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**From Classroom to Real Word: Researching into how
Chinese as a Foreign Language beginner learners use Social
Networking technology to develop Intercultural
Communicative Competence in UK secondary schools**

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the teaching and learning of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) in a Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) context and to understand how social networking (SN) technology can contribute to CFL beginner learners' ICC development. The research involved a longitudinal exploratory case study (2015-2017), in which the case was a single General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Mandarin class and the participants consisted of nine CFL beginner learners in a comprehensive secondary school in the Midlands of the UK. The research question focuses on how CFL beginner learners used social networking technology to develop their ICC and to communicate with their language partners from a link school in China. The research was carried out in the interpretive tradition in that it sought a rich and detailed understanding of the case by examining aspects of it in depth. This exploratory case study was intended to provide a trustworthy and transparent account of CFL learners' use of social networking tools around genuine communication in Chinese.

The focus of the study was to explore how a group of GCSE Mandarin students' use of social networking technology contributed to their ICC development in a collaborative Community of Inquiry learning environment. Methods of data collection included participant observation, field notes, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with students. The Community of Inquiry analysis framework (Garrison et al., 2000) and Byram's (1997) ICC model were used as the base of the analysis of students' online exchange and intercultural communication. The findings of this case study showed that Social Presence was the category of presence most often identified in the current Community of Inquiry created by GCSE Mandarin learners, followed by Cognitive Presence, and then Teaching Presence. The use of social networking technology was motivating and solved real-life problems (i.e. exchange visits). The intercultural tasks

in this exchange project promoted purposeful communication which generated unplanned topics on real-life events that were of interest to participants. The multimodal affordances of social networking tools played a crucial role in participants' continuous participation and increased motivation in a Community of Inquiry. The informal characteristic of online conversation in this case study was in line with the "third place" concept, and non-linguistic features of social networking tools contributed to participants' intercultural experience and ICC development. It is argued that translanguaging and collaborative learning in a Community of Inquiry could be a practical and useful approach to enable CFL beginner learners to become comfortable using the target language step by step while exploring the intercultural aspects of the target culture and community. In terms of GCSE Mandarin academic skills, the group of participants reported that they developed Mandarin writing and reading skills more than speaking and listening skills by using social networking technology. To conclude, social networking tools could help to create a Community of Inquiry where CFL beginner learners can develop real-world intercultural communicative competence through collaboration and exchange with language partners to become globally competent "intercultural speakers" (OECD, 2018).

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Abbreviations

ACTFL: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
BC: British Council
BYOD:bring your own device
CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning
CFL: Chinese as a Foreign Language
CI:Comprehensible Input
CILT: the National Centre for Languages
CLT: Communicative Language Teaching
CoI: Community of Inquiry
EBacc: English Baccalaureate
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
FL: Foreign Language
Hanban: the National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in China
ICC: Intercultural Communicative Competence
IOE: Institute of Education UCL
L1: First Language
L2: Second Language
MAT:Multi Academy Trust
MEP: Mandarin Excellence Programme
MFL: Modern Foreign Languages
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education
QTS: Qualified Teacher Status
SLA: Second Language Acquisition
SN: Social Networking
UK: United Kingdom
UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA: United States of America
ZPD:Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In order to explore how social networking technology could contribute to the development of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) beginner learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC), the researcher took on the roles of both course teacher and participant observer in a case study carried out in a GCSE Mandarin class of nine students at a secondary school in the UK Midlands. In this introduction, the researcher aims to outline the setting that gave rise to the topic of this thesis. This section includes the introduction of Modern Foreign Language (MFL) context in England, the growth of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) education and the personal factors which have influenced the researcher's choices in this study. Finally, this chapter will present the questions that have emerged from this context.

1.2 Research background

The increasing globalisation of trade and the mobility of people between China and the UK made the researcher pay special attention to intercultural communicative competence of CFL beginner learners in the UK. This section will describe the situation when this research started in September 2015. The later and current state of affairs regarding Chinese language teaching and learning in the UK (e.g. the 2016 British government initiative Mandarin Excellence Programme) will be mentioned in section 6.4 when discussing implications of the research.

Foreign language education in English schools is called 'Foreign Language' (FL) at key stage 2 and 'Modern Foreign Language' (MFL) at key stage 3 in England, the only stages at which language learning is compulsory (DfE, 2014). The major aim of FL/MFL is for all students to achieve 'confidence, fluency and spontaneity' in both

written and spoken language (DfE, 2014:98). The National Curriculum says that high-quality MFL teaching should help foster students' curiosity and greater understanding of the world, recognising that language is not simply about grammatical or technical issues. The British Council *Language Trends Surveys* and *Languages for the future Reports* indicated that there have also been repeated calls for the teaching and learning of a wider range of foreign languages, including those deemed most economically desirable to the UK - including Chinese (Tinsley and Board, 2014).

Chinese language education has a long history in the UK, originally based in UK Chinese communities to meet the demands of early Chinese immigrants and heritage Chinese children (Yang, 2015). With China's growing prominence on the world's stage as both an economic and political power in past decades, learning Chinese has become a desirable choice not just for business people, but for children in schools too (Li, 2013). There was a shift from Cantonese to Mandarin in Chinese communities in the UK. Although there have been repeated calls for compulsory FL education in British primary and secondary schools, concerns remain about the achievement of English children at language learning and numerous barriers to improving this situation (Tinsley and Board, 2014). These issues will be discussed later together with the challenges of CFL education in section 2.2.2.

Although English is an obvious language learning choice for much of the world, the English-speaking population faces a much wider and less obvious choice of what language to study. An increasing number of comprehensive as well as independent schools in the UK are beginning to offer CFL education, either in curriculum or as an extra-curricular activity (Tinsley and Board, 2014; CfBT, 2015). More and more secondary schools in the UK are offering Chinese as one of the GCSE and A-level MFL options. To conclude, Mandarin has been pointed out to be a strategically important but

difficult language to the UK. However, in the UK, Chinese language teaching is usually offered outside the curriculum, involving part-time teachers and small numbers of students (CfBT, 2015).

1.3 Research motivation

The researcher was a qualified teacher of Chinese in China and had three years' experience in teaching Chinese to adult CFL learners before coming to England in 2012. When observing MFL lessons and offering Mandarin lessons to schools in Coventry, interest in researching about children's Chinese learning in UK secondary schools was gradually developed. The researcher's CFL teaching experience and personal beliefs were behind the choice of the research topic for this study. The researcher's long-held beliefs in the social and intercultural approach in CFL language teaching and learning have motivated the specific research topic.

The researcher became a firm believer in ICC during the first year in the UK with plenty of opportunities to communicate directly with British colleagues. Due to lack of linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and intercultural competences in ICC, the researcher encountered numerous difficulties while using English in the UK as an English as a foreign language learner. For instance, it was surprising to the researcher that people need to say 'hello' and 'thank you' to the bus drivers when getting on and off buses. Sometimes the researcher could not work out the correct meanings of English words or phrases in particular contexts because the unfamiliar meanings of some words were new to the researcher. For example, it was new to the researcher that the word 'tea' could mean 'dinner', the word 'cheers' could mean 'thank you', the word 'cheerio' actually means 'goodbye', and the phrase 'break a leg' means 'good luck'. These encounters made the researcher question her understanding of the target language and culture. Therefore, the past experience of studying and working in a foreign

environment where intercultural exchanges took place every day made it increasingly necessary for the researcher to reflect upon the importance of developing intercultural communicative competence to prevent communication breakdowns.

When observing other Mandarin teachers' lessons and reading the latest research into effective Chinese teaching and learning, the researcher was inspired by the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in CFL education. The researcher started to think about another question: How can the use of modern technology support CFL learners to develop their ICC? Then, the researcher approached these questions as a Ph.D. student and began observing Chinese teaching more systematically in a comprehensive state school in England since December 2014. It was observed that one of the reasons why Chinese is particularly challenging to English students is very simple: Chinese speaking countries are a long distance away, not only physically, but also socially and culturally. Students observed complained that they forgot Mandarin words soon after learning, and the Mandarin teacher asked for help too. The researcher was strongly committed to the communicative and sociocultural teaching approach that one of the important goals of learning languages is to use the target language in the target contexts socially and culturally (Kramsch, 1998; Koester, 2002; Chun, 2011). The researcher also believes in the power of autonomous learning, in that learning does not mean merely 'being taught', but rather should be an interactive and spontaneous effort from the learners' side.

From the researcher's early observations, secondary CFL students easily forgot what they had learnt in lessons after one or two weeks, and they struggled to develop cultural understanding, let alone any obvious ICC. The researcher then realised that ICC is not only about language learning in classroom settings. It is also about international mindedness, global mentality, global citizenship, and global competence that students

need to obtain to solve problems and communicate with culturally different people beyond classroom settings, especially as the world gets smaller and smaller (Trilling and Hood, 2001; Jacobs, 2010). The researcher, therefore, developed an interest in the use of social networking (SN) technology to create possible ways for students to use their target language (L2) knowledge and skills, by encouraging them to directly communicate and interact with culturally different language partners to develop Chinese language acquisition and ICC. The Chinese teacher observed in the pilot study started using Edmodo (Borg et al., 2008) with one of the GCSE classes to share learning resources, set up homework, and give instant feedback to students. The researcher's original research intention was to conduct a case study in this school in order to look closely into how social networking technology could change the status quo (e.g. students forgot what they learnt quickly; students did not have access to more authentic materials; students could not use L2 effectively; students needed more opportunities to develop ICC). However, this intention was prevented when the teacher of Chinese in this school left - leaving the school with no teacher of Chinese and little prospect of finding one as many schools in England had discontinued Mandarin provision when facing a staffing shortage (Neal, 2014; Tinsley and Board, 2014).

The effect of this loss of a Mandarin teacher and class in which to conduct this research led to a very significant change in the researcher's positionality in relation to the case study. Instead of undertaking a study of a class and a teacher as an outsider, the researcher realised that there was a need to be rather more involved and become an insider in the setting. In short, the researcher took the part-time Mandarin teaching job in this school in September 2015 to maintain the research setting of the present case. Having started this research as a student looking for the solutions to the intellectual challenges posed by Chinese, the use of technology, and ICC, the researcher ended up teaching Mandarin as the only way to sustain the case study. The researcher gained UK

Qualified Teacher Status in 2017, which is somewhat unusual. Many teachers research their teaching practices in order to improve their own teaching, but very few become teachers specifically in order to conduct research. Nevertheless, it was a great opportunity for the researcher to better understand UK education and the challenges of Chinese learning in UK secondary schools from an insider stance.

For example, the researcher did not understand the real status quo of CFL teaching at secondary level in the UK until becoming an insider. When the researcher was an outsider, it was felt opportunities like Confucius Institutes would be extremely helpful for schools around the country. However, this was not the case for the school in the present case study. The researcher made some inquiries on behalf of the school but it turned out that because the school was not a Confucius Classroom, so there was no funding or support available, even though this school was the only one that offered Mandarin as a curriculum subject in the area. As an insider, the researcher was able to experience the real difficulties of CFL education at schools in disadvantaged situations. The researcher wanted to create more opportunities to support and empower Mandarin students' learning in other effective ways. Therefore, the researcher started to contact the link school to organise a language partner exchange programme for students from both countries. At the very end of this project, all the participants in this case study visited their Chinese language partners (this was the school's first visit to China), although the school did not manage to get any funding or support from the local Confucius Institute, or the British government (the CFL students in this study were self-funded).

After some observation of Chinese teaching in England, the researcher realised that Mandarin was still a relatively new language to be introduced to UK schools (although it was not new to universities and community schools) and that most schools did not

require a full-time teacher straight away, or even in the longer term. Therefore, for CFL teachers, it was often necessary to have another language or subject that could be taught as well to ensure a full timetable. Most teachers of European languages traditionally offered two or more languages which gave them and their schools much more flexibility. The increasing number of Multi Academy Trust (MAT) schools might be a good opportunity for CFL teachers, as they can consider working part-time for a couple of schools possibly to form a full timetable in the same MAT. As the researcher observed, budgets at comprehensive schools that are in deprived districts are decreasing every year and many schools have discontinued Mandarin as a curriculum subject to save money. These staffing and budget problems are not ideal for the expansion and provision of CFL education in the UK. However, the researcher believes that for schools still providing Mandarin, it is essential to create more learning opportunities and provide a better educational experience for CFL learners to make Mandarin more sustainable in the UK. Under such circumstances, as an insider, questions like ‘how GCSE Mandarin students could acquire more language competence’ and ‘how Mandarin students could become more interculturally competent’ motivated the researcher to conduct the present case study.

To sum up, early experiences of misunderstanding and communication breakdowns made the researcher realise the importance of ICC when using a target language to interact with culturally different people. To explore the issue of using information and communication technology to develop ICC in CFL education, the researcher worked as an outsider observing a Chinese teacher’s lessons at a local secondary school for about seven months, then turned the Ph.D. research into a case study and became an insider observer. The researcher taught the same GCSE class of nine children for two academic years (2015-2017) during this study and all aspects of GCSE Chinese were taught in this time. Despite this change of stance, the researcher’s interest and focus remained

the same - the role of social networking technology in developing ICC for CFL beginner learners. This has shaped the researcher's teaching practice. By taking up the teaching role, the researcher gained more access to conduct a qualitative case study over the two years, with a GCSE Mandarin class of nine beginner learners. The two years culminated in the nine students visiting China and staying with Chinese students they had met through the social networking tools in this project. By observing their online exchanges and behaviours, sending out questionnaires, and conducting interviews with the participants, the researcher explored in great detail how they made the most of social networking tools to communicate with their Chinese language partners effectively and appropriately. The rationale for this research was therefore based on the need to develop this GCSE Mandarin group's intercultural communicative competence, which is closely related to the changing circumstances of language learning across the globe. Consequently, this research naturally evolved from the researcher's personal motivation which was shaped by her teaching experience and ongoing observation.

1.4 Research purpose

This qualitative study aspired to connect research to practice, thereby to contribute to the ongoing debate on the use of social networking technology to develop intercultural communicative competence in UK secondary CFL education. The main purpose of this empirical study was to explore ways to help CFL beginner learners to develop their ICC using social networking technology to communicate with language partners from the target culture. The researcher used a case study of a GCSE Mandarin class over a period of two academic years to achieve this. The present study set out to examine these issues in a naturalistic CFL education context at a secondary comprehensive school in the UK Midlands with qualitative data collection and analysis methods. This case study, therefore, aimed to address the central research question: How can a group of CFL beginner learners use social networking technology to develop their intercultural

communicative competence? This will be presented in more detail in section 2.7. To achieve the research purpose, the present study used participant observation, field notes, interviews, and questionnaires to learn about the ways a group of CFL beginner learners interacted with peers and language partners, as well as their views on and experience of developing intercultural communicative competence in an online exchange project. These methods will be further discussed in section 3.6.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of six chapters. Following on from this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature in the fields of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), Social Constructivism and Sociocultural learning, ICT and social networking for foreign language education, Tandem and telecollaboration as related to Chinese teaching and learning, and the impact of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework in online learning and exchange platforms. A number of previous studies and empirical research on these issues will also be discussed to identify the gaps in existing knowledge and to situate this study. Chapter 3 justifies the methodological approach and research paradigm and introduces the research design, including the selection of participants, data collection procedure, coding and analysis of students' online chats, interviews, and questionnaire data, as well as ethical considerations. This is followed by Chapter 4, where the researcher presents, in turn, the results in this case study and analysis guided by two research sub-questions: 1) In what ways did a group of CFL beginner learners use social networking technology to build a Community of Inquiry in this case study? 2) How did a Community of Inquiry lead to a group of CFL beginner learners' ICC development? In Chapter 5, the key findings of the analysis will be discussed in turn relating to key literature and the pedagogical implications will be considered. Finally, Chapter 6 brings together the main findings to answer the research questions and draw conclusions of this case study. It also highlights the contributions of this research,

identifies possible implications, acknowledges the limitations of the thesis, and provides recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2 LiteratureReview

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that underpinned the theoretical background of this study, defines the key terms and concepts, and characterises the existing field because these issues are the background to and basis for the research questions. The early part of this chapter introduces ‘Mandarin Chinese’, the struggles UK learners face learning this language, the important issue of ‘intercultural communicative competence’ (ICC) and its importance in Chinese as a foreign language teaching and learning. This chapter then reviews the key literature about Social Constructivism and Sociocultural learning, the use of ICT and social networking technology for foreign language education, Tandem and telecollaboration, and the potential of using social networking technology to develop ICC in UK secondary schools. Finally, the chapter presents literature about using a Community of Inquiry framework to analyse online learning and exchange. These areas of literature have shaped the key research questions in this case study.

This study took place in a natural GCSE Mandarin class setting. In this thesis, the researcher defined a second language (L2) not as the second ordinal language learnt by a person, but as any language learnt in addition to one’s mother tongue (L1). As this research was into a case of GCSE Mandarin as an MFL curriculum subject in a UK secondary education context, it would be more consistent to use the term Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) throughout this thesis to refer as the same definition as Chinese as a second language. In this research, Mandarin Chinese is a foreign language that is not used in the local area of participants and not spoken by their community at all. Therefore, this thesis used the term Chinese as a foreign language and Chinese as a second language interchangeably.

2.2 Chinese language and challenges of CFL education in the UK

This section will introduce the Mandarin Chinese language as a dual language learning system of pinyin and characters, and review the literature on the challenges of CFL teaching and learning in the UK. This is highly relevant to the present research as the unique characteristics of Chinese language are closely linked to CFL beginner learners' linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence which are crucial preparatory elements to online communication and intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997).

2.2.1 Mandarin Chinese and its key characteristics

Researchers argued that Chinese is a family of separate languages that share a common written script (Yang, 2015). Two main types of Chinese languages are widely used overseas: Mandarin and Cantonese. Mandarin is also known as 'Putonghua' (literally: the Common Language or the Standard Language) in China. Due to limited communication between dialects of Chinese, Mandarin was introduced as a Lingua Franca in 1956, based on the Beijing accent and the vocabulary of Northern China, following the basic grammatical rules in classical contemporary Chinese literature (Hudson-Ross and Dong, 1990). Mandarin has recently been adopted even in Hong Kong and Macao and is the language most commonly taught as Chinese across the world as a result of rapid economic development in China in recent decades (Lai, 2001; Tong, 2004). The term Mandarin will be used throughout this thesis to refer to Putonghua (i.e. pinyin and simplified characters) because it was the language that the group of CFL learners were learning and using in the present research.

2.2.1.1 The pronunciation system: Pinyin and tones

Pinyin is the official Romanisation system of Chinese language used in China, which was established as the standard transcription system for Mandarin in 1979 (Zhou, 1986). The Pinyin system is currently adopted in primary literacy lessons throughout China and in the CFL field overseas (Basseti, 2007). Taiwan also adopted pinyin as one of the official standard phonetic systems in 2009 (Yang, 2015).

As Chinese is a tonal language, pinyin usually represents syllables of Mandarin as involving a consonant, a vowel, and a tone mark above the vowel (Fu et al., 1998). Tones are extremely important for Chinese speakers because syllables using exactly the same initials and finals but with different tones might mean completely different things in Chinese. There are about 1300 syllables but about 7000 morphemes that are commonly used in everyday life in China (Li et al., 2002), resulting in a large number of homophones in Mandarin oral speech (Perfetti et al., 2005). For example, the following three words 栗子 (sound: lìzi; meaning: chestnuts), 梨子 (sound: lízi; meaning: pears), and 李子 (sound: lǐzi; meaning: plums) all share the same pinyin script but have different tones, and as a result refer to different meanings.

However, CFL beginner learners' knowledge of pinyin and tones were extremely relevant to the current study because knowledge about the target language and culture is a crucial part of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997). As tones appear as additional marks above written syllables, they are likely to be neglected when people only use initials and finals of syllables to type Chinese characters on social networking tools. The participants were trained on how to use pinyin to type Mandarin in lessons and they were learning how tone changes could affect real life Mandarin speaking and listening. The researcher was interested in exploring how participants in this study could

use social networking tools for intercultural communication, which required students to use pinyin to type characters to send posts and messages. The case study was also interested in exploring whether students' knowledge of pinyin and tones could affect their user experience of voice messages and video calls with language partners and their ICC development. The challenges of processing pinyin and tones will be discussed later in section 2.2.2.1.

2.2.1.2 The writing system: Chinese characters

Characters are regarded as the fundamental units of meaning in the Chinese writing system (Wang et al., 2003). Unlike alphabetic languages like English or French where letters represent sounds and words represent meanings, the Chinese language mainly employs an ideographic writing system (Tan and Perfetti, 1999). For example, the character 山 means mountains and the character 水 means water. Chinese characters generally include three elements: 1) form, 2) sound, and 3) meaning (Shen, 2005; Zhu, 2002), and are normally constructed based on three levels of orthographic structures: 1) characters, 2) radicals, and 3) strokes (Sung and Wu, 2011). Radicals are the basic orthographic units of characters, and strokes are the basic building blocks for radicals (Wang et al., 2003; Shen, 2005; Sung and Wu, 2011; Zhao, 2014). There are about 189 radicals in simplified characters, including independent characters and those serve as parts in other characters (Ross and Ma, 2017). Take the character 明 (sound: míng; meaning: clear or bright) as an example, the shape is a combination of two radicals: 日 (sound: rì; meaning: day or the sun) and 月 (sound: yuè; meaning: month or the moon). Both 日 and 月 contain four strokes as their building blocks although they follow different positional rules.

