives in a satisfying and positive way. When they give support, guidance and caring to others, they will receive respect and appreciation, and learn from others' experiences as well. There is a poem in *Shu Ching*:

Those who seek mentoring, will rule the great expanse under heaven.
 Those who boast that they are greater than others, will fall short.
 Those who are willing to learn from others, become greater.
 Those who are ego-involved, will be humbled and made small.
 (Huang & Lynch, 1995, p. xi)

Thus, mentoring is a great way to help Chinese teachers to improve their teaching in a satisfying and positive way.

Moreover, the training sessions or conferences are useful resources as well. Two years ago, a scholar from the Confucius Institute of UMD provided an 8-session training lesson at HCS. When I walked into the classroom, I was impressed by the teacher's full attention and passion. Moli told me: "This is my first time to get the systematic training since I began teaching Chinese at HCS. It is a precious experience and benefits my teaching." Actually, most Chinese teachers are willing to change and teach Chinese "so far so good." Therefore, with a regular and systematic professional development program, the teachers will be helped to do their best teaching.

According to Hawley and Valli (2000), learner-centered professional development provides the effective learning opportunities for teachers. They say:

The content of professional development focuses on what students are to learn and how to address the different problems students may have in learning that material.... Professional development should be driven by analyses of the differences between (a) goals and standards for student learning and (b) student performance....Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving. (pp. 1-2)

Professional development for Chinese teachers in American Chinese Schools could help with what students are to learn in Chinese class and how to solve the problems students may have in their learning Chinese. The scholar who provided teacher training at HCS was a professor of teaching Chinese as a second language in a university in China. He had rich knowledge of Chinese language and a lot of experience teaching Chinese to adult people of other national origins. However, teaching students in American Chinese Schools does not present the same kind of pedagogical needs. Based on his syllabus, his focus reflects linguistic knowledge, such as how to use your tongue, how to pronounce a phoneme correctly. However, pronunciation is not a big problem for American-born Chinese students. In fact, one of biggest challenges students in American Chinese Schools may encounter is contextual understanding beyond spelling and grammar structure. Thus, it would be helpful if teachers would have the chance to learn how to improve students' reading and help them understand contextual meanings better. To provide an effective professional development program for Chinese teachers in American Chinese Schools, the training has to be leaner-centered.

Besides the inclusion of linguistic and pedagogical training courses, the professional development program should provide inter-culture training for Chinese

teachers in American Chinese Schools as well. One of my friends shared a story about her eight year old daughter. She said:

One day last year, my husband, daughter and I watched the Olympic Games on TV. It was a swim race. Both Chinese and American swimmers participated in the final. My husband and I cheered for the Chinese athlete loudly. Suddenly, my daughter cried out loudly. When we asked her why she cried, she told us that she wanted to cheer for the American team. I was totally shocked by her answer. This was the first time I realized that she identified herself as an American.

The girl's crying reflected the tensions she was experiencing around identity conflict.

Actually, many second-generation Chinese children in American Chinese Schools experience similar identity conflicts like her. During the weekday, the children go to American schools, talk in English, and play with other American children. However, on the weekend, the children go to Chinese schools, talk in Chinese, and play with other Chinese children. How do they identify themselves? A Chinese, an American, a Chinese American, or an American Chinese? If they can not deal with the cultural identity issues well, they may experience conflict, feel hurt and cry out like the girl in the story.

As a major source of Chinese culture, Chinese teachers in American Chinese Schools have to help students to understand the multi-cultural society in which they live and develop appropriate bi-culture identities. To achieve this goal, Chinese teachers could be helped to develop culturally relevant pedagogy through inter-culture training courses. To sum up, teachers, whether they have a certificate or not, do need the continuous professional development to help teach Chinese "So far so good."

Who Can Be the Principal?

When I had my conversations with Lihong, she once sighed and told me: "I heard from other people that the teaching quality of HCS is the worst." I was surprised and asked her why. She replied:

There are several kinds of Chinese schools locally. Hope Chinese School is established by the new immigrants from mainland China, and it is the biggest one. There are some other Chinese schools established by Taiwanese. They are all smaller than HCS. But their principals usually work full-time. And most of the teachers do not work full-time at weekday so that they have enough time to prepare for their teaching at weekend. Of course their teaching quality may be better than us.

