

PALGRAVE STUDIES IN TEACHING
AND LEARNING CHINESE

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Michael Singh and Jinghe Han

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TEACHING AND LEARNING CHINESE IN SCHOOLS

Case Studies in Quality
Language Education

**Robyn Moloney and
Hui Ling Xu**



Palgrave Studies in Teaching and Learning Chinese

Series Editors

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“This is an important and timely book for teachers who want to make a difference in their teaching of Chinese language at schools. Focussing on quality teaching of Chinese, case studies from primary schools to secondary schools offer practical suggestions that make this an indispensable resource for students, teachers and researchers alike.”

—Dr Tinghe Jin, *Durham University, and President of the Chinese Educational Research Association, UK*

“What an interesting and great read this book is! I thoroughly enjoyed it. It is practical, easy to read, and well organised around the principles of the Quality Teaching Framework. It brings together and makes visible good language teaching practices, showcasing effective programming approaches and differentiation strategies. It shows depth of understanding, drawing on so much relevant current research. This book offers teachers’ solutions to all the current challenges in Languages education: continuity from primary to secondary, differentiation, motivation, and building communities which value language study. It is an important new resource for teachers, for supporting both better pedagogy and advocacy.”

—Merryl Wahlin, *Languages Consultant at the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales, Australia*

Palgrave Studies in Teaching and Learning Chinese is a Pivot series designed for teachers, teacher education candidates and teacher educators working in the field of Chinese language education. Despite the world-wide growth in school-based Chinese language education it has not yet been accompanied by a strong programme of educational research for teacher professional learning. This series provides an internationally significant forum by bringing together research from around the world to inform school-based Chinese language education. Specifically, this series draws on a wealth of evidence from studies of Chinese learning and teaching, weaving together theoretical study of language education and real-world experience of student-centred, learning-focused practices. The series uses theoretically-informed and empirically-grounded evidence to inform the professional knowledge and practices of teaching, learning and using Chinese.

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“I am excited to see this new well researched resource for teachers of Chinese language. It is critical for classroom teachers to be aware of the challenging issues of teaching and learning Chinese today which have been elaborated in this book. Using real-life examples of practice in classrooms, the authors provided many great ideas and practical strategies to improve students’ achievement in Chinese language study. I especially commend the inspiration to use the digital technology to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning. I thoroughly recommend this book to all teachers of Chinese language in primary, secondary, and tertiary classrooms.”

—Maria Xu, *President of the Chinese Language Teachers’ Association,*
New South Wales, Australia

“This volume engages in a meaningful way with the challenges of teaching Chinese in the primary and secondary school sector. Robyn Moloney and Hui Ling Xu provide a valuable contribution to the discussion of quality teaching by first addressing quality indicators against the background of challenges posed by the Australian language learning and teaching setting, before engaging with teacher research in the form of case studies. This book will prove to be a useful resource for teacher training as well as professional development.”

—Professor Martina Möllering, *Executive Dean at the Faculty of Arts,*
Macquarie University, Australia

Robyn Moloney • Hui Ling Xu

Teaching and Learning Chinese in Schools

Case Studies in Quality Language Education

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Palgrave Studies in Teaching and Learning Chinese
ISBN 978-3-319-89371-6 ISBN 978-3-319-89372-3 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89372-3>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018943392

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Cover illustration: Pattern adapted from an Indian cotton print produced in the 19th century

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Pivot imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature.
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

FOREWORD

In the context of changing demographic, social, political, and economic realities at a global level, there has been a marked expansion in the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture in multiple and highly diverse educational contexts around the world. This also coincides with a period of immense change in the understanding of the very nature of the teaching and learning languages, prompted by globalisation and the resulting increasing complexity of linguistic and cultural diversity in diverse societies (see Kramsch, 2014; The Douglas Fir Group, 2016). It also occurs at a time when the goals of language learning have expanded beyond ‘communicative competence’ to developing students’ multilinguality, including personal, affective, and aesthetic dimensions (Leung & Scarino, 2016).