There are the two standard systems of characters in current use: traditional characters

(e.g. the official characters used in Taiwan) and simplified characters (e.g. the official characters used in mainland China) (Ross and Ma, 2017). Simplified characters were introduced together with Mandarin in China to improve the Chinese literacy rate and to make recognising and writing Chinese easier and more efficient (Ministry of Education in China, 2006). As a result, almost all people in China write simplified characters in the same way (Hudson-Ross and Dong, 1990), but for historical reasons, Hong Kong and Taiwan still use traditional Chinese characters (Higgins and Sheldon, 2001). People in China mainly speak Mandarin for official, educational and other formal reasons, but they might also speak other dialects to communicate with family or friends (Li, 2013). The writing systems of Chinese characters were highly relevant to the present case study because participants and language partners used Mandarin characters in their text messages. They sometimes compared traditional forms of characters with simplified ones to explore and illustrate some cultural reference (see an example in Figure 65) to develop their intercultural competence. The challenges of acquiring characters will be discussed in section 2.2.2.3.

2.2.2 Challenges of CFL education in the UK

The difficulties of learning Chinese are connected to the characteristics as discussed above and the prevalence of homophones, which is a key characteristic of the Chinese language. Neal (2014) maintained that Mandarin Chinese language has many intrinsic linguistic challenges and it is often regarded as very difficult to acquire for English speaking students. Hu (2010) analysed 34 aspects of difficulty for adult learners and identified six major difficulties of learning Chinese, such as grammar, aural reception, words, pronunciation, oral production; and recall. Particularly, the logographic and pictographic nature of written Chinese forms (i.e. simplified or traditional characters) brings a unique challenge for CFL beginner learners (Xu et al, 2013). Additionally,

Anglophone learners are reported to have difficulty in acquiring complex Mandarin tones (Neal, 2014). In addition, CFL education in the UK encounters other problems regarding teaching and learning resources, shortage of qualified CFL teachers, and the lack of a standard syllabus below GCSE level (Wang, 2009; Xie, 2013). These issues impact on one another. The following sections will review the existing literature on the challenges and difficulties of learning Chinese for English CFL beginner learners.

2.2.2.1 Processing pinyin and tones is an additional demand

The first challenge of CFL learning is the limited correspondence between characters and their pronunciation, which poses problems for English speakers who are used to rely on an alphabet to read (Hu, 2010; Sung and Wu, 2011). Although there are some characters that use existing radicals to indicate their pronunciations (e.g. characters 清, 情, 请, 晴, 蜻 all share the same sound radical 青), recognising the sound-symbol correspondence is very experience-based which is not very accessible to beginners. Chinese native speakers are often exposed to the pronunciations of characters years before they study them, but this is not the case for CFL learners in the UK (Bassetti, 2007). Western CFL beginners have to learn the characters and their pronunciation at the same time, which can be time-consuming and frustrating for them (Wang, 1998). Although the Chinese pinyin system borrowed Roman alphabet letters to help children and CFL learners to decode Chinese speech, it does not follow exactly the same phonology patterns of English. For example, some of the sounds in the pinyin system do not appear in English (e.g. ŭ), which makes learning pinyin an additional demand for CFL beginners. For English students, some pinyin spellings can be similar to English spelling but have completely different pronunciation principles (McGinnis, 1999; Lee and Kalyuga, 2011). For example, English speakers may find the pronunciation of ‘c’, ‘q’, and some combination rimes of pinyin like ‘iu’ and ‘ui’

difficult (Bassetti, 2007).

Processing pinyin and tones can be challenging for English speakers due to the large numbers of homophones in the Chinese language (Wong et al., 2010) and limited sound-symbol correspondence in Chinese characters (Liu, 2005). Everson (1998) found that CFL beginners who are English speakers tend to rely on pinyin to read Chinese words' meanings rather than using characters, which does not work well when CFL learners face homophones. It has been pointed out that learning and recognising homophones can be a daunting job for CFL beginners (Shen, 2008; Hu, 2010). Moreover, Lin (1985) found that most CFL beginner learners can barely recognise the subtle differences between different Mandarin tones. Indeed, when it comes to real-life conversation flow, some tones may be omitted partly or changed into other pronunciation due to the combined effect with neighbour tones. Therefore, processing, recognising, and producing Chinese pronunciation can be very challenging for CFL learners. Also, the conditions for changes to neutral tone are too complex for CFL beginner learners to recognise, including second syllable repetition (e.g. 弟弟; 妹妹) and some suffix without a meaning (e.g. 位子; 柜子). All these challenges could affect GCSE Mandarin learners' use of the target language to communicate with language partners online. It was hoped that social networking technology could help participants to tackle some of these issues during the intercultural exchange in this study.

2.2.2.2 Acquiring Chinese Characters can seem endless

Some researchers have argued that Chinese characters are very demanding altogether for speakers of English to acquire (Hu, 2010). For instance, Kirkpatrick (1995) held the view that introducing Asian language at primary school stage to non-heritage learners can be confusing and time-consuming due to the substantial difference between

European and Asian written languages. Chinese speakers generally need to obtain a vocabulary bank of about 3000 words to read newspapers but this can be less for western CFL learners (Sung and Wu, 2011; Wong et al., 2010). As Chinese characters represent meanings but do not necessarily indicate pronunciation, CFL learners thus need to remember all the forms of characters by heart separately and link them to the corresponding pronunciation. When to introduce characters has been a huge debate in the CFL field. Everson (1998) suggested that pinyin should be introduced before characters to help university level CFL learners to acquire and remember words more effectively. However, Hu (2003) found that introducing characters first to young children was more effective in helping them recognise more characters. Moreover, the two versions of written Chinese discussed above (i.e. simplified and traditional systems) could make learning characters more confusing for CFL beginner learners (Yang, 2015).

As discussed earlier, the challenging bit of writing characters is that the connection of strokes can be very different and complicated for English speakers. Writing Chinese strokes properly is challenging for English CFL learners, as the strokes of English letters are much simpler than Chinese strokes. For example, CFL learners may forget to write the dot stroke in character 鸟 (sound: niǎo; meaning: birds), which can turn this character into another one 烏 (sound: wū; meaning dark or crow). Therefore, minor differences of strokes can bring changes of meanings in the CFL education context and add more difficulties to acquiring characters. The GCSE Mandarin learners in this case study needed to type Chinese characters and respond to Chinese messages for intercultural communication. It was intended that the use of social networking tools could help them to better communicate with peers and language partners to develop intercultural communicative competence.

2.2.2.3 Other difficulties of CFL education in the UK

Apart from the difficulties in processing pinyin and tones, and learning characters and homophones, many other factors make CFL education challenging in the UK. For example, Chinese grammar relies on using the selection of vocabulary, word order, and functional words to refer to different time tenses, rather than changing the forms or the gender of words (i.e. inflections). Therefore, the word order in sentences and questions and the use of particles in the Chinese language can cause great difficulties for CFL learners (Hu, 2010). Also, there are assessment challenges to the spread and continuing of Chinese teaching. Current examinations are difficult for students to pass or acquire a satisfactory result (Zhang and Li, 2010). The content of the GCSE syllabus, which tends to guide the secondary curriculum, used to be based on the equivalent content in European language examinations. Moreover, some exams like Pre-university Diploma in Chinese were previously mainly designed with heritage Chinese students and A-level entries mask large numbers of Chinese heritage speakers taking the exam (Tinsley and Board, 2014). Chinese is more distant and therefore more difficult than other European languages to English speakers (Chiswick and Miller, 2005). Given the relative difficulty of learning CFL, this could make it very difficult for non-native speakers to succeed. Therefore, there have been increasing calls for a more standardised national Chinese syllabus, more choices of appropriate teaching materials, and reforms of GCSE and A-levels examinations (Wang and Higgins, 2008; Zhang and Li, 2010). Although new syllabuses have addressed this problem partially and many Chinese heritage learners have switched to IGCSE since 2011, students in England have been achieving very low grades in GCSE and AS/A2 examinations in Chinese (Carruthers, 2012). This makes the subject less attractive to schools and students in an educational climate where judgements of pupils and schools are grade-based. Although Chinese has become a

thriving MFL choice in some British schools, its teaching pedagogy is far from perfect (Zheng, 2006, Zhang and Li, 2010). Three main constraints to CFL education in England were highlighted by a national report (CILT, 2007): 1) the availability of trained qualified teachers, 2) lack of time allocated to Mandarin on the curriculum, and 3) accreditation issues.

To summarise, Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) using pinyin and simplified characters is the type of Chinese language most widely taught in the UK because of its increasing demand and popularity in the Chinese speaking world. However, to acquire Mandarin, CFL learners need to learn characters, pinyin, and tones, and memorise combinations of characters to understand words and to build sentences. Additionally, CFL learners must remember the sound associated with each character to accurately express their meanings. Pinyin may help CFL learners to record the sound with Roman letters and tone marks but sometimes they can be confusing to beginner learners. In the present case study, Mandarin is the language that CFL learners used to communicate with their language partners over the two years, and pinyin is the tool that they use to type Chinese characters to facilitate their communication. The students in this study face all the challenges discussed above. This thesis intends to explore whether the use of social networking technology could contribute to CFL beginner learners' intercultural interaction and communication with culturally different others. The following sections will introduce the key concepts of this thesis: intercultural communicative competence, information and communication technology, and social networking for foreign language education.

2.3 ICC and its importance in foreign language education

Although the term “intercultural competence” emerged in the field of international relationships and affairs in the 1950s, theories on intercultural competence and skills in

education and social science started to develop over the past two decades (Spitzberg and Changnon, 2009). In the UK, the Department for Education (2014:98) has emphasised the intercultural dimension in language education and pointed out that learning a foreign language can be regarded as “liberation from insularity” which opens up new opportunities for children to better understand other and their own cultures. The following sections will review the definition of ICC and discuss related concepts underpinning the issue of teaching languages in English secondary schools and this study. In particular, this section will explain the relationship between intercultural communicative competence (ICC), communicative competence (CC), and intercultural competence (IC).

2.3.1 Definition and development of ICC

Previous literature has used different terms to describe ICC, for example, intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986), cross-cultural adaptation (Lewthwaite, 1996), and intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). Some researchers defined ICC as an equivalent term to the concept of intercultural competence (IC) whilst others recognise the similarity but emphasise the importance of the communicative aspects as well (Fantini, 2000; Schnabel et al., 2016). As there is no absolute consensus on the definition of ICC, this thesis viewed the concept of ICC from both communicative and intercultural perspectives, and the following sections will review the existing literature on key terms CC, IC, and ICC.

2.3.1.1 Communicative competence (CC)

As a goal of language learning, the term Communicative competence (CC) was coined by Hymes (1972) based on Chomsky’s grammatical competence claim. The concept of language proficiency was introduced by Chomsky (1965) to describe the intrinsic

language ability which humans would have. He emphasised that language can be studied without the contexts, and grammatical competence includes syntactic, lexical, morphological, and phonological skills. Linguistic competence (LC), also known as grammatical competence (Chomsky, 1965), refers to language learners' knowledge of grammatical rules to receive or produce meaningful utterances in their own language community (Byram, 1997; Council of Europe, 2001).

The term competence was then taken up by various linguists focusing on the issue of second language teaching. In particular, Hymes (1972) pointed out that Chomsky overlooked the sociocultural features of language learning. He highlighted the importance of context for communication, and then coined the concept of communicative competence (CC). It was argued that CC refers to not only the knowledge of grammar rules but also appropriate use of language in social contexts. Canale and Swain (1980) developed CC into three parts: 1) grammatical competence; 2) sociolinguistic competence, and 3) strategic competence. In 1983, Canale added discourse competence as a fourth aspect of the CC model. Widdowson (1983) also suggested that CC should be taught alongside with LC, by offering both linguistic and communicative contexts for learners in language instruction. Additionally, Savignon (1983) stressed that CC is a dynamic and interpersonal skill, which can be developed in the process of negotiation of meaning between language speakers.

Van Ek (1986) attached two additional points to Canale's (1983) CC model: 1) sociocultural competence which refers to the ability to function in different cultures, and 2) social competence which refers to the understanding of social norms, confidence, and motivation to communicate with other people. Likewise, Brown (1994) emphasised that authentic target language use and real-life language tasks could help language learners to relate classroom activities to longer-term communication needs. He argued

that students' use of language and their fluency in real-world contexts are more important than their accuracy - which is an idea that has major implications for language teachers and learners. To conclude, the core notion of CC is that ideal language learners obtain both correct and appropriate use of the language by applying their knowledge of linguistic grammars, social norms, cultural differences, and discourse principles. Byram (1997) borrowed linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences from Van Ek's (1986) CC model, adding intercultural competence to form his ICC model. Therefore, CC has been a crucial base and preparatory element for ICC development.

2.3.1.2 Intercultural Competence (IC)

Through the influence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), communicative competence (CC) has become widely accepted as one of the major goals of foreign language teaching and "native speaker" has been established as the main standard of learning (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006). However, more criticism of CC has arisen against the native speaker standard which foreign language students would be expected to achieve. An emerging voice has been that sufficient communication could not be achieved without intercultural awareness (Cetinaçci, 2012).

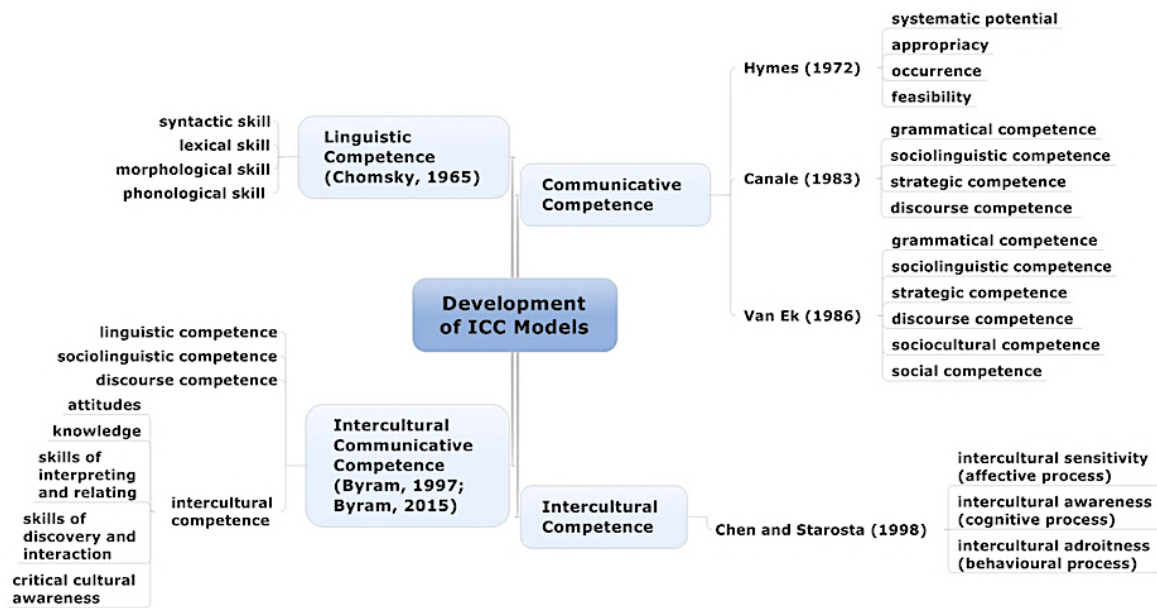
Byram (1997:3) underlined that intercultural competence (IC) means the ability to "decentre" oneself and apply the perspective of others to establish and maintain relationships. Taking into consideration the requirements of IC, Chen and Starosta (1998) identified three basic components in terms of affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects respectively: 1) intercultural sensitivity, 2) intercultural awareness, and 3) intercultural adroitness. As Sinicrope et al. (2007) maintained, the key goal of IC is to help students develop both appropriate and effective conversation and interaction with those from other cultures. Likewise, Bennett (2011) also claimed that IC is a mix of cognitive, affective, and behavioural knowledge that helps people interact

effectively and appropriately in cultural situations. Parra (2011) pointed out that intercultural contact also helps individuals obtain a greater understanding of their own cultural behaviours and values. It could mean language students' knowledge and ability to relate and compare other languages and cultures with their own (Jin, 2012). To conclude, IC generally refers to the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of communicating effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Lustig, 2013). It could be understood that intercultural competence focuses on the interaction and communication between people from different cultural backgrounds. To achieve this, language learners need to develop the ability to communicate with others appropriately and to understand cross-cultural issues and situations in multiple perspectives. IC is a core part of Byram's (1997) ICC model, and the following section will explain ICC and its relation to CC and IC in more detail.

2.3.1.3 Intercultural communicative competence (ICC)

Based on previous developments of linguistic competence (LC), communicative competence (CC), and intercultural competence (IC), the concept of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has become of interest to more and more researchers of foreign language learning (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006; Cetinavci, 2012; Jin, 2012; Bryam, 2015; Winchester, 2015). A brief summary of the development of CC and ICC models can be viewed in Figure 1 below. Although the model of ICC has been discussed and developed by many scholars, this thesis concluded that ICC consists of both communicative competence and intercultural competence. In short, ICC is regarded as a combination of CC and IC (Cetinavci, 2012).

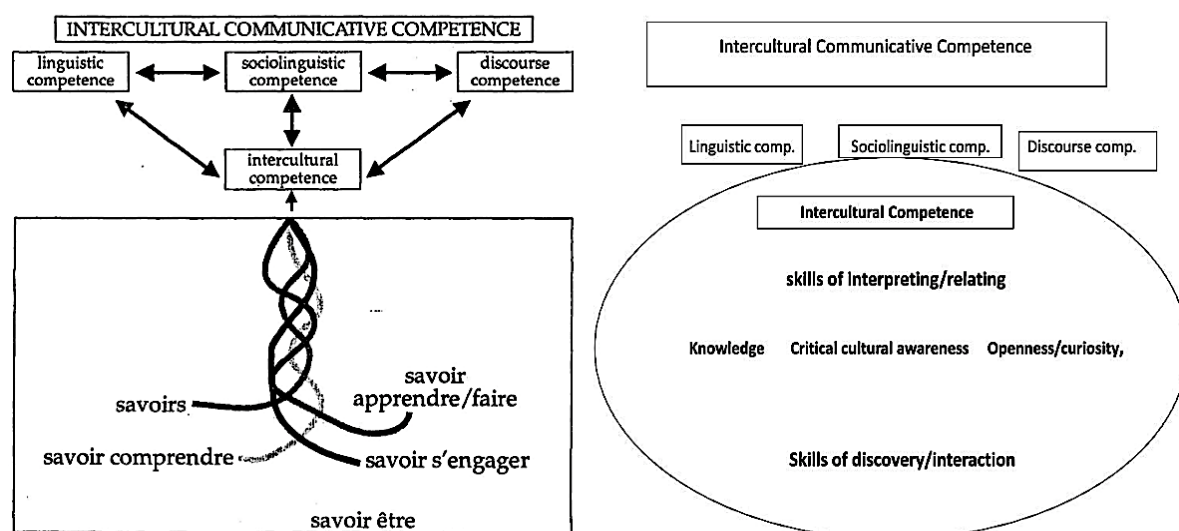
Figure 1 Development of ICC models



Byram (1997) has most extensively developed the concept of ICC and its models. Generally, ICC refers to the competence to achieve effective communication and appropriate relations in multicultural contexts (Byram, 1997; Chen and Starosta, 1998; Chun, 2011). Therefore, to develop ICC, students are required to have sound knowledge of both linguistic and pragmatic language use. This thesis will take Byram's model as a base and point of reference for the analysis of participants' intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997; 2015). As one of the most dominant frameworks in the area of ICC (see Figure 2), it contains four major aspects: 1) Linguistic Competence; 2) Sociolinguistic Competence; 3) Discourse Competence; and 4) Intercultural Competence. Particularly, this model highlighted five components of IC as students': 1) attitudes, openness, and curiosity towards beliefs and disbeliefs about their own and another culture; 2) knowledge of social groups and process of individual and society level interaction in their own and other cultures; 3) skills of interpreting and relating documents and events from their own and other cultures; 4) skills of discovering new cultural knowledge and the ability to conduct real-life intercultural

interaction; and 5) critical cultural awareness when evaluating cultural products, practices, and perspectives in their own and another culture (Byram, 1997). This study intended to explore in what ways a group of CFL beginner learners could develop the components of Byram's ICC model, and how the use of social networking technology could contribute to participants' ICC development in an online exchange project.

Figure 2 Byram's ICC Model (Byram, 1997; 2015)



2.3.2 Importance of developing ICC in foreign language education

Yang (2015) pointed out that the purpose of communicative language teaching (CLT) is to develop learners' ability to use second/foreign languages in real contexts, not just to obtain knowledge of language structures. It was argued that languages should be taught in a meaningful and communicative way, through group work and interactive activities. This approach strongly emphasised the use of the target language for teaching, in order to give students a meaningful experience of that language. Furthermore, teaching materials should be authentic and genuine, based on students' own communicative needs. It is necessary to underline that ICC has been defined as the ability to interact effectively with members from the target culture "in the target

language” (Byram, 1997:71). As communicative competence (CC) is the core goal of CLT and a crucial part of ICC development, students are encouraged to take risks in speaking or writing tasks to guess meanings of conversation by interacting with others. The impact of CLT approaches upon the way how languages are taught is significant. However, ICC consists of not only CC (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences) but also intercultural competence (attitudes, skills, knowledge, and awareness) that should not be overlooked.

2.3.2.1 The inseparable relationship between language and culture in foreign language teaching

The importance of integrating culture into foreign language education has been emphasised by many researchers. According to Kramsch (1993), language is after all a tangible representation and part of the culture by which humans construct their social world. Byram et al. (1994:7) also noticed that the importance of culture has merely been seen as “support to linguistic proficiency” by previous theories. However, Godwin-Jones (2013) argued that without cultural understanding, students may not be able to interpret the real meanings of particular words, even if they have excellent knowledge of pronunciation, vocabulary, and thorough grammar.