After I heard her explanation, I had to admit that the administration may be a real hidden difficulty at HCS.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, principal indicates a person who has controlling authority or is in a leading position, one who engages another to act as an agent subject to general control and instruction, the person primarily or ultimately liable for, or a leading performer. Moreover, its etymology is from Anglo-French, from Latin *principalis*, from *princip-*, *princeps*. It means most important, consequential, or influential. Therefore, the principal has to engage other teachers in their position with instruction; he or she is the person whom other teachers rely on, and he or she may be a leading performer of teaching. Aoki (2005j) says:

The word principal was at one time understood as principal teacher—first or leading teacher. Principal was at one time an adjective. (p. 435)

The principal is one of the most important, consequential, or influential persons in a school. As a leading teacher, what does the principal have to do? What is the meaning of “leading” in education? Aoki (2005j) answers:

At the heart of education is pedagogy. Fortunately, both pedagogy and education speak to the meaning of leading; pedagogy means [“agogue” lead; “pedae” young children] leading the young. Education means [“ex” out; “ducere” lead] a leading out. Leading in education means, essentially, the leading of people from where they are now to new possibilities. To lead in such as way requires that the teacher follow the essentially true of what education is. (Leading and following is a dialectic.) The principal as leading teacher must be one who leads others to new possibilities by following the essentially true of what education is. (p. 436)

Therefore, the principal, as a leading teacher, has to know the essential truth of what education and pedagogy mean, and help others to develop their new possibilities.

At HCS, the principal is elected by the parents directly every two years. Even though this principal is passionate and diligent, he or she may not know that much about education. In the past 15 years, most principals at HCS have not had any teaching experience at all. How then, can they be the leading performers or relied on by the teachers? Can they understand and follow the essential truth of what education is? Can they be the first or leading teachers who lead other teachers to new possibilities? At an early stage of the school, it is understandable that it is hard to vote in an appropriate principal knowledgeable about pedagogy due to the very small parent-pool. However, now there are six campuses, more than 4,000 students, and more than 8,000 parents at HCS. Is it not possible to find a principal who may be knowledgeable about pedagogical theory or practice? In addition, for a big Sunday School like HCS, would it not be a good idea to hire a full-time professional as the principal to run the school? What requirements should a principal have in preparation for this responsibility?

Based on the definition and Aoki's understanding of principal as a leading teacher, the candidate has to be knowledgeable about pedagogy and education. It requires that the candidate has to have educational background in pedagogy or related educational theory. Moreover, as a first teacher who must lead other teachers to new possibilities, the candidate has to understand the experience of others. So the candidate has to have the experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools. At last, even though it is less desirable to regard principal as manager (Aoki, 2005j), we can not ignore the function of "to lead" and "to administer." Aoki (2005j) says:

The original meaning of administer was [“ad” to; “minister” serve] to serve. To serve others, “to be servants,” “to minister to the well-being of others” was the original meaning of administration. (p. 435)

So the candidate has to have experiences of serving others in the school. The candidate may or may not come from the parents. But he or she will work on all school chores to improve the teaching quality, such as developing curriculum and outlines, hiring and training the teachers, and so on. With the support of the professional and full-time principal, I believe that the Chinese teachers will take teaching more seriously, pay more attention to teaching, and improve their teaching quality even more.

Building a Home in the Classroom

Among the six campuses of HCS, five schools rent public high schools as their school facilities, and only the College Park campus rents a UMD building as the school place. In Chapter One, I have discussed the relationship between the renter schools and master schools. As the renter, we are not allowed to touch any resource or change any setting in the classroom. We are in awe with the school place. Actually, teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools makes us experience the “in-betweens” of places. To dwell in the “in-betweens,” a third space, we have to build a home, a temporary master classroom for the students and ourselves.

In her thesis “Looking for Home: A Phenomenological Study of Home in the Classroom,” Sinclaire (1992) writes:

The classroom, then, can be considered as “home” if it provides the atmosphere of the “protective neighbourhood,” the opportunity for building “trusted relationships,” experiencing “vocation” and developing “friendships.” The classroom certainly does not remain the completely unknown, and it can be the intimate and safe haven which develops the security for the child to open. (p. 32)

Therefore, to build a home in the classroom, teachers have to create a safe and intimate atmosphere, wherein the students may feel secure and free to open and explore the unknown world. For example, we can change the arrangement of desks and chairs to fit our teaching, make a “home” setting, and then change them back after the class. Only at home will people be confident and comfortable to teach and learn.