In all language learning classrooms there is now an increasing diversity of students who come from diverse life worlds and bring to their learning diverse histories (personal/experiential and educational), diverse affiliations with the language/s being learnt, diverse motivations and diverse desires in relation to the learning of particular languages. In language education in Australia, it is the teaching and learning of Chinese that presents the greatest diversity of learners. Learners bring diverse backgrounds (‘home’ users of Chinese or not), diverse experience of contexts of Chinese language learning (at home/community, at a mainstream or community school, in mainland China or in a diasporic centre where Chinese is used), diverse experience of time-on-task, duration, and intensity of Chinese language learning, and diverse experience of different programme types (first or second/foreign language, CLIL, bilingual), along with their own diverse

personal qualities and identities. Efforts have been made over time to cater for this immense diversity through curricula, for example, in the recent Australian Curriculum—Chinese, as developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), and the long-standing availability of diverse pathways for diverse groups of students at senior secondary level in Australia. It is crucial that the experience of teaching and learning Chinese in Australia, which has a long Chinese migration history, be investigated in ways that do justice to the linguistic and cultural realities of learning Chinese in an English-dominant setting for all learners.

In the present volume, Robyn Moloney and Hui Ling Xu consider the complexity of teaching and learning Chinese through the lens of ‘quality’. They have identified some of the major issues that the teaching and learning of Chinese in Australia brings, notably, ways of strengthening primary level Chinese language learning, the need to better understand ‘motivation’ in the secondary school years to address issues of retention, support for teaching ‘multi-level’ classes especially where heritage language learners sit beside ‘foreign’ language learners of Chinese, and the need to explore and maximise the use of digital technologies. These issues, and more, present significant challenges for teachers (see Duff et al., 2013). The case studies documented in this book shed light on the practices of some teachers of Chinese as they seek to respond to these challenges.

The focus on quality is particularly pertinent because any expansion in language learning, without close attention to quality, will inevitably fall short of success. ‘Quality’ is a ubiquitous concept often described by synonym, classification, or enumeration. Such definitions, however, often do not provide sufficient guidance on what is the right thing to do nor how to do the right thing. This is all the more so in relation to the complex phenomenon of quality teaching and learning of Chinese. Defining ‘quality’ operationally requires evidence that the question of what are the right things to do and how to do them have been addressed. The authors draw upon a particular framework for describing quality that foregrounds ‘intellectual quality’, ‘the quality of the learning environment’, and ‘significance’. This model offers some important elements. Elements such as fostering ‘deep knowledge’, ‘metalanguage’, ‘deep understanding’, and ‘problematic knowledge’ certainly invite teachers of Chinese to guard against superficial or trivial learning that can so readily occur when conditions for learning are less than favourable.

Being a generic framework for describing quality, it also invites the specific question of what these kinds of knowledge can mean for different

learners of Chinese at different levels of schooling. To what extent does it include, for example, the multilingual and intercultural ‘bridging’ that all learners of Chinese learning in the Australian setting (and beyond) will have to learn to accomplish? For first language students of Chinese, they are bridging their home language and culture into the Australian educational and societal setting. For those with some home background in Chinese, they are bridging across Chinese-English, English-Chinese, extending the domains of modalities of home uses of their language and culture to school/academic/literate domains and modalities of use. For learners of Chinese as a ‘new’ language, they are bridging their knowledge of the English language and culture into their learning as they enter the world of Chinese language and culture.

This book represents an invitation to all contributors to Chinese language education—Chinese teachers, teacher educators, and researchers—to address the question of quality. It opens up the need to explore this question in a way that is distinctive to the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture. It foregrounds appropriately the crucial role of teachers (and students) and their practices—and theorising that can be derived from local practices. Finally, it highlights the complexity that the learning of Chinese language and culture entails, and that quality is necessarily a dynamic and relational accomplishment. And it is precisely for this reason that all contributors need to continue to problematise both the nature of Chinese language and culture learning for diverse learners in diverse contexts and its quality.

Associate Professor Angela Scarino,
University of South Australia
12 February 2018

Angela Scarino

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to sincerely thank the following teachers, and the Principals of their schools, for their participation in the data collection for this project, and also for their review of the book:

Ming Urwin, Abbotsleigh Junior

Jianlian Liang, Rouse Hill Public School, Department of Education NSW

Kye-Ling Low, Rouse Hill Public School, Department of Education NSW

Shuyi Wu, International Grammar School, Sydney

Faraday Pang, Presbyterian Ladies College Sydney

Ken Wong, Barker College

We would also like to thank Merryl Wahlin and Melanie Hughes, from the Association for Independent Schools NSW, and Veronica De Jong, for their valuable review suggestions, and to Professor Michael Singh for his invitation for this volume to be part of his series.

We also include a special note to thank Associate Professor Angela Scarino, University of South Australia, for her excellent Foreword, and for her long commitment to languages education in Australia.

We acknowledge permission given to use materials used in the book. We thank the New South Wales Department of Education for permission to use the image of the Quality Teaching Framework. We thank Shuyi Wu, Faraday Pang, and Ken Wong for permission to include samples of their work.

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