In the 1970s, the teaching of culture has been emphasised more in foreign language education and the concept of culture has shifted from the big term “civilization” to the “daily life” of target culture and communities (Kramsch, 1993). Kramsch (2005) explained that the changes of political and social situations in the international context had shifted the objectives of foreign language education from the communicative approach for satisfying the needs of migrant workers in Europe to the cultural dimension and intercultural approach. According to Risager (2007), the 1980s was a

time of “marriage between language and culture”, in which the cultural and intercultural dimension of language education gained high levels of popularity and interest. In the UK, national language education programs underlined the importance of “cultural awareness” for students, which was a positive change (Byram, 2002). Further, the teaching of culture in the 1990s focused on comparing the target and own cultures and addressing stereotypes based on models of developing intercultural competence.

To conclude, the inseparable relationship between language and culture in foreign language teaching has been recognised gradually during the last decades. Culture should not be an addition to language teaching but ought to be integrated into language classes. Foreign language education should be the place where cultural prejudice and stereotypes could be challenged and the relationship between own and foreign cultures should be taught and reflected upon.

2.3.2.2 The intercultural characteristics of CFL education in the global age

In the UK, Jin (2014) carried out her Ph.D. research into intercultural competence in CFL Higher Education. She argued that many CFL teachers have started to consider intercultural instruction, but their teaching practice still need guidance from research. As she pointed out, the issue of ICC is emerging, but underdeveloped, in the context of CFL education in the UK. Jin’s (2014) findings echoed the researcher’s own experience and observation of secondary CFL education in that many teachers tend to teach linguistic part of the language first and then introduce the culture part. As the researcher observed, the GCSE Chinese textbooks that the previous Mandarin teacher was using were dominated by technical language knowledge and skills (please see scanned copies of textbooks in Appendix 9). However, the practical problem has been pointed out to

be that the development of cultural competence is inseparable from language competence (Alptekin, 2002). Therefore, the researcher argues that ICC should be taught alongside the language skills in CFL education. Otherwise, CFL beginner learners' cultural development risks not being consistent with their linguistic development.

As Ghanem (2015) pointed out, globalization, multiculturalism, and multilingualism are terms that play a crucial role in foreign language teaching and learning. One of the important objectives of ICC is to allow students to relate the target culture to their own and critically compare the two cultures to become “intercultural speakers” (Byram, 1997). Therefore, ICC can be regarded as something related to two key concepts in language education in a globalised world: International Mindedness and Global Citizenship (Ellwood and Davis, 2009; OECD, 2018). Yang (2015) also argued that it is very important to be aware of the intercultural characteristics of CFL education as CFL learning could be a cultural activity that deals with issues between Chinese teachers and their non-native students. In this global age, CFL teachers are expected to develop children's global competence to prepare them to be able to observe global and intercultural issues, to appreciate alternative points of view, and to engage in open and effective communications with others (OECD, 2018). Although ICC has been discussed in the field of foreign language education (especially EFL), there remains a gap in understanding in what ways ICC could be developed in CFL teaching and learning at secondary schools. This research therefore intended to explore how social networking technology could be used to reveal intercultural characteristics of CFL education and prepare a group of CFL beginner learners to be globally competent intercultural speakers.

2.3.2.3 International guidelines regarding the intercultural dimension in foreign language education

UNESCO (2006; 2013; 2014; 2016) reports stated that the core of intercultural competence including communication skills, cultural knowledge, and personal attributes such as cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness towards others are more important than ever in a globalised contemporary world. Schools were reported as a crucial place to develop such abilities. Both foreign language education and second language acquisition (SLA) field have recognised the importance of not only linguistic and communicative competences but also intercultural competence (Chun, 2011). Intercultural competences have the potential of empowering students to interact culturally, as well as suspending disbeliefs and conflicts. Byram (2015) emphasised that ICC in language learning could provide pupils with the opportunity to: 1) become familiar with other cultures; 2) broadens an understanding of their own cultural belonging; 3) strengthen their own identity; 4) achieve deeper understanding of their own life when exploring others' life; 5) look at things from a different perspective.

The need for integrating ICC into foreign language education was already emphasised by the national standard documents in other countries. In the USA, for example, the Five Cs Framework in the ACTFL Guidelines (see Figure 3) identified five core goals for language learning and put communication as the top goal of second language study (ACTFL, 1996; 2015). Through learning a foreign language, children are expected to obtain a greater understanding of the target cultures based on effective communication. Through connections and comparisons with the target language, pupils could develop new insights into their own language and culture. The international guidelines recognised that secondary education could be a critical transition period where intercultural experience takes place in school exchanges, and access to the Internet

allows students to tackle the issue of geographic distance in this global age (ACTFL, 2015). Taking into consideration of ICC's important role in SLA and MFL education, it would be necessary to explore how to develop students' ICC more effectively. In England, however, the latest National Curriculum for foreign languages only mentioned requirements about Grammar and Vocabulary, and linguistic competence, with no discussion about intercultural competence or ICC (DfE, 2014).

Figure 3 The Five Cs Framework (ACTFL, 1996:1)



Some English as a foreign language (EFL) research has discussed the notion of ICC. Alptekin (2002) claimed that successful intercultural bilinguals, rather than native speakers, should be seen as pedagogic models in English, and it is crucial for EFL students to develop their ICC. Hismanoglu (2011) explored the relationship of EFL learners' linguistic proficiency and their experience of the target culture to their ICC development. It was concluded that foreign language instructors could develop students' ICC by providing them with videos and films of authentic language communication and interaction. Cetinavci (2012) did secondary research about ICC in EFL and found that although LC and CC have dominated sequentially in language education, ICC is the most favoured type of competence to date. To conclude, at the start of the present study, existing studies in the area of intercultural communicative

competence mainly concern EFL and other European languages. Although there was an increasing number of research on developing ICC in higher education and CFL education, little research had been devoted to how to develop CFL students' ICC in a secondary context. Therefore, in the present case study, the researcher intended to explore how social networking technology can help develop a group of GCSE Mandarin learners' ICC in an English secondary school.

2.3.3 Difficulties of developing and teaching ICC

2.3.3.1 ICC is not static but rather a dynamic process

The first reason why ICC is so difficult to develop is that developing an intercultural outlook is not static but a “lifelong process” (Barrett et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2016). Researchers have pointed out that intercultural competence is subjective and constantly affected by the individual's engagement in interactions with culturally different others (Deardorff, 2006; 2009). A challenge pointed out by Bennett (2011) is that cultural knowledge and intercultural contact does not necessarily lead to competence. Therefore, even if ICC has been discussed and emphasised by curriculum documents and research articles, it still needs more exploration in practice. As Winchester (2015) explained, understanding the sociocultural meanings of perceived norms is inevitably harder to achieve than just being aware of them. Witte (2014) pointed out that the process of developing ICC involves long-term efforts of implicit and explicit learning in which ICC cannot be acquired automatically as a by-product. In other words, ICC is not just a product that language learners can achieve once and for all. Instead, developing ICC is a long process of learning, practice, and reflection which can be challenging. Moreover, Allen (2013) argued that it is difficult to teach ICC because students often lack strategies to encounter other speakers who are culturally different beyond classroom settings.

ICC is closely related to language learners' knowledge and skills around the target culture (Byram, 1997). However, culture is not an easy object to learn and acquire, although there are many tangible cultural products such as food, buildings, books, and paintings (Page and Benander, 2016). To help students to really understand cultural practices and perspectives can be difficult, as they need to be reflected by the human minds upon culturally different choices and actions (Witte, 2014). The development of ICC needs to be gradually transformed from a wide range of different layers of attitudes (respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery), knowledge (e.g., cultural self-awareness, culture-specific knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness), and skills (observation, listening, evaluating, analysing, interpreting, and relating) that may not happen in classroom settings (Byram, 2015). Furthermore, Fantini (2010) highlighted it can be very difficult to develop ICC when students are expected to learn how to persistently negotiate meanings and construct identities culturally and socially.

2.3.3.2 The “third place” needs to be co-constructed and reconstructed with others to develop ICC

ICC is not easy to develop because language learners need to collaboratively construct the “third place” (Kramsch, 1993) or ‘third places’ (Soukup, 2006) with culturally different others to achieve dialogue and intercultural understanding (Bryant et al., 2014). The term “third place” originated from Bakhtin's (1986) notion of “dialogism” and Bhabha's (1990) “third domain”. Kramsch (1993:236) suggested that language students have to position themselves in a third place to appreciate the gaps between the target culture and own culture. Such a third place or space was defined as a channel for discursive dialogue to take place where the meaning of culture are not fixed and even the same symbol could be read and translated anew” (Bhabha, 1990:37). Therefore,

cultural learning could become a very dialogic and interactive journey for learners and others, as intercultural understanding should not be a fixed or one-direction outcome of learning and passively accepting the target culture. Instead, language learners' intercultural learning experience needs to be constantly co-constructed and reconstructed by interacting with the other culture. Byram's (1997) requirement for "critical cultural awareness" of ICC captured the soul of the "third place" notion with features such as safe place, levelling, and accessibility. However, challenges lie in the process of critique and reflection that learners need to conduct to grow an awareness of alternative worldviews without taking the target or own culture for granted.

Young (2001) echoed the idea that it is quite challenging for language learners to develop the ability to decentre themselves from their own stances to have dialogue with culturally different others in the third space. Durán et al. (2016) argued that intercultural communication needs students to observe other cultures' different sets of beliefs and values from various perspectives. The competence to construct the third place is the focus of ICC, which regards culture as constructed and negotiated among students and others. Therefore, ICC also refers to students' knowledge and skills of creating a dialogic community in the third place, rather than only demonstrating one-sided adaptation to the target culture (Kramsch, 1995; Byram, 1997). This is very important in this thesis because developing intercultural communicative competence requires language learners to keep a critical stance to reflect on both the target culture and their home culture (Byram, 1997). Nonetheless, negotiation and construction of meanings in the process of developing ICC can be very demanding for learners and teachers. In short, the need to collaboratively construct a safe and comfortable "third space" makes the learning of ICC a continuous difficult journey (Czura, 2016).

2.3.3.3 Ongoing output practices like interlanguage and translanguaging are needed to develop ICC

Han (2017) concluded that second language acquisition (SLA) occurs in social interaction and conversations involving input, output, interaction, feedback, and negotiation of form/meaning with others. Empirical studies in SLA in the past 40 years have shown that input is inadequate for students to acquire a second language (Jin, 2017). As for output, Swain (1985; 2005) argued that L2 output opportunities can enhance accuracy, by promoting noticing of errors, and provide opportunities for metalinguistic reflection, including self-reflection and peer-peer co-reflection. Swain and Lapkin (1995) argued that pushed output, where students make efforts to respond to incomplete understandings, is highly necessary for helping learners to engage in both syntactic and semantic processing and develop automaticity in L2 production. This is because opportunities for output could help students to identify the gap between what they want to say and what their language competence allows them to produce (Swain, 1985; Batstone, 2002; Leiser, 2008; Russell, 2014). The Interactionist SLA researchers argued that to functionally use L2 in meaningful interactions could contribute to learners' language production and provide more opportunities for L2 acquisition to occur (Swain, 1985; Chapelle, 2006; Mackey and Goo, 2007). Therefore, apart from exploring whether and how CFL beginner learners could use social networking tools for more input, this research also intended to examine whether and how output opportunities could affect participants' Mandarin learning and ICC development.

When producing output, L2 learners may generate some forms of interlanguage in a Community of Inquiry (Young, 1988). Selinker (1972) pointed out that many L2 learners sometimes attempt to express meanings in L2 forms but partly use L1 knowledge and follow L1 patterns, which is a unique new language system created in

the process of language learning. According to Interlanguage Hypothesis, interlanguage is happening to all language learners and it is a system different from both the target language and the native language (Lakshmanan and Selinker, 2001). This suggests that interlanguage must be noticed and analysed to understand language learners' language competence accurately and effectively. To summarise, interlanguage is neither the system of the target language nor that of the mother tongue, but instead, it is a new language system in between. It reflects the language learners' attempts of trials and hypotheses testing. It would be interesting to explore whether social networking tools can facilitate more meaningful communication to help CFL beginner learners to produce more output, what kinds of output could secondary GCSE Mandarin students generate, and to which extent that the social nature of social networking technology could affect CFL students' output creation.

Translanguaging is one of the effective strategies to provide an adequate number of output opportunities in language learning, which refers to the dynamic process where language learners use both languages as a mixed communication system (Canagarajah, 2011). The term "translanguaging" was coined by Williams (1994) to describe a type of pedagogy that does not separate the use of home and target languages exactly in bilingual education. Lewis et al. (2012) explained that the process of translanguaging often involve language production, effective communication, and code-switching processes behind the use of languages. It was stressed that the emphasis of translanguaging is on the internal language use that often consist of linguistic and multimodal signs beyond the concepts of external languages like Chinese or English (García and Li, 2014). In this case study, although the GCSE Mandarin learners were CFL beginners, they were at the early phases of English and Chinese bilingualism. It could be interesting to observe what translanguaging experience social networking tools could bring to the participants in this study. Social networking tools will be used to

create a translanguaging space for a group of CFL beginner learners to speak in Mandarin and English, or even code-switch between Chinese, English, and Pinyin, in order to help participants to act in ways of Chinese and English in times of need. To sum up, the researcher intended to observe and analyse a group of secondary CFL students' online chats to explore how interlanguage and translanguaging with social networking tools could contribute to their ICC development.

2.3.3.4 CFL teachers may not be ready to teach and assess ICC

Language teachers can play a crucial role in helping learners to develop cultural understanding and appreciation in intercultural settings (Liao et al., 2017). However, researchers have pointed out that CFL teachers may not be ready to teach ICC because they exist in the web of complexities surrounding the teaching of Chinese (Jin, 2014), discussed above. One of the reasons has been explained that some language teachers may think they are only competent to teach language, not literature or culture (Kramsch, 1993). While MFL has been considered as a suitable subject where the teaching of ICC can be integrated, language teachers may feel underprepared to develop this competence in their classes because it is often not in the curriculum assessments (Fantini, 2010; Zheng, 2014). Zu (2004) summarised two methods of teaching Chinese culture, one is to teach culture outside of language courses, and the other is to integrate culture in language teaching by explanation. However, she failed to explain to teachers how the interaction between Chinese culture and language could be achieved in and outside classrooms. Likewise, although the National Curriculum mentioned developing children's cultural awareness, the nature of cultural awareness remains vague for language teachers with no specific guidelines for the implementation of ICC development.

Although more schools in England are starting to offer CFL education, have link schools in China and organise immersion courses, the staffing problem across the country has been a focus of attention (Neal, 2014). Qualified Chinese teachers are rare, and many of them are from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, or British heritage with Chinese backgrounds (Medwell et al., 2012). However, the majority of CFL teachers are Chinese native speakers who may not have sufficient knowledge about English culture and educational systems (Wang, 2009). As Liao et al. (2017:369) noted, many CFL teachers could face numerous difficulties including “managing classrooms, developing curricular materials, crafting instructional strategies, assessing students, catering to learner differences, and collaborating with others”. Moreover, many of the UK CFL teachers work part-time, so they are unable to allocate time and energy to teaching and assessing ICC or to give time to professional development (Wang, 2009; Zheng, 2014). Therefore, teachers of Chinese in the UK may not be ready to teach ICC, which makes students’ ICC development even harder.

To sum up, researchers agreed that the development of ICC is not static but a very dynamic process where learners’ competence is not acquired in one day or permanently. Also, ICC is difficult to develop because the ‘third space’ needs to be co-constructed and negotiated between L2 learners and the culturally different others. Teachers of Mandarin face many challenges and may feel unprepared to help students to develop ICC, especially when it is not a specific curriculum assessment goal, but rather an overarching purpose for language teaching. Therefore, the current study planned to investigate whether the exciting possibilities offered by social networking technology can be used by CFL learners to provide more opportunities to interact with culturally different others beyond classrooms, and to explore in a longer term whether CFL learners can construct a third place using social networking tools to achieve any sustained ICC development. The above issues will be discussed in more detail in

section 4.2.3 when analysing “teaching presence” from the teacher and participants in a Community of Inquiry in this study.

2.4 ICT and its use in foreign language education

The rise of mobile technology as a tool for intercultural communication in foreign language education have been emerging issues in recent years (Álvarez and Kan, 2012; Kan et al., 2013; Jin, 2014; Yang, 2016). This section will present a definition and typology of ICT, and review the advantages of technology and the potential impacts of it on MFL education. In particular, this section will review the research that has explored the potential of technology for language learning, meaningful interaction, communication skills, and intercultural exchange, which are important background to this case study.

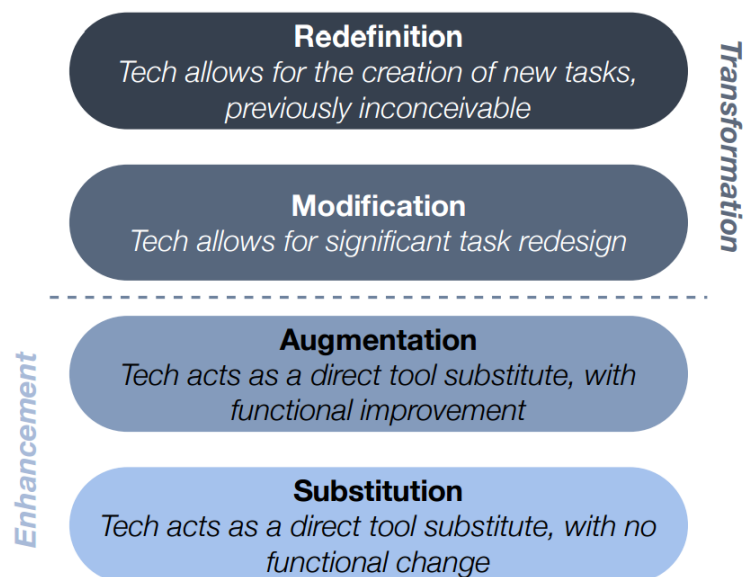
2.4.1 Definition and typology of ICT

Moving into the 21st century, technology-enhanced learning courses are gaining popularity (Garrison and Anderson, 2003; Anderson et al., 2015). The term technology in current literature mainly refers to “new and digital” applications based on computers and mobile devices with the Internet (Koehler and Mishra, 2009). The term ICT means technologies related to information and communication, providing tools for creativity and presentation, as well as opportunities for collaboration and communication within and beyond the school (Becta and CILT, 2009). Another key concept “mobile learning” is defined by Pegrum (2014) as the kind of learning when the devices, learners, and learning are mobile, and students could either choose to bring their own devices (BYOD) or use school-issued devices.

Maddux et al. (2001) identified a dichotomy of Type I and Type II applications as a

way of classifying technology. The main utility of Type I applications is to make the traditional teacher-centred instruction more effective and efficient. In contrast, Type II applications use ICT tools in new and different ways so that students are the controllers of what happens on the screen, instead of being passive learners (Maddux and Johnson, 2008). Puentedura (2009) developed a SAMR Model (see Figure 4) which distinguishes four levels of technology utilisation into two categories (i.e. enhancement and transformation). In MFL classrooms, examples of Type I application might be digital drills or quiz (i.e. enhancement), whereas Type II applications could be student-centred information searching, video conferencing, and problem-solving about target language and culture (i.e. transformation). Type II technologies fundamentally change the way of learning, rather than offering applications to do the same thing slightly differently (Maddux and Johnson, 2008). The status quo, however, is that Type I applications are used more widely, but Type II technologies are more efficient and powerful with students in schools (Leach and Moon, 2010).

Figure 4 SAMR Model (Puentedura, 2009)



Likewise, Wang and Vasquez (2012) pointed out a dichotomy of Web 1.0 versus Web 2.0 technology which is similar to the earlier enhancement/transformation dichotomy.

They claimed that the application of Web 2.0 technology has the potential to transform language learning and pedagogy, curriculum design, and even relevant research in the SLA field. It was argued that Web 2.0 environment is more collaborative and user-friendly where they can actively participate and contribute to the construction and growth of knowledge (O'Reilly, 2005). Therefore, it would be valuable to look at the advantages and challenges of using ICT to develop ICC in the CFL context.

2.4.2 Key affordances and constraints of ICT

Although it has been claimed that the shift from traditional language education to innovative language instruction is greatly facilitated by the advancements in new technology (Wang and Vasquez, 2012), the long-predicted transformative revolutions have not necessarily arrived in MFL classrooms (Preston and Younie, 2017). The reality of using ICT at English secondary schools is that interactive whiteboards are still utilised in limited and limiting ways (Kneen, 2014), not alone to say more complex and transformative ways of using modern technologies. Therefore, it would be valuable to look at the affordances and constraints of ICT that can be used in secondary schools to facilitate learners, and how certain technologies can be used in a CFL context in this case study.

2.4.2.1 The concept of “affordance” in the use of technology

The concept of “affordance” was coined by Gibson (1986) to refer to what an environment offers to the animals, including both positive and negative aspects (Greeno, 1994). Gaver (1991; 1996) further divided technology affordances into three types: “perceptible, hidden, and false”. He argued that perceptible affordances could help people to see directly how certain technologies could be used but hidden and false

affordances could lead to misinterpretations of the use of technology. The contribution of this term is that it reminds researchers that this world can be perceived from many complementary perspectives and technology could provide both opportunities and constraints depending on the perceivers (Hammond, 2010).

An early paper applying ideas of affordance and constraint to educational ICT was written by Kennewell (2001) which proposed a framework to help teachers to analyse the effects of and to improve the positive impact of ICT in their classrooms and beyond. It was pointed out that the affordances and constraints of ICT are different from those factors that are directly related to the subject matter. The affordance and constraints of ICT need to be considered carefully otherwise technology might cause digital disaster rather than promote e-maturity in education (Morris, 2012). Regarding the use of social networking technology in education, the affordances should be perceived from multiple dimensions based on the multi-faceted characteristics of social media (Zhao et al., 2013; Mao, 2014). Therefore, it would be useful to reflect upon not only the opportunities but also the constraints of ICT and social networking tools in this study when analysing students' online communication and interactions.