Beyond the physical setting, “home” can also be built by changing our own bodies and minds. Once I observed one of Tanli’s Chinese dance classes. Tanli and her students stood in the center of a school gym. It was an empty space without any setting. Actually, it was a free space for the teachers and students. At the beginning of class, Tanli stood in the front and students stood line by line. After saying “hello” to one another, she asked students to move their bodies freely and jump or walk around to warm themselves up. At first, I could still feel the tension in their bodies. Their movements were restrained. They were trying to explore a safe space carefully. After warming up, their bodies became relaxed gradually. They became familiar with the empty space, which became their temporary “home.” Finally, the teacher and students moved their bodies and ran through the gym without any restraint. When the class was almost over, I could not see any line or circle. Tanli stood on a spot surrounded by her students, and the students stood anywhere in the empty gym. Tanli created a free and familiar “home” for her students by leading them to explore their own bodies and spaces in the class. The experience of exploring bodies and minds may also happen in the regular Chinese classroom.

On a Sunday morning seven years ago, I went to the College Park campus of HCS as usual to teach a second grade Chinese lesson. However, the rented school building was

closed due to an emergency. When the principal and administrators were busy with their negotiation with the master—UMD staffers, all the teachers, students, and parents were waiting outside of the building. Facing worried students and parents, I wandered what we might do? Should we dismiss them or continue teaching? Where could we teach? Five minutes passed; ten minutes passed... there was no result yet. Looking at their worried faces, I made a decision. I asked all my students to follow me to an open but quiet lawn. Under the sun, sitting on the grass, I started my teaching. At first, we felt uncomfortable to take a lesson outdoors. I also felt a little nervous under the others' interested gaze. When we read, our voices were low and soft. However, gradually, we got used to the open space. Students began to read or talk loudly. With the beautiful sunshine and soft wind, our bodies became relaxed. We felt at "home," a nature place without any restraint and fear. We were free to enjoy teaching and learning.

Therefore, "home" can be anywhere. Even though we are the renter, and our bodies may be restrained, our hearts and minds are free. We can change the physical settings to build a familiar "home;" we can lead students to explore their bodies and minds to build a free "home;" we can provide the trusted and intimate atmosphere to build a safe "home" in the rented classrooms of American Chinese Schools. "Home" means being free to teach and learn. Through building a home in the classroom, Chinese teachers will enjoy teaching more and help students be more open to learn Chinese.

Developing Curriculum-as-Lived

Last September, I was invited to participate in a meeting to discuss how to develop our own textbook at HCS. In the meeting, I learned that the school would work with the New Orientation Publishing Press in Beijing, China to publish a set of textbooks

for ourselves or other American Chinese schools. It was good news. All the Chinese teachers participating in the meeting were excited and eager to share their ideas, such as what we have to emphasize, what we have to avoid, etc. The organizer also asked each teacher participating in the meeting to suggest a proposal about outlines, themes, and even the recommended teaching styles for the text.

However, the active discussion reminded me of how *Standard Chinese* and *Jinan Chinese* textbooks are developed. To develop the *Jinan Chinese* textbook, Jinan University Publishing Press in China cooperates with some American Chinese schools. They may have called for similar discussions about how to develop a set of texts for overseas Chinese students. They may also have collected some ideas from teachers. But after the text was published, there were still many complaints or critiques about it. It didn't appear that the Chinese side listened to the Chinese teachers' voices. Is it possible to develop a successful set of textbooks through the cooperation between the press in China and the American Chinese schools? Can Chinese teachers teach "So far so good" with a set of good textbooks? Do Chinese teachers have to develop their own curriculum if they adopt a set of good textbooks? Does good teaching depend on a good curriculum or textbook? How will the teachers' creativity be fostered so that they *can* develop their own texts?

What is the meaning of curriculum? According to the *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, the etymology of curriculum is New Latin, from Latin, meaning running, course. Curriculum is a running course, rather than a still text. In addition, the root word for curriculum is *currere*. According to Pinar (1995), "*Currere* focuses on the educational experience of the individuals, as reported by the individual" (p. 414).