2.4.2.2 The concept of “digital natives” in language education

The term “digital natives” refers to current younger generation who were born in the digital era and used to the affordances of the Internet and technology from very young (Prensky, 2001; Gibbons, 2007; Bosch, 2009; Helsper and Eynon, 2010). It has been claimed that social networking sites are more popular with younger people, for their affordances, including increasing collaboration, maintaining relationship, and sharing resource between people (Heinze and Reinhardt, 2011). Nevertheless, the concept “digital natives” has been criticised as misleading and problematic because people who

are born in the digital age are not necessarily born with more sophisticated knowledge and different skills of information technologies. Also, there has been no evidence indicating that the younger generation would learn fundamentally differently, have different learning needs or special learning preferences than earlier generations of learners (Bennett et al., 2008). In a situation where there are possibilities which are undemonstrated, this study will explore how a group of young CFL learners could make the most of the key affordances of technology and reflect upon the constraints in a two-year process for intercultural communication. The next section will present potential opportunities and advantages of information and communication technology for foreign language education based on its affordances.

2.4.3 Advantages of technology for foreign language education

In terms of advantages of ICT for language education compared to traditional teaching, as Facer and Owen (2004) concluded there are a number of potential advantages: 1) increasing motivation, 2) learning outside classrooms, 3) meaningful authentic practice, 4) responsive feedbacks, 5) creative devices, and 6) information and resource sharing between MFL teachers. Many researchers have explored the potential of technology for language acquisition, meaningful interaction, discourse construction, and communication skills (Risner, 2011) and the following sections will present the highlighted advantages.

2.4.3.1 More access to authentic resources and useful tools

Becta and CILT (2009) regarded the most obvious advantage of technology as rapid and easy access to real-world learning materials in the target language. Risner (2011) noted that on-going advancements in technology allow affordable access to information and resources. A wide range of real materials and downloadable podcasts could be adapted

to develop vocabulary, identify grammar in context, and practise listening skills and word recognition (Godwin-Jones, 2005). Taking authentic online learning materials as an example, BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) Languages webpage provides a variety of courses and free resources, as well as tests of 40 foreign languages (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/>). There are many ICT tools and resources designed for different levels of CFL learners, which can facilitate students to understand the daily life and culture of modern Chinese society without travelling to China. The series *Growing up with Chinese* teaches 300 of the most commonly spoken Chinese phrases to beginners, which is entertaining, fun and easy to follow. The series *Travel in Chinese* has a total of 100 lessons, which introduce the language, the food or the culture of China to intermediate learners. *Happy Chinese* has two seasons, with the first season about family and school life and the second one about travelling for advanced learners. Frequently used Chinese phrases in the scenes are explained and related examples of using those phrases are given for CFL learners.

In addition to online videos, there are many useful websites and apps about particular aspects of Chinese that students could easily access to (e.g. Chinese characters, phrases, sentence structures, grammar, literature, and cultures etc.). For example, the *Arch Chinese* website (<http://www.archchinese.com/>) provides animated stroke order presentations for frequently-used Chinese characters in both simplified and traditional forms. The stroke order animations are featured with high-quality native-speaker recordings, which would be really useful for children's Chinese character writing. Students can even create and print their own flashcards, worksheets, and puzzles, which might increase their learning motivation. Another example is the emergence of mobile digital dictionaries (e.g. Pleco). Students could explore the pronunciation and meaning of new Chinese characters and words at any time anywhere with the Internet access, rather than relying heavily on teachers and course books as the only source of

information and knowledge. Although there has been a wide range of different kinds of technological resources, more exploration about how ICT could be best integrated into CFL classrooms without overloading teachers and students is needed.

2.4.3.2 Increased motivation and engagement in MFL learning

England's performance does not compare well with the global average across foreign language skills and this fact has been influenced by students' attitudes towards language learning (NFER, 2013; DfE, 2013). Motivated pupils tend to have better performance, whereas those who had negative attitudes and motivation towards languages tended to perform at lower levels (Ortega, 2011; Dörnyei, 2011). In England, GCSE learners expressed their hope of having more available time speaking with speakers of the target language, visiting the target country and learning the target culture (NFER, 2013). Therefore, students' motivation for MFL could be closely linked with their language competence and England's national performance of language skills. The positive effects of ICT on pupils' attitudes and motivation to MFL learning have been reported as students' greater interest in the subject and increased commitment to learning tasks (Cox et al., 2003).

Gardner and Lambert (1959) concluded that there are some key factors (e.g. social and cultural variables; individual learner differences; learning settings and contexts; learning outcomes) that could affect L2 learning and acquisition. It was pointed out that L2 motivation consisted of three main aspects: 1) learners' will to make effort; 2) learners' wish to achieve a goal; 3) learners' enjoyment in doing tasks. The concept "integrativeness" in Gardner's (2001:5) motivation model was regarded as learners' genuine interest in L2 learning in order to become closer to L2 communities. The researcher argues that this term is closely related to ICC development, emphasising

learners' openness and curiosity to the target language, culture, and community, as well as their ability to relate back to their own language, culture and identity (Byram, 1997). Dörnyei (2011) developed the L2 Motivational Self System, which has been claimed as one of the most dominant L2 motivation frameworks to explain learners' changes of motivation and relevant learning experience. However, there had been rare research on secondary GCSE Mandarin learners' motivation and ICC development. Therefore, the current research intended to explore whether the use of modern technologies could improve and sustain GCSE Mandarin learners' motivation and how this could contribute to their ICC development.

2.4.3.3 Transformative communication with native speakers

Another important benefit is the possibility that students may be able to make and maintain contact with native speakers or bilinguals, allowing them to communicate and understand their culture. It was argued that the use of Web 2.0 technologies could bring transformative impact for MFL education compared to traditional teaching and learning approaches (Leahy, 2008). In particular, computer-mediated communication (CMC), including both synchronous and asynchronous modes of communication between human beings via networked computers (Warschauer, 1999; Herring, 2004), has transformed language learning in university levels (Blattner and Fiori, 2009; Zhang, 2013). The benefits of CMC to language learning included: 1) boosted motivation; 2) enhanced autonomy; and 3) increased collaboration (Fisher et al., 2004; Hurd, 2005; Chiu, 2008; Lee, 2011).

An asynchronous CMC project carried out by Ware and Kramersch (2005) suggested that online intercultural exchanges enabled teachers and students to gain more competence about language and culture. In that project, students developed their ICC in terms of

attitudes, knowledge, and skills in real-life interaction with partners from another culture. For young pupils, one of the key benefits of Web 2.0 technologies is the social interactions with learner-centred active participation and intercultural activities (Prensky, 2001). Also, Byram (2015) highlighted that it is social actors in online multilingual settings that enable students to communicate not only effectively but also appropriately with one another. Godwin-Jones (2013) argued that the Internet could support language learners to connect with native speakers which could open up new opportunities beyond language classrooms and textbooks.

2.4.3.4 Effective use of technology for CFL education

Although it has been argued that use of technology has made university level foreign language instruction more effective, by offering more student-centeredness, learner autonomy, and interactive activities, the literature about the secondary school sector in the UK portrays a rather more mixed experience (Fisher et al., 2004; Bui, 2012). Godwin-Jones (2013) demonstrated some effective MFL activities such as video subtitling, captioning and transcribing, which provide both linguistic and cultural knowledge. Parra (2011) found that ICT-based activities like emailing could improve students' communicative abilities and intercultural behaviour. Based on general knowledge of using ICT to support MFL education, many researchers have particularly looked at CFL teaching and learning, in classrooms or extra-curriculum time. Kuo and Hooper (2004) suggested that ICT could be used to create a student-centred learning experience to promote student autonomy. Jiang and Ramsay (2005) used CMC applications to help students build rapport with teachers for Chinese learning. In this study, a WebCT discussion board was used where students could ask and answer questions and write emails to teachers in Pinyin. Results showed that rapport building enhanced students' Mandarin learning by motivating learners and reducing their

learning anxiety. This study suggested that technology may have had an effective role in changing the relationship between teachers and pupils in the traditional classroom setting. However, this study was based on students' good command of pinyin.

Xu et al. (2013) carried out an experiment in the USA to compare how effective reading, animation, and writing are for the development of CFL undergraduates' Chinese orthographic knowledge. They found that writing was superior, reproducing characters from memory, and the effect of animation in recalling meaning was best. However, the delayed test indicated participants' serious memory loss. This study suggested the effectiveness of animation in helping students' character recall but it reminded future researchers that ICT tools need to be evaluated in the longer term, not only immediately, to ensure students' cognitive learning. Moreover, how to help students practise their language skills meaningfully needs further investigation. Chen et al. (2014) indicated that using multimedia technology could facilitate non-native CFL beginner learners to learn Chinese characters more effectively.

Another example is a two-year project called Multilingual Storytelling, in which a number of mainstream schools and overseas link schools worked together to engage students in digital language learning (Anderson et al., 2015). In this project, a class of Year 5 CFL pupils in a complementary school created their digital stories about the Chinese Zodiac. Theme-specific vocabulary was provided by the teacher, and children used these characters and their English translations to present the stories. As a result, children's literacy, media, thinking, research skills, and cultural understanding were improved. The teacher noted significant improvement in CFL learners' speaking and listening competence, reading comprehension and character recognition. However, in that school, most of the students are British born Chinese and other heritage students whose parents can speak some Mandarin. By contrast, the vast majority of students

currently learning Chinese at mainstream schools in England are studying it as a second/foreign language, not as a community or heritage language (CILT, 2007). In the present research, the researcher will explore the use of technology in a comprehensive secondary school where the CFL beginner learners were very different from Chinese heritage learners.

Wong et al. (2010) conducted a case study about using ICT to learn Chinese idioms in Singapore, in which the primary school assigned mobile devices to students to use in school. Chinese learners used ICT tools to take photos of their everyday life and they were asked to make sentences with the new Chinese sayings and idioms that they had learnt in lessons to describe the photos. Although the devices were issued by the school, students could take them out of classrooms and schools. The students were highly motivated and engaged in the online and classroom activities of creating and sharing sentences with newly acquired idioms. It was found that with the help of student controlled devices, CFL education can be effective in that children are empowered with autonomy in the afterschool informal learning. Therefore, this thesis intended to explore how a group of CFL beginner learners could use social networking technology to achieve ICC development. The following sections will present literature on the key concept of this thesis: social networking for foreign language learning.

To sum up, ICT could be effective because of its role in changing many aspects of foreign language education including CFL teaching and learning. It could generate the effect to change teacher-centred classrooms into student-led learning communities. In traditional language instruction, teachers are mainly controlling the classroom learning process. By contrast, in technology-enhanced language education, a variety of school-based ICT tools and student-owned devices could work together to facilitate student-centred language learning (Asia Society, 2010). Social networking tools have become

commonplace and provide a forum for international communication (Brighton, 2013). However, there have been few studies investigating the potential of ICT for CFL education at English secondary schools to date. Therefore, it would be valuable to explore how ICT could be best used to achieve its potential advantages in CFL education and contribute to CFL beginner learners' ICC development.

2.4.4 Social Networking for foreign language education

The past decade has witnessed a shift of technology from only allowing users to browse existing information to also enabling users to generate new information, although there are studies suggesting that this potential is not necessarily realised among the many users (Warschauer and Grimes, 2007). It has been argued that the more revolutionary shift of technology is happening in the field of social networking based interaction and collaboration (Godwin-Jones, 2008). Educators and researchers in the field of Second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language education argued that social networking tools bring great potential for literacy practice and language learning (McBride, 2009; Stevenson and Liu, 2010; Lamy and Zourou, 2013). Social networking technologies have provided more opportunities for international and intercultural communication than before (Brighton, 2013). As Kramsch and Thorne (2002:85) maintained, social networking technologies brought "a significant pedagogical shift", moving from learning languages as a brain processing activity, to language learning as contextual collaboration and social interaction. The current case study intended to examine whether and how the use of social networking tools could develop a group of CFL beginner learners' ICC through contextual collaboration and social interaction in an online exchange project. The following sections will review the literature on using social networking for foreign language education and introduce multimedia and multimodality for foreign language education.

2.4.4.1 Research on using social networking for foreign language education

Many language teachers and researchers have considered using social media and social networking (SN) technology to support innovative language learning (Wang, 2013). It was claimed that there was a shift in language education from cognitive language learning to sociocultural learning with the emergence of social networking technology (O'Dowd, 2006; Lamy and Hampel, 2007). Social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter could bring affordances including mobility, connectivity, individuality, and accessibility (e.g. strong bonds between social networking users, a sense of class community, friendship maintaining, and resource sharing which may help increase students' motivation and performance) (Blattner and Fiori, 2009). Social networking technologies (e.g. Facebook) are typically concerned with social communication and interaction among students, family members, teachers, and alumni (Aydin, 2012). Mazer et al. (2007) have pointed out the positive relationship between teachers' self-disclosure on Facebook (e.g. sharing of personal information, pictures) and students' motivation increase plus better classroom climate. Also, Antenos-Conforti (2009) investigated using another social networking tool Twitter in the teaching of Italian as a second language. It was found that the development of social networking technology shifts from linking information to linking people, with the potential of creating better interaction between learners and instructors. It could be concluded that researchers have highlighted the potential of social networking tools to create sociocultural contexts for foreign language education and intercultural exchange (Warschauer, 1999; Kramsch and Thorne, 2002).

Social networking sites and apps could be especially useful for language learners' communication, interaction and collaboration with peers, native speaker language

partners, and instructors. For instance, emails and text/voice messages could help students communicate easily with their friends from other countries. In addition, some studies explored the potential of social networking for CFL learners. Hung (2007) did an intercultural exchange project connecting EFL adult learners in Taiwan and CFL adult learners in the UK with instant messengers, wikis, and emails. It was claimed that cultural education and technology applications can converge effectively in the field of telecollaborative language learning based on Byram's (1997) model. Students were observed to have developed their knowledge, intercultural skills, and cultural awareness towards their partners' culture and their own. The emergence of flexible social media applications has given possibilities for asynchronous communication, allowing children to work together to develop awareness of aspects of each other's lives, cultures, and languages. However, it would be challenging to arrange video conferencing for British and Chinese students due to long distance and time differences between England and China. To conclude, social networking tools could allow students to observe and participate in authentic L2 discourse communities, as well as to post content based on their own lives and home cultures. This research will, therefore, explore in what ways social networking tools could be used to support a group of CFL beginner learners to take a role in an online L2 speech community to develop intercultural communicative competence.

2.4.4.2 Multimedia and multimodality for language education

The prefix "multi" could be understood as more than one means. Multimedia and multimodality mainly refer to multiple communication modes or media (e.g. linguistic, visual, textual, and aural) that can be used to create meanings, understand messages, or facilitate learning (Murray, 2013). Kramsch et al. (2000:98) argued that the Internet and free multimedia empower students to use multimodal content to express themselves in

an economic manner, which was not easy to achieve in traditional settings. Likewise, Kress (2003) pointed out that new technology could lead to an underlying change in communication and representation of information due to its multiple affordances. A related concept in language learning is ‘multiliteracy’ which describes the different modes of language literacy from page-based text to screen-based messages produced by multimedia (Kress, 2003). It was argued that most research about social networking technology investigated its core function: friending and relationship maintaining. They found that senior secondary school learners’ use of social networking space involved multimedia literacies based on multimodal text and content.

Computers could provide multiple modes of communication to promote sociocultural cooperation and collaboration in a wide range of ways to language learning (Lamy and Hampel, 2007). In terms of using multimedia and multimodality for CFL education, Hung (2007) did an intercultural exchange project connecting adult EFL learners in Taiwan and CFL learners in the UK with multimedia including instant messengers, wikis, and emails. It was claimed that cultural education and technology applications can converge effectively in the field of telecollaborative language learning based on Byram’s (1997) ICC model. It was reported that participants have increased their cultural knowledge, interaction skills, and intercultural awareness towards the target culture and their own culture with the help of the multimodality of multimedia. In the present study, a group of CFL beginner learners would need to use multimedia and multimodality features of social networking tools to create meanings and understand multiliteracy with their language partners.

To conclude, the multimodality feature of multimedia has the potential to help teachers to mediate information through various channels and produce multiple resources for students in foreign language education (Lamy and Hampel, 2007). Kress (2003)

maintained that multimedia and multimodality on new technologies could contribute to ideal language learning settings to enable teachers and students to communicate virtually through multiple modes (e.g. written and spoken language, images, and stickers). Also, O'Dowd (2006) pointed out that different types of media could be combined together to develop students' ICC effectively with the contribution of multimodal technologies (e.g. synchronous video conferencing combined with asynchronous text-based chats). However, it still lacks empirical research on whether and how the multimodal feature of multimedia with social networking tools could provide multimodal products and resources to create authentic communities for intercultural interaction and collaboration with others to develop ICC. Despite its multimodal potential, social networking tools still needed further attention and research on secondary CFL education. The present research therefore aimed at exploring how multimodal features of different social networking tools could contribute to a group of CFL beginner learners' Mandarin learning and ICC development. In this case study, by using various features of social networking tools, participants were hoped to learn how to communicate with their language partners in a virtual online community, and also see Shanghai students in real time. Key features of the particular social networking tools that participants used in this research can be seen in section 3.5.5.3. The researcher was interested in investigating whether and how the group of GCSE Mandarin learners could use a wide variety of multimodal representations with social networking tools for intercultural communication.

2.5 Social constructivism and sociocultural theories for foreign language education

This section will review the background theories of this case study: social constructivism and sociocultural learning that are related to foreign language education. This is highly relevant to the present research as these theories set the broad theoretical

foundations for the key concepts and methodologies of this study. Constructivism maintains that language learning is a process of constructing understanding through processing previous knowledge and new information (Vygotsky, 1978). Based on Constructivism theory framework, the social constructivism approach to foreign language education highlighted that knowledge and understanding are “co-constructed” by students and others through social interaction and communication (Hymes, 1972; Canale and Swain, 1980).

2.5.1 The sociocultural dimension in language learning

Recent decades have witnessed the increasing number of follow-up research on applying sociocultural theory to foreign language education (Warschauer, 1997; Lantolf, 2000). There was a “social turn” in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), influenced by the renaissance of Vygotsky’s constructivism (Block, 2003:4). Sociocultural theory has been a cluster of theories inspired by Vygotsky’s psychological and educational perspective on children’s cognitive development, which is then often used to analyse the impact of social interactions on learners’ mental development (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Lantolf et al., 2015; Lantolf et al., 2018). It has been argued that there is a social nature in human learning and there are two levels in children’s development: the social level between people first and the individual level inside the child later (Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theorists held that people exchange ideas, construct meanings, and regulate their behaviours in sociocultural interactions and contexts (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Appel, 1994; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006).

Vygotsky’s (1978) theories about children’s cognitive development was further

developed to the field of foreign language teaching and learning. Lamy and Zourou (2013) concluded that sociocultural theorists regarded language learning as a “contextualised and interpersonal process” situated in social and cultural contexts, rather than pure cognitive information processing independently. In the second language (L2) learning area, it was held that meanings of words are not fixed in different social contexts because language users might adjust or recreate new meanings of words for various communicative purposes in different cultural scenarios (Brooks and Donato, 1994; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 1995; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Lamy and Zourou, 2013; Lantolf et al., 2018). This means that language learning arises not through students’ mere internal processing but in interactions with others in different social contexts (Ellis, 1999). Therefore, in sociolinguistic and discourse levels, words can have very different meanings from their original linguistic meanings, which might set barriers to foreign language learners. To address such barriers, social constructivism and sociocultural theorists argued that task-based language teaching and learning could be used to help language learners to construct their understanding of different real-world contexts to develop their language competences (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; González-Lloret and Ortega, 2014).

However, in the present research, it was a disadvantage for the group of GCSE Mandarin students to learn Chinese in England, as they were not physically immersed in a Chinese speaking community or environment and they could hardly access different social and cultural contexts for CFL learning. Therefore, it was felt necessary to create a sociocultural online community for the group of CFL beginner learners to be exposed with extra target language input, as well as sociocultural communication contexts and tasks with language partners. It was hoped that information and communication technology could be a useful tool and extra resource for the social construction of

meaning and knowledge for the group of GCSE Mandarin learners. The researcher intended to observe and analyse how the participants could use social networking technology to exchange ideas and construct meanings of words in the sociocultural contexts online. To sum up, the present research will explore in what ways a group of CFL beginner learners could benefit from the sociocultural contexts and tasks by using social networking tools to develop intercultural communicative competence in an online exchange project.

2.5.2 Collaboration and mediation in foreign language learning

Intercultural language learning has been regarded as one of the sociocultural approaches because of the focus on development and learning through social and intercultural interaction. According to Bruner (1983:60), sociocultural theories maintained that instructors could set up situations to “scaffold” learners to develop competences through social and cultural activities. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) has been defined by Vygotsky (1978:86) as: “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” This concept was relevant to the current case study because participants and their language partners used social networking technology to facilitate intercultural communication and collaboration. Also, ZPD could bridge the gap between what learners can achieve independently and their potential development level with scaffolding in educational settings (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). This could be relevant to the present study because social networking tools might enable participants to gain extra support, help, and partnership from more capable peers, language partners, and the teacher. Collaboration and ZPD would be important to the cognitive, social, and

teaching presences in a Community of Inquiry too (Garrison et al., 2000). Although Vygotsky's ZPD model was mainly designed to analyse young children's development (Ohta, 2005), the GCSE Mandarin students (around 14 years old) could also gain help and scaffolding from the teacher, peers, language partners, the Internet, and social networking tools to achieve the next level of development. However, the ZPD is not just a matter of adding some extra material and knowledge for language learners, but an approach to support them to achieve a "dialectical relationship" with additional materials and help from others (Kington, 2002:247).