Understanding curriculum as *currere* means that curriculum is a lived experience rather than a planned text. So, Aoki (2005b) states that teaching is indwelling between two curriculum worlds: “the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experiences” (p. 159). Aoki says:

The first of these, the curriculum-as-plan, usually has its origin outside the classroom, such as the Ministry of Education or the school district office....This curriculum-as-plan is the curriculum that Miss O is asked to teach the Grade 5 pupils who are entrusted to her care..... In curriculum-as-plan are the works of curriculum planners, usually selected teachers from the field, under the direction of some ministry official often designated as the curriculum director of a subject or a group of subjects. (pp. 159-160)

So curriculum-as-plan is the curriculum based on instruction, policy, direction, and the works of other planners. It is still and embedded in the outlines and textbooks. However, curriculum-as-lived is different. Aoki (2005b) says:

The other curriculum world is the situated world of curriculum-as-lived that Miss O and her pupils experience. For Miss O it is a world of face-to-face living with Andrews...and some 20 others in class, each living out a story of what it is to live school life as Grade 5s. Miss O’s pedagogic situation is a world of students with proper names—like Andrew, Sara, Margaret, and Tom—who are, for Miss O, very human, unique beings. (p. 160)

So curriculum-as-lived is *currere*, which focuses on the lived experience of the teachers and students. It is the running of a course and embodied in the teachers’ lived experiences in class. How to connect the two worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived is the teacher’s essential consideration. How American Chinese Schools might help with this connection is another consideration here.

It is a great experience for Chinese teachers to be involved in the development of text. They may provide a lot of information for the professional authors or editors in China, such as the purpose, needs, themes, and so on. However, developing text is not

our primary job. What we have to consider and are expected to do are how to develop our curriculum-as-lived in class. Pinar (2005) says:

Present are the sounds of complicated conversation in which teachers are bridges between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived, between the state and the multitude, between history and culture. “Conversation,” Aoki explains, “is a bridging of two worlds by a bridge, which is not a bridge.” “Bridge” here is both noun and verb; it is both literal and metaphoric. It is both spatial and temporal. (p. 83)

Chinese teachers are not only bridging the two different cultures and pedagogies but also being bridges between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. To teach Chinese “So far so good,” Chinese teachers have to pay attention to choosing texts, understanding students, seeking the appropriate ways to present the texts to the students, and develop their own curriculum-as-lived. In addition, the principals and other serving people in American Chinese Schools have to provide the financial support and freedom for teachers to choose teaching materials and develop appropriate approaches.

Learning from Other Foreign Language Teaching

I had a chance to teach Chinese as a trial in a private high school. After my trial teaching, the school arranged for me to observe another foreign language class. This was my first time observing the teaching of another foreign language, such as French or Spanish. In a French 3 lesson, I experienced a French presentation made by the students. Even though the students did not come from French-speaking families and could not talk French natively unlike my students’ scenario at HCS, they presented French news with the support of a media system. One group of students even presented a video about a “Japanese Robot.” The teacher sat at the back of classroom and watched the presentation. Sometimes she might interrupt to correct the students’ pronunciation or help to explain the new vocabulary. She played the role of a helper rather than that of a lecturer, or even

a leader in the class. In addition, the teacher and students talked in French most of the time, unless it was very necessary to explain something in English.

This French lesson impressed me a lot. It made some pedagogical terms, such as student-centered, immersion, multi-media teaching, etc., come alive in my mind. I know there are many differences between Chinese and French languages. The pedagogy of teaching Chinese varies from that of teaching French. However, as Chinese teachers, is it possible for us to learn from other foreign language teaching? What might we learn?

French and Chinese are both alien languages in the United States. Their home countries are both situated outside America. So the French and Chinese teachers may encounter similar cultural and pedagogical conflicts during their teaching. In addition, for teachers, teaching is a way of being in the world. They share the lived experience of helping students to know. Therefore, Chinese teachers can learn pedagogies from French teacher's teaching, as I have learned from my first experience observing a high school French lesson, such as project-based curriculum, multimedia teaching, student-centered classroom, immersion teaching method, and so on.

However, French is different from Chinese. France is located much closer to the home country of English: England is culturally closer to the United States than China, and so is France. In other words, the experience of teaching and learning French is different. For example, it may take a shorter time for students to start reading French than Chinese because French shares a similar phonetic and spelling system with English. In addition, Chinese characters belong to the glyph system. It is much harder for students to learn about writing Chinese characters than French words. Therefore, we have to consider

the differences of language structures and pedagogical practices carefully when we learn from other foreign language teaching.