Secondary education could be an ideal time to engage young teenagers in developing intercultural communicative skills by "mediation" through others and technology (Lamy and Hampel, 2007). The concept of mediation for language education has its origin in sociocultural learning theories, influenced by Vygotsky (1978) (Mercer et al., 2009). Students' language learning could be mediated by more capable others in social collaboration and interactions and also by tasks and the use of technologies (Lantolf, 2000; Lamy and Hampel, 2007; Mercer et al., 2009). In terms of ZPD and mediation for intercultural communicative competence in foreign language education, Byram (1997) reflected on learners' stages of development and pointed out that teachers need to analyse students' cognitive and emotional development to help young learners to learn from the concrete to the abstract. To conclude, the researcher intended to explore how a group of secondary CFL beginner learners could use social networking tools to gain help from more capable others to achieve a dialectical relationship in an online learning community to achieve mediation and ICC development. The next section will present Tandem and telecollaboration based on the background framework of sociocultural learning theories.

2.5.3 Tandem and telecollaboration for foreign language education

This section will introduce Tandem and Telecollaboration for foreign language education and CFL teaching and learning. Online language exchange (e.g. eTandem; Telecollaboration; E-Twinning), as a sub-field of CALL, has become a typical use of modern networking technology to address learning difficulties and to develop learners' language competence and intercultural awareness, especially in the Higher Education sector (Wang, 2013; Helm, 2015; Yang, 2016). The European Project TILA (<http://www.tilaproject.eu>) also explored how to design tasks for intercultural Telecollaboration in secondary schools (Jauregi et al., 2013).

2.5.3.1 Definition of Tandem and Telecollaboration

According to Brammerts (1995; 1996; 2001), Tandem typically means intercultural exchange and activities designed to help two members from different language backgrounds to learn from and communicate with each other. Likewise, Telecollaboration has been defined by Belz (2003:1) as “internationally-dispersed” learners adopting CMC tools (e.g. e-mails, Internet chats, and threaded discussions) to promote social and intercultural interaction, dialogue, debate, and exchange. This thesis will use Tandem, eTandem, and Telecollaboration interchangeably. Intercultural eTandem and Telecollaboration projects could be much more difficult to facilitate than pure language learning because it is challenging for secondary students to conduct alternative interpretations of intercultural behaviour and perspectives (Jauregi et al., 2013). Likewise, Woodin (2001; 2018) agreed that Tandem projects could promote interculturality but students often tend to regard intercultural learning as collecting information and facts of target cultures. It was pointed out that intercultural Tandem projects should help students to interact with language partners to develop awareness and skills of analysing and reflecting upon the intercultural exchange.

Tandem could be an ideal exchange activity to develop students' curiosity, openness and intercultural skills when combining class work with field work so that the experiences with the target culture could be compared with and analysed from their own culture perspectives (Byram, 1999:377). However, it is unlikely that Tandem exchange will automatically produce intercultural understanding and tolerance of the target culture (Byram et al., 2002). It was stressed that the process of eTandem projects includes multiple steps, such as setting up the exchange, pre-project preparation, debriefing tasks, and guiding students to build and maintain contact with language partners which can influence the success of intercultural exchange (Jauregi et al., 2013). This was relevant to the Teaching Presence of the Community of Inquiry online learning analysis framework which will be discussed later in sections 2.5.4.1 and 4.2.3. The researcher intended to explore how an eTandem style exchange project could be arranged to promote a group of GCSE Mandarin learners' intercultural skills and competences with social networking technology.

2.5.3.2 Benefits of eTandem and telecollaboration

Tandem learning has been reported to be helpful to develop students' grammatical and linguistic competence (Brammerts, 1996; 2001; Dussias, 2006), pragmatic and discourse competence (Kakegawa, 2009; Cunningham, 2016), as well as their ICC (O'Dowd, 2006). It was argued that Web 2.0 tools have "opened new horizons for language learning and teaching involving intercultural exchanges" (Lee, 2009:439). Online intercultural exchange projects could promote a more interactive process for meaning negotiation and authentic communication with the native speakers of target languages and cultures (Kessler et al., 2012). O'Dowd and Ware (2009:175) argued that a typical telecollaborative project involve language learners from two different cultural

and linguistic backgrounds, and it naturally could facilitate learners to create negotiation of meaning and develop ‘different cultural perspectives’. Also, Lewis and O’Dowd (2016:53) held the view that feedback and comments from Tandem peers could help students to “pay greater attention to linguistic form, accuracy, and appropriateness”. Moreover, intercultural telecollaboration could extend language learning beyond classrooms to develop cultural knowledge, skills, and awareness (Thorne, 2010).

The study by Kramsch and Thorne (2002) investigated asynchronous and synchronous interaction and communication between French learners of English and American learners of French. It was found that most French learners’ writing was factual but not passionate, whereas the majority of the American students’ posts were relatively casual and spoken style. The researcher was interested in observing a group of CFL beginner learners’ posts and explore whether social networking technology could affect how they communicate in both asynchronous and synchronous settings. Similarly, Belz (2003) carried out a German and English exchange learning project for students to compare and reflect ideas through intercultural telecollaboration activities such as common literature reading and film sharing. It was argued that tele-collaboration particularly features the social dimension of language learning and often provides social settings and intercultural contexts for language pairs and groups.

Bui (2012) carried out a Tandem learning project on university students’ English learning as a foreign language based on the five principles of Byram’s (1997) ICC model. The study used both asynchronous and synchronous Web 2.0 tools to facilitate collaborative language learning, resource sharing, video creation, and video conferencing. It was found that the design of cultural activities effectively enhanced participants’ ICC development. However, it was about the development of

ICC for English learners in a university setting. Zhang (2016) pointed out that it is hard to make sure that all learners receive equal time and opportunities to practice using L2 in limited lesson time – more able and active L2 learners could be at an advantage over those less able learners in different communicative tasks in classroom settings. In a Tandem communication context, however, L2 learners could be provided with more equal opportunities (e.g. direct interaction with peers, teachers, and language partners). Nevertheless, it has been pointed out that most of the current Tandem exchange was between European languages (Kan et al., 2013). It was, therefore, of interest to the researcher to explore how CFL beginner learners could use social networking technology to benefit from Tandem learning opportunities.

Although there was a wide range of classroom activities planned to engage GCSE Mandarin students in practising Chinese skills in this study, those structured drills lack the natural flow that happens frequently in real-world communication. Researchers have pointed out that the majority of school children learn Mandarin through classroom instruction and do not have direct contact with native speakers, which existing literature argue could improve language learning and intercultural exchange (Belz and Thorne, 2006; Lomicka, 2006; O'Rourke, 2007; Chun, 2011). Advocates of Tandem learning held that it offers learners with 'convenient, authentic, direct, and speedy access to native speakers and their cultures' (Kramsch and Thorne, 2002:100) and 'institutionalised, electronically mediated intercultural communication' with the help from more capable peers, native speakers, and teachers (Belz, 2003:2). The researcher thus intended to explore how could CFL beginner learners use social networking tools and how would they perceive their experience of real-world interactions with native speakers. The present case study will examine whether social networking technology could help participants to develop ICC when given full access and equal opportunities.

2.5.3.3 Principles of Tandem and Telecollaboration

Researchers have argued that there are two main principles to follow when designing and conducting Tandem learning projects: autonomy and reciprocity (Little and Brammerts, 1996; Brammerts, 2001; Cziko, 2004; Benson, 2013). In spite of its popularity and advantages, Tandem learning has not been used that often in Chinese teaching at secondary levels. The present case study intended to explore the use of social networking tools to support a two-year Tandem style project between secondary British learners of Mandarin and secondary Chinese learners of English. In this study, the researcher, as the class teacher, was responsible to prepare all the students and supervise GCSE Mandarin students' intercultural communications with their language partners. Both autonomy and reciprocity were explained to the Chinese teacher in the link school and these two rules were emphasised to all students when starting the exchange project. However, the Chinese teacher from the link school stressed that Chinese language partners' level of English proficiency was much higher than GCSE students' Mandarin level. The Chinese language partners all started learning English since very young - in kindergarten or early primary years, and they now could speak English much more accurately and fluently than how GCSE Mandarin students could speak Chinese in this study. The researcher found that this fact was in line with existing literature regarding Tandem projects that normally Chinese learners' English language levels would be much higher than CFL students' Chinese language levels (Tian and Wang, 2010).

Therefore, taking all circumstances into consideration, on one hand, the GCSE Mandarin students in this research were explained of the gap of their levels of L2 proficiencies. They were more emotionally and pedagogically prepared, and they were also encouraged to use Mandarin as much as possible. Otherwise, this project risks ending up in English communication dominance due to their language partners' higher

level of English proficiency. On the other hand, the Chinese language partners were encouraged to use more Mandarin to help the British students to learn Mandarin and develop ICC, which was the main focus of the present case study. To conclude, this project intended to follow the two principles autonomy and reciprocity as much as possible, although students from both countries were encouraged to use more Mandarin. In terms of ICC development, both autonomy and reciprocity would be followed - students from both countries could work in collaboration to explore the target culture freely and spontaneously in an online community (Hammond, 2017). All the students could use Mandarin, English, or a combination of Mandarin and English in times of need, and they could decide what topics to communicate about, when to post, and what activities to initiate. The researcher was interested in observing how participants negotiated the use of language with language partners, and to what extent they could use Mandarin effectively and appropriately for intercultural communication. This will be further discussed in section 3.5.5 when describing participants and guidelines of exchange.

2.5.4 Analysis framework for telecollaboration in this study

Integrating information and communication technology (ICT) especially social networking tools into CFL education can bring many new opportunities for students. However, using ICT is not simply about presenting learning content in an electronic and effective way. Beyond making CFL teaching more effective, ICT has the potential to create a deep learning experience for students.

2.5.4.1 Introducing the Community of Inquiry framework

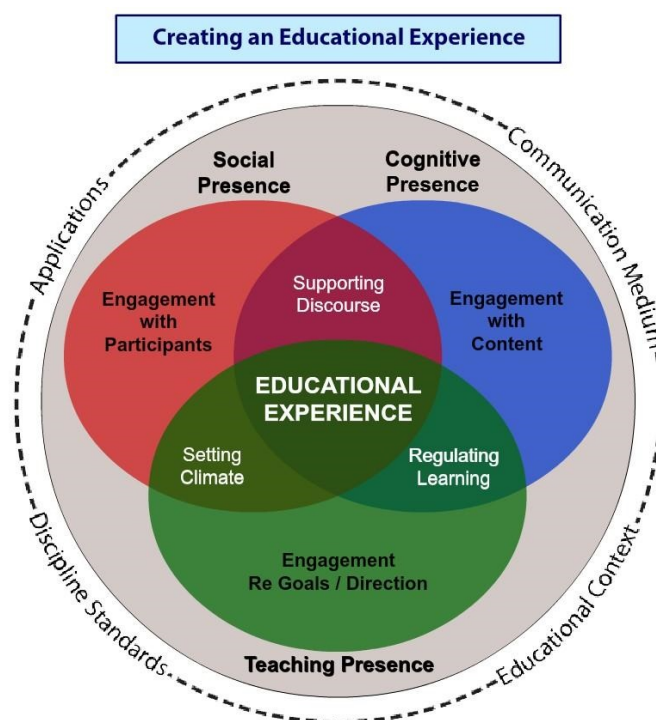
In order to examine CFL learner's online communication and interaction, the model of Community of Inquiry (CoI) will be used as the analytical framework for this case

study. As pointed out by Moisey et al. (2016), there has been an increase not only in the citation counts but also in the frequency of using CoI concepts and protocols in various research contexts. The CoI Framework (see Figure 5) is a process model of online deep learning, based on a collaborative constructivist approach (Garrison et al., 2000; Swan et al., 2009). Its main purpose is to provide a framework for the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) in supporting teaching and learning, which could help the researcher to understand CFL students' use of social networking technology in this case study.

Three components of the model are: 1) social presence; 2) cognitive presence; and 3) teaching presence. Garrison et al. (2000; 2004) defined social presence as individual learners' emotional involvement, communicational skills during the process of group cohesion; cognitive presence may include students' behaviours such as triggering an event, exploring topics, and resolution of problems in an online community; teaching presence refers to teachers' and students' contribution to course directions including solving problems and sharing goals with other participants. The social constructivism and sociocultural frameworks discussed above were hoped to help define the proposed notion of "social networking technology-based Community of Inquiry" in this research. The social networking tools were selected to support CFL learning through social practice (e.g. collaboration and exchange) and therefore social presence (e.g. engagement with peers through discussion and corrections) rather than simply interacting with other types of websites and apps where only cognitive and teaching presence are involved. The interplay of the three elements constitutes a unique and dynamic CoI model which are necessary for learners to reach deep and meaningful learning (Ma et al., 2016). Based on constructs and interactions of the three dimensions, the CoI framework could facilitate both teachers and students to co-create a deep and meaningful online learning experience (Yang et al., 2014). Therefore, this study will

adopt and use the CoI concepts and protocols as the key analysis framework, not only because it has been referenced in hundreds of publications and is the leading theoretical reference point for research in online and blended learning (Moisey et al., 2016), but more importantly because ICC development was felt to be complicated and deep learning experience which could be analysed and assessed with the CoI framework (Byram, 1997; Garrison et al., 2010; Garrison, 2017).

Figure 5 CoI Framework (Garrison et al., 2000)



Garrison and Archer (2000) argued that successful E-learning, especially deep and meaningful online learning, would require the development of a student-centred community. In order to evaluate online learning, Akyol and Garrison (2008) went further to adopt a variety of methods such as interviews and students' self-reported learning outcome, satisfaction, as well as analysing transcripts. They found that blended learning with an online community could lead to students' deep learning experience. Therefore, the sense of community is very important to effective online learning and

the CoI framework could be used to develop such communities. In terms of online interaction in a community, Moore (1989) described learner-to-content interaction as the basis of education, which might contribute to students' information cognitive process. Learner-to-instructor interaction has played a significant role in traditional educational environments, while learner-to-learner interaction is the most potential in the future of online education.

As Kozan (2016:222) argued, in a community of inquiry, the primary focus should be on the intended learning experience without emphasis on either social or teaching presence. Too much emphasis on social or teaching presence will very likely undermine critical discourse and deep learning. Yussiff et al. (2018) provided evidence for the positive correlation between the CoI presences and learning results with an experimental design. However, it was impossible to conduct a similar experiment design in the school where the researcher was teaching due to ethical reasons. Instead, the present research will involve a qualitative case study in which the CoI Framework could be used to evaluate a group of CFL beginner learners' telecollaboration and online exchange experience.

2.5.4.2 The Community of Inquiry approach to CFL education

Yang et al. (2014) used the CoI framework to study the use of social networking in a CFL afterschool learning club at a comprehensive secondary school in England. The central question of their research was how a social network site could contribute to children's deep and meaning CFL learning. The case study aimed at extending CFL learners' formal learning and offering informal opportunities for their Chinese acquisition and cultural development. Students' online behaviours and language output were observed and their interactions were tracked and analysed according to an

established CoI coding framework. It was found that social networking sites have the potential to provide additional exposure and student-centred exploration on the target culture, therefore may contribute to CFL learners' deep learning. It was argued that social networking technology was helpful to promote students' deep learning and the CoI framework was useful to analyse online Chinese learning. It was in line with Garrison (2017:59) that a Community of Inquiry might be "the most effective means to achieve deep and meaningful learning outcomes".

However, although Yang et al.'s (2014) research claimed that the CoI experience contributed to students' deep learning, this research did not integrate intercultural learning to students' Mandarin course, and it did not involve social networking for communication or interaction with native speakers or language partners. The study took place in an afterschool club for 12 weeks but the researchers did not demonstrate prolonged engagement and observation with the students during mainstream lessons. This research showed more social presence than cognitive presence and teaching presence, arguing that social networking technology was helpful to create a sense of relatedness and to promote student autonomy towards deep and meaningful learning. However, the study did not investigate how to use social networking tools to create a Community of Inquiry to develop CFL learners' intercultural communicative competence. While there was some evidence that deep learning outcomes in an afterschool Mandarin club context were related to a CoI approach, further exploration is still needed to validate the findings for mainstream curriculum-based GCSE Mandarin beginner learners. Therefore, in the present case study, the researcher will investigate how a group of GCSE Mandarin students could use social networking technology to build a Community of Inquiry for ICC learning and development in a longitudinal case study.

To sum up, the Community of Inquiry framework has been selected to serve as a central analytical framework for evaluating participants' online learning and exchange of this case study. This will be supplemented by Byram's (1997) ICC model presented in section 2.3.1.3 to teach and assess participants' intercultural communicative competence. It was hoped that the researcher will observe the three presences among CFL learners in this case study, explore their impacts on students' ICC development, and identify whether there was any need to create new CoI categories or indicators for developing ICC in a CFL tandem and telecollaboration project.

2.6 Summary of literature review

Looking back, this chapter has presented key concepts of this research, reviewed literature on Chinese language and CFL education in the UK, the importance and difficulties of developing ICC, the potential of social networking technology for foreign language education and ICC development, and introduced Tandem and Telecollaboration based on Social Constructivism and sociocultural language learning. These ideas have been related to the current research study. The review indicated that there is little research exploring Mandarin Chinese teaching and learning in mainstream secondary schools in the UK although there were many studies focusing on higher education and community schools. Existing research demonstrated the potential of ICT and social networking and communication technology to foreign language and CFL education, especially in Higher Education sectors (Thorne-Williams, 2016). It had been claimed that an essential goal of L2 learning is to be able to functionally use the target language to conduct various social communication and to understand messages in different social interactions and cultural contexts (Kramsch, 1986; Darhower, 2002; Koester, 2002), which could be potentially facilitated with social networking technology. However, the question of how intercultural communication and social

interaction in the target language in a natural setting affects opportunities for CFL acquisition, especially for ICC development in the secondary education sector, had been rarely explored. Despite the repeated calls for and reported benefits of using technology in MFL education, using social networking tools for CFL teaching and learning at English schools is under-researched. Therefore, this study aimed to explore this matter and make a contribution and fill the gap in the field of using technology to develop CFL beginner learners' intercultural communicative competence.

This literature review discussed some of the existing research into the challenges of learning Chinese, the importance and difficulties of ICC, the potential of technology in MFL and CFL education, and introduced some background theories and online learning analysis frameworks. It can be concluded that innovation in Chinese pedagogy needs to address not only the high attrition rate among school learners in the UK but also to prepare CFL learners to be internationally minded and communicate meaningfully through technology in this global age. There seemed to be an urgent need to make Chinese teaching and learning more sustainable and effective in the UK. Trained qualified teachers, good learning materials, appropriate teaching pedagogy all seemed crucial, but teaching needed, it was felt, to be underpinned by research to inform curriculum and instructional design for schools and universities. Recently, interest has grown concerning innovative integration of technologies into CFL teaching and learning, yet it has not been matched by enough empirical research.

Much of the current research had focused on other foreign languages, adult learners and heritage students, in university settings. As indicated by Wang and Vasquez (2012), regarding the use of technology, more frequently and commonly explored foreign languages were English, French, Spanish and German, and most research was taking place in Higher Education settings. The main purpose of this study was, therefore, to

explore how social networking technology and community of inquiry could contribute to the CFL context. More specifically, this thesis intended to investigate a group of GCSE Mandarin learners' intercultural experience using social networking technology, observe and analyse participant' online chats and telecollaboration exchange, and to explore in what ways the group of CFL beginner learners could use social networking technology to develop their ICC in a Community of Inquiry.

2.7 Research questions

As discussed earlier, many researchers had looked at different aspects of CFL teaching and learning, but few had explored the use of ICT especially social networking tools to help CFL learners to improve intercultural communicative competence. It was still not clear in previous literature how and why social networking technology could be used to develop secondary CFL learners' ICC. Thus, more research was needed to fill the gap. This study was aimed to be an exploration to tackle the problem to make a contribution to the discussion of the using technology for CFL students' ICC development. In particular, the researcher intended to explore how a group of CFL beginner learners at a UK secondary school could use social networking technology to achieve ICC development. To bridge the research gap, the present study aimed to employ a case study to address the central research question: how a group of CFL beginner learners could use social networking technology to develop their ICC? To better address this core question, two subsidiary research questions were developed from the general question. Further additional questions underpinned the central and sub-questions and the whole study as below:

Research Question 1: In what ways did a group of CFL beginner learners use social networking technology to build a Community of Inquiry in this case study?

Subsidiary Question 1.1: In what ways could Cognitive Presence be observed

in the present Community of Inquiry?

Subsidiary Question 1.2: In what ways could Social Presence be observed in the present Community of Inquiry?

Subsidiary Question 1.3: In what ways could Teaching Presence be observed in the present Community of Inquiry?

Research Question 2: How did a Community of Inquiry contribute to a group of CFL beginner learners' ICC development in this case study?

Subsidiary Question 2.1: How did the present Community of Inquiry contribute to participants' communicative competence (e.g. linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence)?

Subsidiary Question 2.2: How did the present Community of Inquiry contribute to participants' intercultural competence (e.g. attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness)?

Chapter 3 Methodology and Methods

3.1 Introduction

To illustrate the current research design in relation to the research questions, relevant methodological literature will be discussed, and research methods used in this study will be justified in this chapter. The methodological approach to address the research questions reflects researchers' particular perspective and social interest (Cohen et al., 2011). This chapter starts with a brief summary of the research methods, then presents the pilot studies, discusses the ontology, epistemology, methodology, explains the detailed methods the researcher undertook to investigate the research questions, illustrates the process of data collection and data analysis, and finally the trustworthiness of this case study and the ethical considerations in this research.