Is SAT II Chinese Test the Final Goal?

At the award ceremony of last semester in HCS where Chengxi is the teachers' director, she announced the list of "Excellent Students." At the end, she announced a special award for a student who had just earned a perfect score on his SAT II Chinese Test. She said:

Let's congratulate Hu, who received the full score at his SAT II Chinese Test. Actually, many students spend almost ten years on studying Chinese at Chinese schools. It is the final goal to receive the high score at SAT II Chinese Test, isn't it?

Is the SAT II Chinese Test really the final goal for the students who study Chinese at American Chinese schools? Of course, it is a great accomplishment for students to pass or receive the highest possible score on SAT II Chinese Test. It is one of the best evaluations or demonstrations of how the students and parents put in great effort to study Chinese at American Chinese schools for ten years. However, it is not the final goal. The purpose of studying Chinese in American Chinese Schools is much more than taking the exam. For most of the students, the second generation Chinese immigrants, there are at least two primary goals of studying Chinese: applying the language, and understanding the culture. The first one means to use Chinese as a language, such as oral communication, reading papers, writing notes, and so on. The second one means to understand Chinese as a cultural carrier, such as history, tradition and so on.

Chinese is a foreign language in the United States, even for the American-born Chinese students in American Chinese Schools. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is the only national organization dedicated to the

improvement and expansion of the teaching and learning of all languages at all levels of instruction. The vision statement of ACTEL is:

Believing that language and communication are at the heart of the human experience, that the US must nurture and develop indigenous, immigrant, and world language resources, and that the US must educate students to be linguistically and culturally prepared to function as world citizens...²⁶

Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. Learning foreign languages helps to improve the communication among all kinds of people, such as indigenous, immigrants, etc., and prepare them to understand others' languages and cultures in the era of globalization. This statement indicates a goal of communication for the students in American Chinese Schools.

In addition, studying Chinese may also connect American-born Chinese students to their cultural root. It is a language related to home. With fluent Chinese, they can communicate with their other family members in China, and understand Chinese culture and history better through reading and watching extra Chinese resources. Both of them need continuous study and work.

As one of goals of studying Chinese, Chinese teachers are encouraged to help students pass or receive a high score on the SAT II Chinese Test. However, beyond preparing for the test, Chinese teachers also have to help students keep their interest in Chinese and develop their self-study ability to continue learning Chinese after leaving American Chinese schools. This entails teaching students how to use the Chinese dictionary and search Chinese resources through *Baidu* or other Chinese search engines, presenting students with extra-curriculum Chinese literature or other interesting history materials to attract their interests, and so on. There is no "final goal" of learning Chinese.

²⁶ Coming from ACTEL website: <http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3274>.

Leaving does not mean ending, but another beginning. Chinese teachers at American Chinese schools have to prepare for their students' new beginnings.

Water and Change

Six years ago when I wrote a journal reflection of my future according to the requirement of the phenomenological inquiry class, I adopted “water” as the metaphor to describe my change of life in the United States. After studying my own and other Chinese teachers’ lived experiences of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools, I am convinced again that our lives of being persons or teachers are changing like “water.” Moreover, “water” is the *Tao* of being a great person according to *Laozi*. So as I complete my pedagogical recommendations, I share this poem I wrote on “Water and Change” to express my last recommendation of being open to change as Chinese teachers in American Chinese Schools.

We are water, flowing from east to west.
 What is water?
 Water is a liquid without shape.
 It is pure, tasteless, but a major constituent of all living.
 We are unique and important for helping others to grow.
 When we are running through the different rivers, we have to change to fit in.

We are water, flowing from east to west.
 When we flow into the phenomenological river of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools,
 We find that the landscape of river is different.
 It locates in west.
 The curve is sharper.
 The wave is bigger.
 The color is bluer.
 Encountering the difference, we hear a lot of voices: “to change, to fit in.”

We are water, flowing from east to west.
 Coming from east, we are a little shy.
 Our waves are tender and calm on the surface.
 Our color is a little yellow rather than blue.
 Can we change our way of making waves?

Can we change our color?

We are water, flowing from east to west.

To fit in the phenomenological river of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools, we have to, and we can change.

We change to fit in the different shape of river road, which roots in different cultures.

We change to fit in the direction of river flowing, which means *currere*, the different understanding of curriculum theory from the east.

We change to fit in the way of waving, which indicates the Tao of teaching Chinese in the United States.

We change to fit in the color of river, which brings us closer to our students.

Change means we are dissatisfied.

Change means we are eager to improve.

Water is the highest level of being a person based on *Laozi's Tao*.

“上善若水,” The way of a good person is like water.

His mind is peaceful.

His words are sincere.

His way is natural.

His work is diligent.

His move is right.

I wish I could be “water” fitting in the phenomenological river of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools.

I wish all Chinese teachers could be “water.”

We are water, flowing from east to west.

We are open to change... (Xuan Weng, 2010, Journal reflection)

Being water means we are running in-between Chinese and American cultures

and pedagogies. Being water means we are pure and open to change. Being water means

we are changing to seek the Tao of teaching Chinese “So far so good.”

Change and the Future of American Chinese Schools

Indeed, being open to change creates a possibility for people to seek and see the future of American Chinese Schools. However, how may the changes happen? Might there need to be changes in leadership, school systems, or teachers' teaching? In addition, following the changes of politics, economics, or other social forces in the future, the missions or purposes of American Chinese Schools need to be re-examined. If so, how do

we initiate the changes to keep teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools “so far so good” in the future? In fact, what does the future of American Chinese Schools look like?

Among these recommendations, the changes in leadership, school systems, and teaching methods are all very important. However, it is not easy to initiate any of them. As a researcher, I would like to share my study with administrators, teachers, and even parents in American Chinese Schools. Sharing with administrators may help them to rethink the leadership of running the school and change the administrating system. Sharing with teachers may help them to reflect on their teaching and change their teaching method. Sharing with parents may help them to re-understanding the purpose of learning Chinese in American Chinese Schools and change their attitude toward children and teachers.

With the growth of globalization, the social context of America and China has changed, such as more immigrants, multi-languages, multi-cultures, global economy, and so on. These changes require inter-culture understanding and communication, bi- or multi-cultural identity development, awareness of the global economy, and so on, which may influence the missions of American Chinese Schools significantly.

In addition, with the growing up of second-generation Chinese immigrants, who have been students in American Chinese Schools, we have to face many new questions, such as how to teach the third-generation Chinese immigrants “so far so good?” What is the purpose of teaching Chinese for them? Do they want to study Chinese in American Chinese Schools? Do their parents expect them to study Chinese in American Chinese Schools?

I do not know the answers yet. However, I am sure that the missions of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools will be changed due to these changes. When we re-think our mission, our teaching experiences will be changed. I look forward to the changes and wonder how the changes will look in future American Chinese Schools.

“Go On With Your Story”

You are nearly as old as the number of years it has been

Since I came to America.

I have taught nothing to you at all.

I have done nothing for you at all.

But,

You have done a lot for me.

I can tell you one thing you have taught me;

“Peel off your cultural skins,

One by One,

One after another,

Again and again,

And go on with your story.”

How thick are the layers of cultural clothes I have

Already put on.

How would it be possible to tell a story without them?

How would it be possible to peel off the thick

Wallpaper

In my old house?

How would it be possible to ease my pain

Whenever the paper is torn off?

If I were not to agree with your teaching,

Believe it or not,

My life would be drifting in space,

Like an astronaut separate from his ship

Without any connections.

Now I’m aware that I alone am in the vast

Openness

Of the sea

And cause the sea to be the sea.

Just swim.

Just swim.

Go on with your story.

(Dainin Katagiri, in *Wind Bell*, 1986, as cited by Goldberg, 1993, pp. 212-213.)

When I read this poetry, it spoke to what I would like to say in my heart, but lack the ability to do because of not being native speaker of English. Teaching Chinese in the United States, I often feel I am in a vast openness of the sea. My own and other Chinese teachers' lived experiences of teaching Chinese at American Chinese schools have contributed significantly to my cultural and pedagogical understanding. It has taught me to peel off my cultural clothes, layer by layer. However, the vast openness of the sea causes the sea to be the sea without end in sight. To peel off further layers of cultural and pedagogical clothes, I have to keep swimming in the sea and go on with others' stories beyond the teachers.