3.2 Summary of methods

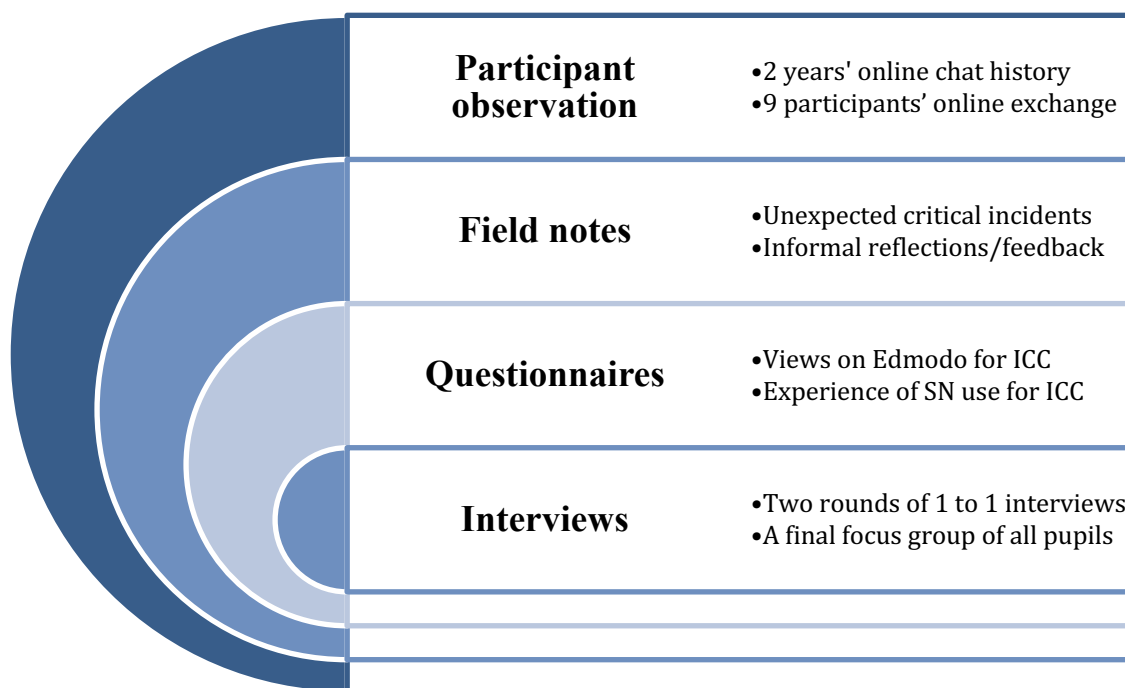
In order to investigate a group of CFL beginner learners' use of social networking technology to develop ICC in the UK, the researcher undertook a case study of one single GCSE Mandarin class of nine learners in a comprehensive secondary school (School S) in the Midlands in England. As shown in Figure 6, a brief summary of methods in this case study includes:

- Participant observation of a group of nine GCSE Mandarin learners' online communication and exchange with nine Shanghai link school language partners of the main case study (2015-2017) (see section 3.6.2.1 for more details);
- Field notes of unexpected activities and critical incidents taking place in a Community of Inquiry created by the nine participants and their language partners over the two academic years, informal comments from participants, language partners, and parents, and the researcher's reflections upon them (see

section 3.6.2.2 for more details);

- Three sets of questionnaires with GCSE Mandarin students on their views on and experiences of using social networking tools to develop ICC: the first set about using Edmodo in February 2016; the second set about using Edmodo and Skype in October 2016; the third set about using Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat in March 2017) (see section 3.6.2.3 for more details);
- Three rounds of follow-up interviews based on questionnaire responses: the first interview with S2, S4, S6, and S9 in March 2016; the second interview with S1, S3, S5, and S8 in November 2016; and a final focus group interview with all nine participants in April 2017 (see section 3.6.2.4 for more details).

Figure 6 A brief summary of methods



To sum up, the rationale for the choice of these methods will be discussed in section 3.6.2. The next section will present the pilot studies and explain the role of piloting to the main research.

3.3 Pilot studies

The main aim of the two pilot studies was to refine the case study strategy and relevant data collection and analysis methods, in order to better investigate the use of social networking technology with a group of CFL beginner learners in the main study. After the Ethical Approval was obtained from the School of Education, University of Nottingham, the researcher carried out two pilot case studies for about four months from April to July 2015. The pilot studies were the basis of the subsequent data collection but they were not part of the final data analysed.

3.3.1 Procedure of two pilot studies

The first pilot was with a group of 30 undergraduate students communicating with five Chinese native speakers in a big WeChat conversation group. The CFL beginner learners were learning Mandarin in the evening classes at the University of Nottingham. Their teacher Mrs Y was the researcher's colleague, so this case was a convenient sample. One of the reasons that the researcher chose this case as a pilot was that the class was accessible and the site was geographically convenient. The other reason was that at the very start of the Ph.D. project, the research was designed to be about both adult CFL learners and GCSE students to fully explore the potential of social networking technology for all Mandarin learners. Also, at that time the researcher did not anticipate the opportunity of taking over the GCSE Mandarin teaching job at the secondary school in September 2015 which would allow the researcher more access for a two years longitudinal case study.

The researcher was observing how Mrs Y the Chinese teacher used WeChat to organise cultural topics and reflective activities from the textbooks they were using. The CFL beginner learners were required to answer the Chinese teacher's questions and respond

to peers' comments. During the four months, there were four cultural topics developed and expanded from textbooks, and students used both English and Chinese to conduct intercultural communications with five Chinese native speakers who were university students as well. The researcher designed a questionnaire for all the Mandarin learners and also interviewed the three most active plus three least active adult participants to explore what activities they enjoyed the most on WeChat. The findings suggested that they enjoyed using WeChat discussions to reflect upon cultural topics related to their textbooks. Cognitive Presence was the element identified most frequently, followed by Social Presence and Teaching Presence in the Community of Inquiry on WeChat. It would be interesting to see whether this finding was consistent in the main case study. It was also found that one possible limitation of the CoI analysis framework for CFL context was that some communication can be coded as one or more CoI categories which resulted in an overlap of some CoI indicators while some other indicators could not be observed. This would be improved by coding strictly based on the main unit of meaning and combining top-down and bottom up-coding which will be discussed in section 3.6.3.

The second pilot study was conducted almost at the same time period with a group of GCSE Year 10 class of five students when the researcher was observing the former Chinese teacher Mrs M using Edmodo with them. The researcher served as a native speaker to communicate with the students and observed how Mrs M set homework and shared various CFL learning resources with students in a big Edmodo group. At the end of summer term, an online questionnaire was distributed to the five Mandarin students to explore their general views on using ICT to facilitate CFL learning and their thoughts of Mrs M's use of Edmodo. When talking to Mrs M, the researcher was informed that she was leaving and the researcher had to take over the teaching job to keep the research going in the current school (School S) from September 2015. Although the researcher

lost access to researching more about that particular Chinese teacher, she could gain more access to the setting of the case school and develop prolonged engagement with a group of CFL learners. Under such circumstances, the researcher decided to focus on the secondary school participants in order to explore the use of social networking technology in more depth in a natural GCSE Mandarin teaching and learning context.

As for the results from the two pilot studies, it was found that social networking technology helped both the adult CFL teachers and GCSE Mandarin students to build trust quickly with the teachers and native speakers. Moreover, genuine communication with Chinese native speakers provided participants with substantial access to authentic and pragmatic language usage in different social and intercultural real-life contexts. However, it was evident that there was a considerable gap between CFL learners' language knowledge and performance in classrooms (e.g. Chinese vocabulary and grammar rules learnt from textbooks) and their competence and proficiency to use the target language effectively and appropriately with real Chinese people (e.g. intercultural communicative competence). Participants reported that they learnt Chinese vocabulary and grammar rules in class but did not know how to use them in real life, resulting in forgetting them very quickly (typically after a week or so). They reflected that, when trying to produce sentences, they often made many mistakes. Mrs Y and Mrs M the Mandarin teachers explained that lack of practice of using the target language in a meaningful way was a possible reason for students' low proficiency. Another reason might be that the composition of Chinese sentences relies on word order and functional words, rather than changes of form or gender of words (i.e. inflections) as European languages do. Therefore, English speakers' L1 knowledge may not be helpful to their CFL learning due to the massive distance between L1 and L2 for participants in the two pilot cases. According to Leaver et al. (2005), knowledge is in the background of L2 learners' ability to communicate, but it rarely results directly in the effective

intercultural communication contexts. However, the pilot studies also found that CFL learners need to pay enough attention to as many aspects as possible of the target language usage that they access and try to use them to test their knowledge and ability in the social networking space, in order to achieve ICC development. It would be interesting to explore whether and how the use of social networking technology could create a space for CFL beginner learners to gain effective ICC development for real-life purposes.

To sum up, both pilot studies echoed previous research on using ICT to support Chinese learning (Álvarez and Kan, 2012; Kan et al, 2013) in that ICT tools can be used to build the rapport between teachers and students to promote intercultural learning in general. It was found that the use of social networking technology added a new dimension to the physical Mandarin classroom and enriched CFL beginner learners' intercultural learning experience in the digital era. Generally, the participants were found to be satisfied with their experiences of using social networking tools to practise their Chinese knowledge and skills. No overwhelmingly negative responses were reported. Although participants cited some technical difficulties regarding Edmodo and WeChat use, it can be safely concluded that the majority of the adult learners and GCSE students felt positive about the use of social networking tools to enhance their Mandarin learning in the pilot studies.

3.3.2 The role of pilot studies

Robson (2011) argued that the role of pilot studies is to help researchers to refine their research questions, to test their planned data collection methods, and to justify the main research design. The role of the two pilot studies was that they informed the design of the main study (e.g. the design of questionnaire and interview questions), especially how to collect data on capturing evidence of a group of nine CFL beginner learners' ICC

development in a Community of Inquiry. For example, the pilot interviews with participants helped to ensure the questions in the main interviews with students to be relevant and understandable. The researcher noticed that questions to students should have been conveyed in a more verbal style for them to understand better. Therefore, the researcher introduced the key concepts of ICC first and developed the questions with more simplified vocabulary to make them more accessible to the group of younger participants in the main study. Moreover, the researcher used the pilot interviews to make sure that there were no awkward questions.

In these two pilot studies, in particular, the researcher gained knowledge of the possible volume and sorts of data regarding using social networking tools like WeChat and Edmodo, developed skills of how to track and analyse student interactions in a Community of Inquiry. Also, the preliminary findings of the two pilot studies helped the research to better understand the affordances and constraints in using technology to develop CFL beginner learners' ICC. For example, the participants in the pilot studies were asked to hand in formal reflections via university or school emails monthly. However, in general, the GCSE students reported that they preferred to talk about the experience in a group during lessons if possible, and the adult learners preferred using social networking tools to send fresh reflections to the teacher. According to the researcher's observation and field notes, most participants just managed to submit one reflective email even after reminders and some others replied that they did not have the time or just forgot to email anything. After double checking with students, participants pointed out that they really enjoyed the chats and interactions with native speakers, but reflective emails made them "feel like doing homework". As the researcher explained to them earlier, their participation was voluntary, so they were just reminded rather than pushed to send the emails. Therefore, the two pilot studies reminded the researcher to modify the exchange tasks in the main study by allowing participants to send reflections

on developing ICC and exchange experience instantly with social networking tools.

By analysing the questionnaire and interview data of these two case studies, the researcher obtained a better understanding of CFL education in the UK and developed an interest in researching about CFL beginner learners' ICC development. Many learners reported that they had practised using Mandarin vocabulary, obtained new grammar and sentence patterns, and learnt how to communicate with native speakers more effectively and appropriately with social networking tools. It fascinated the researcher to explore in more depth how to really help secondary level CFL beginner learners to effectively and appropriately use the target language to communicate with culturally different people. Moreover, the two pilot case studies helped the researcher to refine and reshape the final research methodology to be a single qualitative exploratory case study and the methods to include participant observation, field notes, questionnaires, and interviews to provide more information and thus a more transparent presentation of the case for readers.

To conclude, after conducting these two pilot studies, the researcher kept thinking about how a group of CFL beginner learners at secondary level could use social networking tools to achieve ICC development, what key features and affordances of social networking technology could empower and motivate CFL beginner learners and contribute to their ICC, what types of online behaviours secondary CFL learners would demonstrate in a Community of Inquiry; and how a group of GCSE Mandarin learners would perceive their ICC development with social networking technology. These questions intrigued the researcher to conduct a two-year exploratory case study with a group of GCSE Mandarin learners in the secondary school where the researcher was working as a teacher of Mandarin. The two pilot studies helped the researcher greatly by enabling her to refine the research design, develop the research questions, and test the

design of the exchange project and relevant analysis methods. Most importantly, the pilot studies enabled the researcher to reflect upon the ways to increase trustworthiness and transparency of the case study approach that will be employed to examine the research questions on using social networking technology to develop a group of CFL beginner learners' ICC. However, the pilot studies were not included in the final analysis in this thesis.

3.4 Research paradigm and methodology

This part presents the ontology and epistemology related to this particular research question. The central question stems from a wish to understand how social networking technology could help a group of CFL beginner learners to develop ICC. According to Hammond and Wellington (2012), a hierarchy of philosophical paradigm includes ontology on the top, followed by epistemology, then methodology and methods at the bottom. Ontology refers to understandings about the nature of reality in terms of a dichotomy between objective reality and subjective reality (Bryman, 2008). The former claims that reality is independent of the observer, whereas the latter argues that reality is socially constructed and negotiated within groups. Epistemology explains the logic underpinning a particular enquiry, which is about understandings on how people come to know certain truth and reality (Cohen et al., 2011), which often involves discussions of a dichotomy between positivist and interpretive paradigms. A positivist paradigm rests mainly on objectivist ontology and a scientific hypothesis-testing epistemology which relies on using experimental and quantitative methods, whereas an interpretivist paradigm believes in subjectivist ontology and the epistemology that values participants' experiences and perspectives, constructions and interpretations of realities, and relies on naturalistic methods such as interviews, observations and documentary analysis (Cohen et al., 2011). The interpretative position was adopted for this study because the research focus and purpose was on participants' experiences,

perspectives, and their reflections of using technology to develop intercultural communicative competence in the CFL education context.

The researcher's understanding and belief about what truth consists of and how to know the world defined the research questions, as well as the methodology and methods that were used to help address the questions. It was believed that the nature of social reality is not as objective as scientific facts, and social science researchers come to know the truth with concerns for social realities, rather than following the procedures established in natural science. As Thomas (2010) concluded, an interpretivist paradigm suggests that knowledge is everywhere and is socially constructed and researchers' own values and positionality is very important in the trying-to-know processes. The researcher believes that reality and truth are never external to the subject and people's views are not objective. Instead, reality depends on personal experience and social constructions of those who observe the outside world. In this study, participants' experience of using technology and their ICC development would not be observed directly as truth. Instead, this thesis will employ various methods to capture the GCSE Mandarin learners' social interactions and communications with others, followed by exploring their views and reflections upon their intercultural experience. The researcher, as the Chinese teacher, will play an interactive role in the research process to work with participants to analyse and understand their feedback and behaviours based on her social constructions and interpretations of the case. Therefore, this research adopted a subjectivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology in that the researcher looked at the human agency that constitutes social activity and value internal factors and participants' motivation more. Given that the research purpose of the current study was to explore participants' communication and interactions in the natural GCSE Mandarin teaching and learning context, a qualitative research approach using an interpretive paradigm was the most appropriate.

Methodology generally justifies the rationale for the choice of research approaches and methods, which provides the framework for particular data collection techniques. In the present study, the researcher used the interpretivist paradigm to explore the social phenomenon of CFL learners using social networking tools to achieve ICC development and GCSE students constructing the learning activities together with their language partners in the current Community of Inquiry. Therefore, the focus of the researcher's interest was in human agencies' intercultural communication and interaction in the present Community of Inquiry. As such a research aim was related to people's understandings of their learning experience and their perceptions of particular learning activities in a Community of Inquiry, this study called for a qualitative case study research approach as the most effective way. The rationale for the choice of the research methods in this study will be discussed more in depth later in this chapter.

In summary, the interpretivist paradigm provides the epistemological basis for the case study design and the establishment of case study as a legitimate approach to social research (Giddens, 2011). Case studies, as an in-depth investigation of a particular social phenomenon, are often associated with interpretive enquiry (Stake, 1995). The aims of a case study design are to answer "how and why" research questions and to explore the particular in its natural context. In this study, the case study design sets out to be exploratory. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) stressed, human beings construct their own subjective reality, and researchers interpret data from subjective representations of the participants too. A qualitative exploratory case study was felt to be most suitable for the current research because it involved an in-depth attempt to interpret the particular phenomenon of a group of CFL beginner learners' use of social networking technology to develop ICC in its natural setting. As Merriam (1988) explained, the interest of a

qualitative case study lies more in the process than the results. This research will focus on the process of how a group of GCSE Mandarin learners' would experience and reflect upon using technology to develop ICC rather than the resulted physical behaviours themselves. Therefore, this case study will not seek a causal explanation of the phenomenon in question and could not be statistically generalized to other contexts or situations. The following sections will present the case study approach in more detail and further explain the decisions on research methods for data collection and analysis.

3.5 Exploratory case study

The central research question focuses on how social networking technology could be used by a group of CFL beginner learners to develop their ICC. To investigate this, the researcher undertook an exploratory case study of a single GCSE Mandarin class at a secondary school (School S) in England to use social networking tools to communicate with link school (School C) language partners over two academic years (2015-2017). The case in this study was the class - a group of GCSE Mandarin learners consisting of nine participants. The following sections will present the opportunistic sampling strategy, the researcher's insider stance, the background setting, and the participants of this case study, followed by explaining the strengths and weakness of using case study approach for this research.

3.5.1 Definition of case study

Case study has been defined by many scholars and researchers (e.g. Stake 1995; Yin 2009; Cohen et al., 2011; Robson, 2011), but there is little agreement. For instance, MacDonald and Walker (1977: 181) defined case study as the examination of "an instance in action", which is echoed by Guba and Lincoln (1981) that the purpose of case study is to reveal the properties of the class to which the instance belongs. This

indicates that a core feature of case study is its particular case and its context. Likewise, Stake (1995:6) regarded case study as the study of “particularity and complexity of a single case”, in which particularity refers to the case and complexity represents its context. Yin (1984) stated that the case study is a research strategy that is suitable for scenarios where a phenomenon’s variables cannot be separated from the context. In addition, Shaw conceded the main concern of case study is “interpretation in context” (1978:13). This suggests another characteristic of case study (i.e. interpretation). To sum up, a case study could be defined as an in-depth attempt to understand and interpret a particular phenomenon in its natural context and settings from the perspective of the participants (Shaw, 1978; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Gall et al., 1996; Robson, 2011; Cohen et al., 2011; Yin, 2014).

Also, Merriam (1988) suggested that one important feature of case studies is the exploratory function, which offers meanings that expand readers’ experiences. Yin (2006) also argued that case study is suitable for interpretivist qualitative research because it is into the real-life experience rather than laboratory experiments. Concerning the methodological nature of case study, Yin (2014) stated that as a research strategy, case study is most suitable for how and why research questions, hard-to-control behavioural events, and contemporary phenomenon. Therefore, it can be concluded that case study is a qualitative approach which is mainly used to examine a specific phenomenon by providing a holistic, in-depth and thick description of the phenomenon in the natural setting. The case, in this study, was the social networking activity of a single, Mandarin GCSE class, including myself, as their teacher and their relationships with their language partners across social networking platforms. The focus upon the social networking activity of this case also extended, in some ways, to the resulting physical visit and homestays the students undertook with their Chinese

colleagues but, this has been excluded from the analysis in order to circumscribe the case effectively.

3.5.2 Opportunistic sampling

As Stake (1995) suggested, the first criterion of case selection is to maximise what we can learn, and the selected cases should be easy to access and hospitable to the inquiry. In terms of sampling strategy, there are two basic types: probability and nonprobability sampling (Cohen et al., 2011). Chein (1981) argued that nonprobability sampling is closely linked to qualitative case studies. The most appropriate sampling strategy of case study is non-probabilistic purposive sampling (Patton, 2002; Cohen et al., 2011). As Merriam (1988) also indicated, purposive sampling is well-known and widely used in qualitative research. With this sampling strategy, researchers can select samples from which they can learn the most and understand the best of their research questions. As one of the purposive sampling strategies, opportunistic sampling occurs when the researcher takes advantage of unforeseen opportunities after field work has begun, based on more knowledge of a setting that he/she gains during the process of collecting data in the field (Patton, 2002; Suri, 2011). In the present case study, as more opportunities unfolded, the researcher gained more knowledge of the setting and obtained more access to participants after becoming a teacher of the school. To better explore the research questions, the researcher adopted the opportunistic sampling strategy to make the most of the new opportunities. Therefore, a single GCSE Chinese class in School S was selected as the sample purposely, in order to understand better and explore in more depth how these CFL learners in that class could use social networking technology to develop ICC.

3.5.3 The insider stance

In this case study, the researcher was not familiar with the participants and unfamiliar with their way of using social networking tools when being an outsider. The researcher was not aware of the participants' opinions and attitudes of using social networking technology to develop ICC. When becoming an insider, it became easier for the researcher to gain extra access to the case class of GCSE Mandarin learners to develop a greater understanding of the group in the context. Also, the insider stance has provided the researcher with the opportunities to interact naturally with the class of CFL beginner learners (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). Therefore, an insider stance helped the researcher to carry out this case study in a familiar context so that some common experience could be shared with the participants (Asselin, 2003; Mercer, 2007). It was hoped that the insider role could allow the participants to be more open with the researcher as well so that a deeper level of data could be gained and explored in this case study.