Others' Stories Beyond the Teachers

In my dissertation, I have studied the stories from the teachers' perspective. In my future research, I would like to study the stories from the students' perspective. What is the lived experience of learning Chinese at American Chinese schools like for them? What does it look like to study Chinese at American Chinese schools? What is the students' purpose for learning Chinese? Do students enjoy learning Chinese? Do they experience conflict between Chinese and English languages or cultures? Do they change through learning Chinese at American Chinese schools?

Besides the teachers and students, the administrators are another important group at American Chinese schools. I would like to explore their lived experience of running the special, non-profit Sunday Chinese Schools in the United States. What does this experience mean to them? What is their relation to teachers and parents? Do they

experience any cultural or pedagogical conflicts? Do they enjoy being administrators in American Chinese schools? What are their biggest challenges?

Parents are a special group in American Chinese schools because they are the foundation of the school, the pool from which, both teachers and administrators come. They participate in all kinds of activities at school and help make the school become a Chinese community. They are also involved in their children's Chinese study through talking to them or teaching them Chinese at home. In the future, I would like to explore the lived experience of being parents in American Chinese schools. Do they feel cultural and pedagogical differences between Chinese Schools and American public schools? What do they expect their children to learn in American Chinese schools? Do they prefer language application or culture transition? If they have different expectations from teachers, what are they? If they have different opinions of studying Chinese from their children, what are they? As the foundation of American Chinese Schools, the parents may contribute to school development significantly; it is important to draw on these understandings.

Besides these new phenomena I would like to explore, I still want to work more on the phenomenon of this study. I would like to invite more Chinese teachers to participate in my conversations in my future research. With more lived experience accounts of teaching Chinese in the United States, I may find out even more significant teaching themes to provide further suggestions for Chinese teachers and scholars. I continue to strive for Enlightenment.

Mountains Are Mountains Again

Attaining enlightenment is a person's dream who would like to seek the Tao and Zen. Through studying the lived experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools, I seek the Tao of teaching Chinese "So far so good." Now, as I stand in a place of beginning enlightenment, I can see the essence of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools beyond the simple or complicated understandings. I can go back to the things of teaching themselves and provide pedagogical recommendations with both control and taking risks. And finally I can answer the questions I raised at the beginning of my dissertation: What is the lived experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools? Can I teach Chinese "so far so good?"

However, the phenomenological study of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools is not concluded yet, as the great poet Qu Yuan (about 340 B.C.—278 B. C.) during the Warring States Period (475 B. C. -221 B. C.) writes in his famous poetry *Li-Sao*: "路漫漫其修远兮，吾将上下而求索." It means "the way ahead is long, I see no ending; yet I still want to pursue the truth in the world (up and down)." Actually, the way of my phenomenological study of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools ahead is long, and I see no ending. But I will continue striving for the truth of the phenomenon.

Moreover, my personal scholar life is experiencing enlightenment. Through conducting this phenomenological study on the lived experience of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools, I have found my way of being a researcher in the world. I want to keep doing phenomenological research as I live it. I want to keep studying how to help Chinese teachers to teach "so far so good" and initiate the change in American Chinese Schools. I hope I can enlighten others, and others can enlighten me. I hope we

can work together to seek the Tao of teaching Chinese where “so far so good” moves from tentativity to more assurance of possibility and transformation. Perhaps the response I seek is “Mountains are mountains again.”

APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Xuan Weng
 9103 Saint Andrews Place
 College Park, Maryland 20740
 240-475-0504; xweng@wam.umd.edu
 January, 2007

Dear _____,

I would like to invite you to engage in a study that explores the experiences of teaching Chinese in American Chinese School—the Sunday Chinese school in the United States. I am conducting this study as a doctoral student in the Department of Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the direction of Dr. Francine Hultgren. The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Chinese teachers as they teach Chinese in American Chinese Schools. I am interested in exploring what it is like for you to bridge two cultures and different pedagogies. As I seek to understand these experiences, I will tape-record and transcribe approximately three conversational interviews, observe your class at least once based on mutual agreement, and invite you to write one narrative description of your most significant experience teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools.

The first conversation provides an introduction and a time for you to share your experiences of being a Chinese teacher in Hope Chinese School. The second and third conversations will follow my interpretive analysis of the initial conversations. Meeting times will be arranged at a time and place that is mutually agreed upon by participants and researcher. After I have completed and research, I will share the results with you.