However, there were possible pitfalls associated with the researcher's stance as an insider in this research. The collection of data, the analysis, and interpretation of data might be affected by researchers' prior knowledge and previous teaching experience (Anderson, 2010). In the present case study, the researcher played an interactive role in the decisions on the data collection and analysis methods to be included in the case study which was influenced by her own interpretations of the outside world. Also, greater familiarity between the researcher and the target research population might have led to a lack of objectivity, and the researcher might have made biased assumptions due to her prior knowledge and experience with the group of CFL students (Asselin, 2003; Breen, 2007; Unluer, 2012). Nevertheless, it was argued that holding membership in a group does not represent complete sameness within the group, and the possible concerns regarding an insider stance could be tackled through reflection upon personal

biases and the research process (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). In this study, by keeping a diary of field notes and prolonged engagement with the participants, the researcher was able to observe and reflect upon the research process to avoid potential personal bias as much as possible.

In reality, the researcher had to employ both an insider stance and an outsider status because the researcher was not a GCSE Mandarin student. Although the researcher shared a greater familiarity with the participants and the case after becoming an insider, they did not share exactly the same identity or completely the same understanding of the context (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). Therefore, in the particular context of this case study, it was intended that the researcher would employ the insider stance to maximise the advantages of investigating the particular in its natural settings while keeping the outsider view to reflect upon the research process to minimise the potential bias and disadvantages. Merriam (2014:15) pointed out that, in interpretivist qualitative studies, researchers are 'the primary instrument for data collection and analysis'. To conclude, the insider stance plus outsider perspective would help the researcher to remain reflexive and ensure the objectivity of the data collection and analysis process (Glesne, 1999:60). This researcher stance will be further discussed and reflected on in section 6.6 limitations of this research.

3.5.4 Background setting for this case study

The setting for this case study was a comprehensive state secondary school in a deprived area in the Midlands in the UK. It consisted of around 1200 students and 200 teachers. In conjunction with the British Council, the school established a link with a school in China in 2010 and started to introduce Mandarin to pupils in 2011. The latest Ofsted report (2015) indicated that the school continued to be 'Good'. It also pointed out that,

although students' outcomes in most subject areas were improving, they were not improving quickly enough in MFL. One of the next development points for the school was to improve learners' outcomes in MFL.

When the researcher came to the present school in December 2014, its MFL department offered four languages (French, Spanish, Italian, and Mandarin) to Year 7 and Year 8, and at the end of Key Stage 3, students could choose one or two languages to study for GCSE options. At the end of Key Stage 4, students could choose to do A-level French, Spanish, and Italian. However, one year after, Italian was discontinued as a GCSE option because there were not enough students choosing it and the GCSE results were not ideal. Over the three years that the researcher was teaching in the school, three teachers left the MFL department including the head of department.

In this school, Mandarin was a relatively new curriculum subject (though it had been an after-school club for some time) and there were not many students choosing it for GCSE purposes (typically around ten students in each year group). Although Mandarin class groups were not as big as other MFL language groups, the GCSE results were good (at least C). The majority of those who chose Mandarin were very keen to learn more about Chinese language and culture. As those students choosing to embark on GCSE Mandarin course were strongly motivated and curious at the beginning, the important question left to the researcher was how to sustain their motivation and curiosity in the next three years of GCSE Mandarin learning.

However, a practical problem was that each GCSE student in this school has about 13 to 15 GCSE courses and around 25 GCSE exams (e.g. three exams for English and three

exams for Maths) to complete at the end of Year 11. The time allocated to Mandarin subject was very limited. For example, Key Stage 3 Mandarin learners (Year 7 and Year 8) have three one-hour lessons every two weeks (one academic year consists of 39 weeks in the school). Hence, when students start Year 9 GCSE Mandarin course, they normally already have had about 58 hours' Mandarin learning. As Key Stage 4 GCSE Mandarin learners, time allocated to Mandarin will increase to two one-hour lessons per week. Therefore, generally in total, GCSE Mandarin learners would have around 78 hours' Mandarin learning within curriculum time per academic year. This was the case for the nine participants in the present research.

Another issue in the current setting was that Mandarin learners in this school rarely had any authentic resources compared to students who were in advantaged areas or in Confucius Classrooms. The school's budget for Mandarin was about 60 pounds per academic year, and students in this case study had no support from the nearest Confucius Institute because the school was not a Confucius Classroom. One question left to the researcher was how to engage and sustain GCSE Mandarin students' motivation with free learning resources and tools (e.g. free social networking website and apps). With such limited budget, as the only Mandarin teacher, the researcher had to research on free resources, design the GCSE Mandarin curriculum, create the scheme of work, plan all the lessons, and conduct all the marking and assessment paperwork in a part-time teaching timetable. Mandarin classes were small in this school but the teaching workload was heavy, and the teaching post, as a part-time post, was not likely to attract qualified Mandarin teachers. Therefore, the ongoing staffing problem included worries about teacher supply.

The positive aspect of this setting was that the school was committed to equipping all

learners to become global citizens by providing them with the opportunities to work with students from different schools in other countries. As part of the school's Improvement Plan, sustainable curriculum-based links with international partners were developed. All the other languages were offered a long time ago and had built up strong relationships with link schools in Europe and Africa. The school organised exchange visits for French, Spanish and Italian learners every year. Although the school had a link school in China, the relationship had not been maintained well and there were no exchange visits between the two schools. The researcher started thinking about how to make the most of the link school to create more opportunities around the Chinese language and culture for GCSE Mandarin learners. Therefore, the researcher contacted the school's link school in China in September 2015, in order to build the relationship and arrange a language partner project for students from both countries. After discussion with the link school teacher, it was agreed that the best strategy to help students connect with each other might be to use modern social networking technology. The school, students and parents welcomed the language buddy opportunity, although the school safeguarding and E-safety policies forbade students under 16 years old from using their own mobile devices in school.

As observed, the restriction on using own devices is a widespread policy in UK secondary schools and may be an evolving situation. Teachers may find the distraction potential of smartphones is threatening to perceptions of orderly behaviour. This means that many schools limit or forbid the use of smartphones, despite the huge potential they offer for learning and engagement. In this school, teachers could see the possibilities technology offered for learning as did the students who were equipped with sophisticated smartphones. However, they were cautious about the possible safeguarding, cyber-bullying, security and inequity issues that accompany the use of smartphones in schools. Therefore, in this project, the students used school-owned

laptops for social networking activities in school and their own devices after school, with the support and consent of parents. The school-owned facilities comprised five MFL classrooms with projectors and interactive whiteboards, two of which have 30 laptops in each. The following section will introduce the participants of this case study.

3.5.5 Participants of this case study

The research project reported in this thesis took place between a GCSE Mandarin class of nine learners at School S in the UK and a group of nine secondary Chinese students at School C in Shanghai, China. The Internet-based exchange project lasted two academic years (2015-2017), which allowed the researcher, as the GCSE Mandarin course teacher, to explore the potential of using social networking technologies to develop a group of CFL beginner learners' intercultural communicative competence.

3.5.5.1 Profile of the GCSE Mandarin class

The GCSE Mandarin class in this study consisted of nine students, all of whom were British (L1 English; no Chinese heritage background). The GCSE Mandarin lessons were planned to prepare the group of CFL beginner learners for their GCSE exams in May 2018. All of the Mandarin learners who came to this class had already learnt Mandarin for two academic years (Year 7 and Year 8) and had sound experience with social networking tools. They volunteered to participate in the study, and all of their parents or guardians signed the consent forms (see Appendix 2 and 3). In this research, Mandarin Chinese was a second and foreign language that was not used in the locale of the students and not spoken by their community as a whole. All the participants have not had any contact with any Chinese-speaking countries. The GCSE Chinese course was their only contact with Mandarin language and culture.

Among these nine students, seven were female and two were male. All participants were aged from 13 to 14 when they started Year 9 GCSE Mandarin learning in September 2015, and all of them had learnt some Mandarin Chinese since Year 7. All students joined the private social networking group on Edmodo at the beginning of this research project, in order to connect with language partners from their link school (SchoolC) in China. As the project was conducted and developed in the natural teaching and learning setting, participants also chose to use Skype and WeChat voluntarily along with Edmodo, in order to communicate more effectively with their language partners in this study which was agreed by the school and their parents. Table 1 is a demographic summary of participants and their language partners in the study. In order to maintain confidentiality for the participants and their language partners, the names of all students were anonymised. It is worth noting that the focus of this case study was on the GCSE Mandarin group as a whole as opposed to on individuals. Therefore comparisons between individuals is not a direct focus of this thesis although certain individuals will be used to make certain points about the social networking activities and collaboration which occurred in the exchange project.

Table 1 Information of participants and language partners (20/10/2015)

| Participants (School S) | | | | | Language partners (School C) | | | | |
|-------------------------|------|-----|-----|--------|------------------------------|------|-----|-----|---------|
| Code | Name | Sex | Age | Year | Code | Name | Sex | Age | Year |
| S1 | NB | M | 13 | Year 9 | C1 | TY | M | 13 | Grade 8 |
| S2 | LD | M | 13 | Year 9 | C2 | LZ | F | 13 | Grade 8 |
| S3 | EE | F | 14 | Year 9 | C3 | YN | F | 14 | Grade 8 |
| S4 | NE | F | 13 | Year 9 | C4 | HW | F | 13 | Grade 8 |
| S5 | YE | F | 13 | Year 9 | C5 | YC | M | 13 | Grade 8 |
| S6 | YL | F | 13 | Year 9 | C6 | JL | F | 14 | Grade 8 |
| S7 | EM | F | 13 | Year 9 | C7 | JY | F | 14 | Grade 8 |
| S8 | AT | F | 13 | Year 9 | C8 | LN | F | 13 | Grade 8 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|---|----|--------|----|----|---|----|---------|
| S9 | EZ | F | 14 | Year 9 | C9 | YH | F | 13 | Grade 8 |
|----|----|---|----|--------|----|----|---|----|---------|

3.5.5.2 Setting up the exchange for participants

The researcher made first contact with Mrs Z, the teacher who was responsible for international collaboration in the Shanghai link school in China, by sending a request email for a language buddy scheme partnership. She replied that she was teaching a Grade 8 class German as a foreign language and would consider her students to be suitable for intercultural communication with our Year 9 GCSE Mandarin students. The researcher and Mrs Z achieved agreement and then friended each other on WeChat, followed by a series of WeChat messages and emails in which they negotiated how the intercultural exchange could take place and develop. As none of our GCSE Mandarin learners spoke any German, two classes of students agreed to use both Chinese and English but the main purpose of this exchange project would be to help GCSE Mandarin learners to practise Mandarin and develop intercultural communicative competence. Mrs Z believed that her students would also benefit from this exchange by developing intercultural competence although their foreign language was German.

As for preparing students to be familiar with social networking technology, all the participants in this study were from the same class and were trained to use Edmodo during lesson time at the beginning of this research. The researcher used a school computer to demonstrate how to set up Edmodo usernames and passwords, how to log in and access the social networking site and application. Then, all the participants used school laptops to create Edmodo accounts and they were encouraged to post in Chinese based on textbook chapters first and then around whatever topics they were interested in. It was agreed that the exchange would mainly be comparing British and Chinese

culture and life based on the topics of Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook. Students from both classes were asked to send a self-introduction to their language partners on Edmodo. When the CFL students had their first Mandarin class in a classroom with laptops, they were explained in class how the exchange was designed to work, and what types of tasks would be ahead. They were asked to post a self-introduction to start the language partnership by the next class with school laptops (in two weeks). During the following weekend, the group of Chinese students responded to the GCSE Mandarin learners' Edmodo posts with their own self-introductions. The researcher then asked the GCSE Mandarin class to use Edmodo at least once every two weeks to prepare for tasks, read and send posts to participants (during a one-hour Mandarin class with school laptops). More often, the intercultural communication and interaction were carried out by students themselves outside of school time based on their own pace.

Mrs Z the Chinese teacher in the Shanghai link school also helped to explain the research information sheet and task design to her German class who were interested in talking to English students via Edmodo. As this research depended on participants' voluntary communication with their language partners, nine English students finally chose nine Chinese students based on their own wills after talking to each other for about one month. The researcher then separated each pair of language buddies into small closed Edmodo groups to let them chat more freely and collaborate more efficiently. Students from both countries were explained that they had the right to post about anything related to given tasks or on Chinese language and culture learning in general. In addition to Edmodo, students gradually developed their knowledge and understanding of social networking technology, and chose to use Skype and WeChat additionally to facilitate their communication and interaction as the exchange project moved on. Key features of Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat can be seen in section 3.5.5.3.

Please see Appendix 10 for more examples of Edmodo posts and WeChat messages.

3.5.5.3 The social networking tools participants used

Research had suggested that social networking tools can be used effectively in eTandem learning to connect people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Elia, 2006). When starting this project, the researcher and Mrs Z the link school teacher tried typical western social networking tools (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat) to connect with each other. However, many of them were unfortunately blocked by the Great Firewall in China, therefore not available for the Chinese teacher and language partners from Shanghai link school. The present case study, therefore, used three alternative social networking tools to facilitate students' communication with language partners: Edmodo (Hutter et al., 2008), Skype (Kasesalu and Tallinn, 2003), and WeChat (Tencent, 2011). As shown in Table 2 below (see websites for more details of these tools), Edmodo is a website and free downloadable software application to connect teachers and students. Its key features include sending and commenting posts, and liking and sharing posts and links. WeChat, functionally similar to Skype, is widely used in China. Their common key features include video/voice calls, both synchronous and asynchronous text and audio chats (see examples in Appendix 10).

Table 2 Key features of social networking tools in this case study

| Social networking tools | Key features |
|---|--|
| Edmodo (website and application; mainly asynchronous; https://www.edmodo.com/) | Asynchronous written interaction mainly |
| | Text-based posts (likes, comments & shares) |
| | Possible to embed pictures and multimedia |
| | Group members responding with comments |
| | Forum style archived posts |
| | Visual schoolbag to set homework |
| Skype (software and application; mainly asynchronous; www.skype.com) | Synchronous spoken interaction mainly |
| | Text and video messages |
| | Voice and video calls |
| | Room-based video conferencing |
| WeChat (software and application; both synchronous and asynchronous; www.wechat.com) | Virtual identity and change profile pictures |
| | Asynchronous and text and audio chats |
| | Synchronous voice and video calls |
| | Hold-to-translate (Mandarin ↔ English) |
| | Hold-to-talk (audio transcribed to text) |
| | Moments timeline (likes & comments) |
| | Official accounts |
| | Stickers and Emojis |

Edmodo was a free social networking site and app for teachers and students to connect with each other. Members could join Edmodo groups with a private invitation code and can send posts, discuss topics, set class and homework, and share multimedia digital content (e.g. links, photos, documents, videos and so on). The key feature of Edmodo was that it could provide a secure learning platform for classes to connect with each other for asynchronous collaboration, which was ideal for the social and intercultural exchange in the present study due to the time difference between the UK and China (see a screenshot of Edmodo groups in Figure 7). Apart from Edmodo, the introduction of Skype videoconferencing was a decision made up by students and the researcher during the second academic term. The crucial feature of Skype was that it would allow synchronous face-to-face videoconference for language learners to see and hear one another in this study (Elia, 2006; see Figure 8). Roblyer (1997:58) defined videoconferencing as a “closed communication system” to connect laptops and people (typically with a screen, a camera, a microphone, and a speaker). It was believed that Edmodo could enable the group of GCSE students to take their time to read language

partners' posts and prepare for what to respond to Shanghai students which involves the skills of interpreting and relating of ICC (Byram, 1997). It was hoped that based on the mutual trust and familiarity built, face-to-face Skype videoconferencing could further help participants to conduct intercultural interactions and communication in real time, therefore practising the skills of discovery and interaction of ICC against the limitations of synchronous communication (Byram, 1997:52). This thesis will look at how participants would perceive and use the synchronous chats and asynchronous communication of social networking tools to support their intercultural exchange.

Figure 7 Edmodo big group and nine pairs of small groups

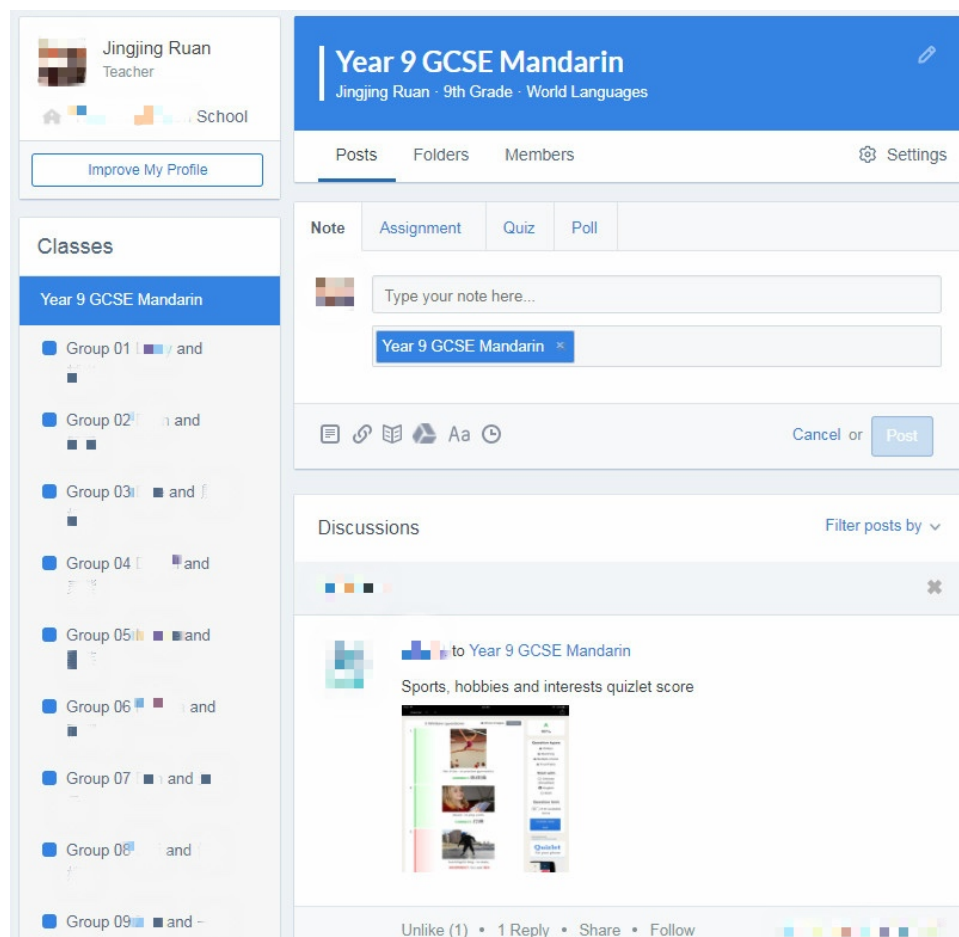


Figure 8 Skype videoconferencing with Chinese students in this study



However, according to Mrs Z the Chinese teacher from Shanghai link school, Chinese students were using WeChat (a Chinese social networking tool; see Figure 9 for a screenshot of WeChat texting feature) on a daily basis, instead of foreign ones, because the Chinese government has blocked access to western social networking tools. With WeChat, the Shanghai students were able to maintain social connections with their family and friends in China. Therefore, WeChat was then chosen as an ideal social networking tool for this study at the second academic year for the following reasons: 1) free instant messaging feature (e.g. text, voice, pictures, video calls), 2) convenient hold-text-to-translate button (e.g. Chinese to English), 3) official broadcast accounts, 4) the Moments feature (similar to timeline in Facebook which allows comments and likes, 5) various WeChat software versions for different mobile devices/laptops, and 6) accessible to both participants and native speakers in China. To summarise, WeChat is an authentic Chinese social networking tool that is very dominant in China. It was hoped that WeChat could provide an ideal space where CFL beginner learners in this case study could speak in Mandarin and English, or even code-switch between Chinese,

English, and Pinyin, and act in ways of Chinese and English. Wang et al. (2016) evaluated the affordances of WeChat in a language exchange project with university learners of Chinese and English. The findings indicated that WeChat successfully helped to establish participants' cognitive, social and teaching presences in a Community of Inquiry. However, the participants in the present study were a group of young secondary school GCSE Mandarin learners who could be very different from the adult CFL learners in Wang et al.'s (2016) research. This thesis will examine whether and how WeChat and other social networking tools could support secondary CFL learners to create a Community of Inquiry to develop ICC.

Figure 9 Messaging with Shanghai language partners



In this study, it was hoped that Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat could offer a more private sort of communication and interaction than the traditional western social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there were no significant differences between the chosen social networking tools in this case study and other typical western social networking tools. The choice of these tools met the research purpose of this study: to explore the use of social networking technologies to

promote a group of CFL learners' ICC development. It was not to promote any single type of social networking tools, and there will always be new generations of social networking technologies in the future. However, one crucial advantage of all chosen social networking sites and apps in this research was that they were free and will cost no data package if connected to Wi-Fi, for both the GCSE Mandarin students and Shanghai link school language partners. When the opportunity appeared in the present study to combine three different types of social networking tools including both asynchronous and synchronous communication, the researcher accepted it. It was believed that Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat could provide typical examples of available social networking tools available for people in China to connect with participants. Although this thesis will inevitably introduce examples of participants' use of certain features of Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat to illustrate the findings of this study, it was intended to explore how social networking tools, in general, could help secondary CFL beginner learners to develop their intercultural communicative competence.

3.5.6 Strengths and weaknesses of case study for this research

Case study has many potential strengths. Nisbet and Watt (1984) noted case studies can be: 1) strong on reality; 2) have a wide audience; and 3) speak for themselves. As Yin (2014) argued, case study design is suitable for educational research due to its ability to explain interventions in real-life contexts, and explore situations without clear outcomes. This is likely to be a characteristic of social networking in language learning, where it is over-simple to expect direct, immediate cause and effect in developing ICC. Also, Merriam (1988) emphasised the strengths of case study as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic and inductive. Merriam (1988) claimed that case study is preferred to examine contemporary events with behaviours in question cannot be manipulated. In the case of using social networking tools in schools, as the researcher

indicated above, it was the very interaction between participants that was under scrutiny and it was important that this was something they sustain. It cannot be easily manipulated.