I am interested in setting up initial conversations for beginning in March, 2007, and following up with additional conversations through April and May, 2007. If you have any questions and/or would like to be one of my conversants, please contact me at xweng@wam.umd.edu, or (240)475-0504. By sharing your insights and experience in this research study you will be contributing to a better understanding of the experience of teaching Chinese in the United States. I hope the understandings gained in this study will be used to guide and inform pedagogical practices for Chinese teachers in order to improve the teaching quality at Sunday Chinese Schools in the United States. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Xuan Weng
 Doctoral Candidate
 Education Policy and Leadership
 University of Maryland, College Park

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Page 1 of 3
Initials _____ Date _____

Project Title:	BRIDGING CULTURES IN A THIRD SPACE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHING CHINESE IN AMERICAN CHINESE SCHOOLS
Why is this research being done?	This is a research project being conducted by <u>Xuan Weng</u> at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an experienced Chinese teacher in an American Chinese School. The purpose of this research project is to explore the experiences of teaching Chinese in the United States, in order to inform pedagogical practices and improve the teaching quality in American Chinese Schools.
What will I be asked to do?	<p>The procedure involves conversations, observation and personal writing, which will provide text for analysis. Topics for these activities include teaching experiences in Hope Chinese School.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will be asked to participate in three tape-recorded and transcribed Chinese conversations, each at least one hour in length. Conversations will take place at a place and time mutually agreed upon by you and the researcher. The type of questions that will be asked include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What drew you to teach Chinese in American Chinese Schools? b. Can you describe a particularly vivid moment in your class when you felt your teaching was connecting well with students? Have you had any difficulties connecting with students? What were those situations like? c. What is it like to teach Chinese in a foreign country? Have you encountered different cultural expectations? d. Could you tell me about an experience in American Chinese School during which you encountered differences between Chinese and American cultures or pedagogies? • You will be observed for at least one mutually agreed upon class sessions. • You will be asked to provide one narrative description of one of your most significant experiences of teaching Chinese in American Chinese Schools.
What about confidentiality?	We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, your name will not be used in any public documents or oral presentations. You will be identified by pseudonym. All the notes, transcripts and tapes will be accessible only to the researcher.

Project Title:	BRIDGING CULTURES IN A THIRD SPACE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHING CHINESE IN AMERICAN CHINESE SCHOOLS
What are the risks of this research?	There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.
What are the benefits of this research?	This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the experiences of teaching Chinese in the United States. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the differences between Chinese and American cultures and how pedagogical practices are influenced in this teaching context.
Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.
What if I have questions?	<p>This research is being conducted by Xuan Weng, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Policy & Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the direction of Faculty Advisor:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Dr. Francine Hultgren Department of Education Policy & Leadership University of Maryland College Park, MD 20742 fh@umd.edu 301-405-4562</p> <p>If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Xuan Weng 9103 Saint Andrews Place College Park, MD 20740 (e-mail) xweng@wam.umd.edu (telephone) 240-475-0504</p> <p>If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20740 (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu, (telephone) 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>

Page 3 of 3
 Initials: _____ Date _____

Project Title:	BRIDEGING CULTURES IN A THIRD SPACE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHING CHINESE IN AMERICAN CHINESE SCHOOLS	
Statement of Age of Subject and Consent:	Your signature indicates that: <i>you are at least 18 years of age; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.</i>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF SUBJECT	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	
	DATE	

APPENDIX C:**POINTS OF DEPARTURE FOR CONVERSATION ON THE LIVED
EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING CHINESE IN AMERICAN CHINESE SCHOOLS****Questions:**

1. What drew you to teach Chinese in American Chinese Schools?
2. Can you describe a particularly vivid moment in your class when you felt your teaching was connecting well with students? Have you had any difficulties connecting with students? What were those situations like?
3. What is it like to teach Chinese in a foreign country? Have you encountered different cultural expectations?
4. Could you tell me about an experience in American Chinese School during which you encountered differences between Chinese and American cultures or pedagogies?

Instructions for Writing Samples:

Write a narrative description of one of your most significant experiences of teaching Chinese in American Chinese schools.

You can write in English or Chinese. Reflect on what your experience felt like. Did you experience any cultural or pedagogical differences? Write as descriptively as you can to help others understand what this experience was like for you.

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