Case study often involves a combination of multiple methods for data collection (Cohen et al., 2011). In some types of research, triangulation may be seen as using different data sources to get a more accurate “truth” (Denzin, 1970). However, this is an interpretivist study, which seeks not to offer any external “truth” but to present an accurate and recognisable picture of the participants’ perspectives. The importance of multiple data sources for this study is to present the case clearly and in a transparent way so that the reader can interpret what he/she reads. Merriam (1988) argued that using combined methods of data collection is a major advantage in case study research. In summary, case study is viewed as a particularly appealing design for educational research, where phenomena like social networking can be examined in real-life contexts, such as a classroom, and multiple methods can be used to provide a more transparent presentation of the case.

In terms of weakness of case study, possible difficulties can be encountered before, during or after the study. As Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggested, a limitation is that case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, therefore misleading readers. Also, the final report of case study may be too lengthy or detailed for busy policymakers and educators to read and use. An additional weakness is that humans are the main instrument of case study whose abilities need to be trained to enhance the research (Merriam, 1988). It can be concluded that the strengths of case study may also present certain limitations (e.g. thick description and time-consuming). A typical difficulty of doing multiple cases study would be the gaining of access to potential cases. Hammond and Wellington (2012) described access as the entry to people, places, organisations or

documents, which is negotiated in advance but gaining access is not a one-off process.

It has been argued that case study does not allow generalisability and the research process may be selective and biased which may affect trustworthiness of case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). To address the issue of generalisability, Yin (2006; 2011) highlighted that the case study approach is better at the uniqueness and specificity of a case, and thick descriptions, rather than scientific generalisation. Cohen et al. (2011:294) argued that case studies can offer researchers an insight into the real dynamics of people in natural situations. Likewise, Robson (2011) explained that case studies tend to have more analytic generalisation, contributing to the expansion of theories and helping other researchers to understand similar cases and phenomena, rather than statistical generalisation. This is echoed by Hammond and Wellington (2012:82) who suggested that a weakened form of generalizability is 'relatability' which may be a contribution of case study. It can be concluded that enough background details and transparent presentation and interpretation could allow readers to recognise the similarity and relatability of the case study. However, as Punch (2005) argued, despite the potential value of in-depth detailed description of case studies, readers still need to be critical of some over-descriptive cases which claim more from the findings. In the present case study, the case is a single GCSE Mandarin class, and the findings and results cannot be generalised to other situations directly. However, this thesis will try to present the case with enough detail and transparency so that other practitioners and researchers may see the relatability and methodological or analytic generalisation of similar situations.

3.6 Research Methods

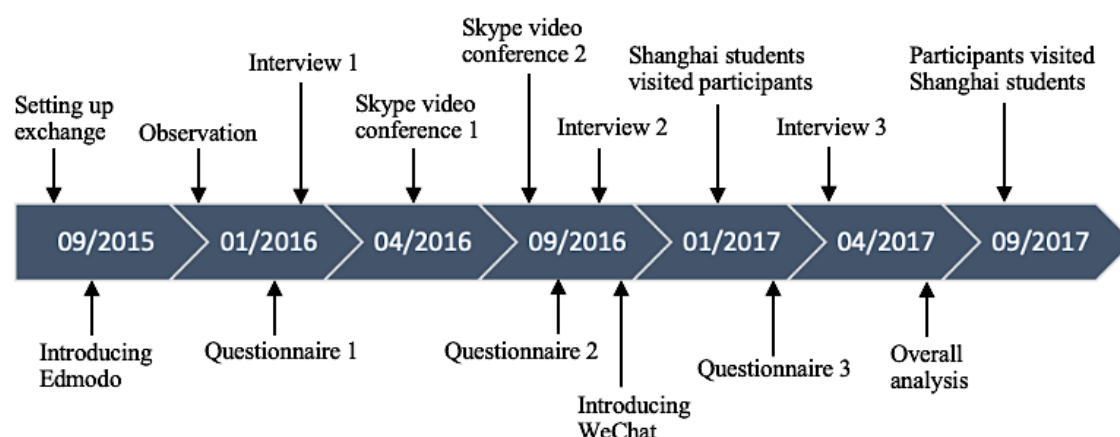
Methods are mainly discussed in quantitative or qualitative categories (Hammond and

Wellington, 2012). Quantitative methods mainly deal with countable data and statistics, whereas qualitative methods often involve coding and content analysis to manage and analyse uncountable data (Cohen et al., 2011). Merriam (1988) concluded that qualitative methods feature strongly in case studies, where the investigator is the main instrument, usually combining a variety of data collection techniques. In this study, the researcher mainly used participant observation of a group of GCSE Mandarin students' use of social networking tools, field notes of critical incidents and informal feedback, questionnaires, and interviews for formal comments and reflections. The main purpose of using a combination of these methods was to present the study in a more transparent way so that readers would be allowed more access to different sources of information to better interpret the particular case in the context.

3.6.1 Research process and duration

The general process of the research can be seen in Figure 10, including the timeline and methods of the research. The duration of this case study was a period of six terms in two school years (2015-2017). The present study started at the beginning of September 2015, the first month of the autumn term of the new academic year. In short, the data included participant observation of online chats, field notes of informal feedback, questionnaire responses, and recorded interviews collected throughout two academic years. The following sections will further describe the guidelines and tasks. The four data collection methods will be discussed in section 3.6.2 in more detail.

Figure 10 Timeline of this research (two school years)



3.6.1.1 Guidelines provided to participants

As for guidelines given to participants, a research information sheet (see Appendix 1) was provided to participants and parents before they signed the Consent Forms (see Appendix 2 and 3) to confirm their places in this research voluntarily. The researcher explained to the GCSE Mandarin learners and their parents that using social networking tools would be a necessary part of this exchange project. In term of how to use the Internet and social networking tools and what are appropriate and inappropriate online behaviours were extremely important to the participants. The researcher introduced Edmodo in September 2015 to students during lesson time and demonstrated the features of the website and app (see section 3.5.5.3). Before using Edmodo to send any posts, all the GCSE Mandarin students and the researcher discussed the basic “Dos and Don’ts” rules together. It was agreed that everyone needs to be friendly and respectful to other users within the closed social networking group including those with different opinions.

In terms of safety guidelines, the participants and the researcher reached an agreement that: the content of all posts and behaviours in this exchange project should not violate

the law; link to spam; degrade others; be commercial, obscene, threatening, offensive, abusive, or bullying. Participants were asked to friend the teacher, classmates, and language partners only. They were not allowed to add any outsiders or strangers. The researcher also asked all participants to report immediately with evidence (e.g. screenshots and description of incidents) if there was any inappropriate information or behaviour during the exchange with social networking tools (Cohen et al., 2011). The researcher did not limit how much time participants should spend on or how they should use the social networking tools out of school but required them to use the tools safely and appropriately under parents' control and supervision at home. They were reassured that they could withdraw the exchange project if they feel any types of harm or unsafety at any time, and the withdraw option would not affect their assessment in any way. Further, both the researcher and Mrs Z the Shanghai teacher were monitoring students' interaction and communication throughout the exchange project, in order to ensure E-safety for all the students. By the end of September 2015, all the participants and language partners had created Edmodo accounts with their school emails and joined the Edmodo exchange group.

In terms of what language to use in the present exchange project, the nine GCSE Mandarin learners were encouraged to use Mandarin as much as possible for text chats and voice messages to develop their intercultural communicative competence. As Byram (1997:71) argued, ICC suggests the ability to interact with members from the target culture "in the target language" effectively and appropriately. This definition of ICC was taught and explained to all participants before this exchange project started. However, the guideline and instructions were also given to participants that they could choose to use English or even pinyin in times of need. The researcher recognised the value of using L1 in the L2 learning environment in terms of the sociocultural theoretical framework. Brooks and Donato (1994:268) pointed out that L1 use in L2

interaction could allow learners to initiate and sustain interactions with others. Also, some L1 use during the L2 learning process could facilitate scaffolding and maintain a disciplined learning environment (Littlewood and Yu, 2011:69). Therefore, participants were aware that they could use both Mandarin and English to communicate with the teacher, peers, and language partners in this exchange project. For those who struggled to post in any Chinese at the start of the project, they could choose to post in English or pinyin before feeling ready to communicate in Mandarin. The researcher explained this expectation to all the participants, so they were aware that they did not have to post in Chinese only. Also, it was explained to all participants that they should not be afraid of making mistakes when using Mandarin, as mistakes are inevitable in the process of language learning. They were encouraged to try more complex Mandarin words and structures, and they were asked to reflect on and learn from their mistakes in the social networking groups.

3.6.1.2 Description of tasks and instructions

This section will further present how the language exchange activities and intercultural tasks were organised and what instructions were given to the participants. This project intended to provide a group of GCSE Mandarin learners with extra opportunities to engage in social and intercultural communication in the target language. The telecollaboration tasks in this exchange project were based on participants' textbook and often took a variety of forms including purposeful communication, postcard and story writing, surveys, interview activities with language partners online, and follow-up group discussion and presentation in class. The weekly class hours for the GCSE Mandarin learners to have Mandarin lessons are two one-hour lessons per week within curriculum time (78 hours in total in a school year). The frequency of using social networking tools as required by the researcher was at least once every two weeks.

More specifically, the participants had a one-hour Mandarin lesson to use school laptops to prepare for given tasks and send posts to participants once every two weeks (when they were allocated to a laptop equipped classroom; about 20 hours in total in one school year), including the two one-hour Skype video conferences using the school conference room. Typically, participants would use half of the lesson to present and share their observations, reflections, and questions through discussion and presentation. For the other half, they would research online, prepare for tasks based on Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook, read and reply to language partners' posts. These lessons were supported and supervised by the researcher, by discussing with them regarding their online chats and ICC development of the previous two weeks. However, there were also intercultural communication and chatting carried out with language partners outside of school and out of class hours based on each participant's own pace. Although many of the interactions were carried out outside the school and lessons, participants were asked for comments and feedback regarding their exchange experience and whether they were messaging each other during these laptop Mandarin lessons. The group of GCSE Mandarin learners were encouraged to type Chinese characters and use Chinese for voice messages and video calls, although this has been regarded as difficult for beginner learners (Everson, 1998). To support participants to engage in online discussions and video conferences with social networking tools, they were given guidelines and handouts (e.g. vocabulary list on Quizlet) to get familiar with frequently used vocabulary in advance. They were also asked to research on the topics that they planned to talk about, create their own vocabulary lists, and practise key sentences as necessary preparation.

The topics for tasks in this exchange project which the group of CFL beginner learners were asked to work on with their language partners were based on their Edexcel GCSE

Mandarin textbook. The group of CFL learners had chosen to do a three-year GCSE Mandarin course in the case school (2015-2018) towards the 2018 summer examination. This case study lasted for the first two academic years consisting of six terms (2015-2017), during which the group of GCSE students learnt the first six chapters of the textbook. At the beginning of each term, the main task was given to all participants for them to research on the cultural similarities and differences between the UK and China. Apart from the main tasks below given to the group of GCSE Mandarin students, they were encouraged to initiate new activities and tasks according to the needs of themselves and their language partners to develop their intercultural communicative competence. They were asked to prepare relevant vocabulary and conversation materials in advance for their online communication and intercultural collaboration with Shanghai link school students based on the key content and topics of the six chapters (see Table 3). Key dates and deadlines for these intercultural activities and tasks were explained to all GCSE Mandarin students. These textbook related tasks were hoped to be accessible and suitable for secondary CFL beginner learners, including a wide range of aspects of life, school, hobbies, media, living, and holidays. The tasks and activities will be discussed in more detail in chapters 4 and 5 when presenting and analysing the findings of this case study.

Table 3 A brief overview of tasks given to participants for online exchange

| Terms | Chapters | Tasks | Description |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Term 1 (09-12/2015) | 1. My Life | Introductory post to my language partner | Students use social networking tools to send posts to talk about themselves and their families |
| Term 2 (01-03/2016) | 2. School | Presenting likes and dislikes about my school | Students use social networking tools to send posts with pictures about their school followed by group presentation in class |
| Term 3 (04-07/2016) | 3. Leisure | Comparing leisure activities in England and China | Students use social networking tools to talk about leisure and hobbies |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Term 4 (09-12/2016) | 4. Media | Interviewing my language partner for media use in China | Students use social networking tools to interview link school students about their media user experience |
| Term 5 (01-03/2017) | 5. Where I live | Survey to all partners on where they live | Students use social networking tools to conduct a survey on link school students' house and rooms |
| Term 6 (04-07/2017) | 6. Holidays | Comparing holidays in England and China | Students use social networking tools to compare holidays, trips, or festivals followed by group presentation in class |

After communicating with each other for two academic terms on Edmodo, students had an open discussion with their language partners about the possibility of using Skype to see each other “face to face”. The Chinese teacher and students were happy with the idea of trying out video conferencing between two schools. During the third term of the first academic year, the English GCSE Mandarin students used the school’s conference room to prepare and conduct the first ever Skype video conference with the Shanghai link school in May 2016 (see Figure 11). This was not easy as the time differences between China and England were 7 hours in the summer and 8 hours in the winter. All the English students had to come to school very early to prepare the school conference room and use their first-period lesson (08:25-09:25 am) to connect with their Chinese friends who were having the last period lesson in China. According to the researcher’s field notes, the English students made very good preparation by researching around given topics and related Chinese culture in general, printing out key vocabulary and sharing relevant materials, and practising the possible questions and answers in Chinese characters and pinyin.

Figure 11 English students preparing for 1st Skype video conference



According to the researcher's field notes, this first Skype meeting was mainly about introducing each other formally and talking about families/pets according to students' own needs. Although the languages used was both Mandarin and English, participants and Shanghai link school language partners all tried their best to talk in Mandarin slowly, loudly and clearly. Based on the success of the first video conference, in September 2016 (start of the second academic year), English students organised the second Skype video conference to further communicate with language partners, around the topics of schools and hobbies. English students performed a Chinese song learnt the previous term 小薇 (sound: Xiǎowēi; a Chinese girl's name) to the Shanghai students. However, after about half an hour of conducting the second Skype video conference, the Internet connection went very poor that participants could not hear what the Shanghai students were saying. Although the Chinese language partners could hear the GCSE Mandarin students, the exchange could not continue smoothly. To solve the problem, Mrs Z the link school Chinese teacher decided to use WeChat to let her students send the voice messages to the researcher's WeChat. In this way, the GCSE Mandarin students could hear the Shanghai students' audio input and use the

researcher's WeChat to reply to the link school. As a result, they could see each other via Skype and hear each other through WeChat. According to the researcher's field notes, the Shanghai students used WeChat voice messages to sing an English song back (Cups-When I'm gone). Although there were some technical issues regarding the Internet connections, this second video conference was reported by participants to be a better exchange and emotional experience than the first one thanks to WeChat. At the end of the Skype video conference, Mrs Z reminded that WeChat has video call function as well which was similar to Skype. All the participants decided to register for their own WeChat accounts back home under their parents' permission and control, and use WeChat in addition to Edmodo and Skype in time of need in the future. However, due to time differences, different timetables, and technical problems in the conference room, the group of GCSE Mandarin students only managed to conduct two Skype video conferences and preferred to have voice and video calls with WeChat in the future.

Regarding the frequency of using social networking technologies, the three most active students (i.e. S3 EE, S9 EZ, and S4 NE) reported having used social networking tools after school to check if there were any new messages or posts almost every day. Other participants typically used social networking technologies at least once a week with their own mobile devices. The main student activities in general over the six terms of two academic years included: genuine purposeful communication around given topics that were based on the Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbooks (e.g. my family, pets, hobbies, school); submitting paperless homework on Edmodo; sharing Mandarin sentence and translanguage story writing with language partners on Edmodo and WeChat (please see Appendix 12 for examples of stories that students wrote); Skype video conferences and WeChat calls with language partners; exchanging pictures of handwritten postcards via WeChat (please see Appendix 11 for examples of postcards); posting about daily school life on WeChat Moments (please see Appendix 16 for

examples). There was no drop out in this case study. All the nine participants participated in this research by using Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat to communicate with their language partners over the two school years (2015-2017).

To conclude, to complete the intercultural tasks, the group of GCSE Mandarin students mainly used school laptops in lesson time and their own devices to access social networking tools after school due to school policy on mobile phone use for students under 16 years old. As Mrs Z introduced, the Shanghai students mainly used their own devices after school or during weekends because they were very busy with their studies during weekdays. In this study, when the English students used school-owned laptops, there was always a member of staff supervising them (sometimes the researcher or another MFL teacher). An ordinary Mandarin class in the school would learn the regular topics in the curriculum according to the Edexcel examination board. In contrast, the GCSE Mandarin class in this case study, not only needed to learn the same topics in Edexcel textbooks (please see Appendix 9), but also needed to prepare for the given tasks and take risks in using the target language to communicate with real Chinese people on Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat. At the start of the project, the researcher encouraged all the participants to make the most of the language buddy scheme and Telecollaboration opportunity to get to know more about China and Chinese culture.

3.6.2 Data collection in this case study

This research aimed to explore a case of a GCSE Mandarin class of nine students to investigate their use of social networking technology to develop ICC. The methods employed to address the research question were based on the interpretivist research paradigm and refined by two previous pilot studies discussed earlier in section 3.3. As can be seen in Table 4, through these methods, the collected dataset consisted of four

parts: 1) participant observation of participants' use of social networking tools to communicate with their language partners; 2) field notes of unexpected critical incidents and informal comments from participants, language partners, parents, and the researcher's thoughts; 3) three sets of questionnaires with all participants after using Edmodo, Skype, WeChat for respectively; and 4) three rounds of follow-up interviews on participants' experiences of and reflection upon using social networking tools to develop ICC.

Table 4 A brief summary of data collection

| Datacollection | Volume | Description |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Participant observation | 328 pages of a word document (roughly 34173 words plus 92 screenshots) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed nine participants' online communication and video conference with nine language partners; • Recorded all the chat history of Edmodo posts and WeChat messages. |
| 2. Field notes | 69 pages of a word document (roughly 25224 words plus 36 screenshots). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented unexpected critical incidents (e.g. screenshots and description); • Recorded unexpected informal comments from participants, language partners, and parents, plus the researcher's thoughts. |
| 3. Questionnaires | 3 sets of questionnaires with all participants (27 copies of responses) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st questionnaire on use of Edmodo (February 2016); • 2nd questionnaire on use of Edmodo and Skype (October 2016); • 3rd questionnaire on use of Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat (March 2017). |
| 4. Interviews | 3 rounds of follow-up interviews (about 5 hours' audio-recordings roughly transcribed into 24260 words) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.5 hour one to one interview with S2, S4, S6, and S9 (March 2016); • 0.5 hour one to one interview with S1, S3, S5, and S8 (November 2016); • 1-hour focus group interview with all nine participants (April 2017). |

3.6.2.1 Participant observation

Newby (2010) argued that observation of participant behaviours is a useful source of data, and more attention needed be paid to observation as a research approach. Observation is an important method to obtain direct information, as in questionnaires or interviews people sometimes cannot remember accurately what they did, and what

they say they did may be different from what they actually did (Lang and Heiss, 1991; Weir and Roberts, 1994:164). It was argued that the value of participant observation is to provide researchers with additional opportunities to understand the phenomenon in the natural environment (Baker, 2006). As Robson (2011) indicated, observation is flexible and takes a view of the whole context in real life, which aids understanding and interpretation. More importantly, participant observation can enable researchers to see things that participants might not be aware of, or things that they are unwilling to talk about. Therefore, the benefits of participant observation are that it takes place in a natural setting for those being observed, and it would allow the researcher to see facts that students themselves may not be able to recall or notice, which are highly consistent with the purpose and nature of this case study.

In terms of possible stances of participant observation, Junker (1960) defined four types: 1) a complete participant; 2) participant as an observer; 3) observer as a participant; and 4) a complete observer. As the teacher of this GCSE Mandarin class and a member of staff at the school, the researcher had to monitor students' use of mobile devices and social media due to school policy. Therefore, the researcher was in the discussion groups on social networking tools and observed students' communication and interactions with language partners as a participant. However, students were the dominant human agencies in social networking activities and the researcher did not participate as much as they did (only when necessary instruction, feedback, explanations, and guidance were needed). Hence, the researcher's stance in this research would be best described as 'observer as a participant' and the researcher was using 'participant observation' to collect data. According to Yin (2014), the strength such participant observation, compared to direct observation, is that it gives researchers more access and it could help them to be more insightful of interpersonal behaviours and motives.

In the present case study, the researcher acted as both the GCSE Mandarin teacher and the project researcher. It was expected that participant observation could allow the researcher to experience the features and limitations of social networking tools in this project and access participants' online interactions and intercultural experience at the earliest timing. As discussed in section 3.5.3 earlier, the insider stance of a participant observer could bring a greater familiarity with and understanding with the participants and the case under study. Another aim of participant observation was to develop better questions for the questionnaires and interviews with CFL students. The comparison and contrast between participants' online interactions and their questionnaire and interview responses could help the researcher to address the key research questions more accurately and to improve the trustworthiness of this case study.

Nonetheless, there are limitations regarding the impact of participant observers on the observed situation to a greater or lesser extent (Merriam, 1988). One possible weakness is that there might be bias due to participant observer's manipulation of events. To tackle this problem, the researcher informed students that they could use the social networking tools voluntarily and their participation would not be a part of any progress checks or GCSE assessments. In other words, the researcher did not participate fully in CFL learners' interactions but only as an observer of students' voluntary use of social networking tools. In the present study, there was no other way of collecting data than through this kind of participant observation. To conclude, the researcher joined the social networking groups in order to better capture and understand students' interactions as a participant observer. Another practical disadvantage is that participant observation could be more time-consuming.

However, there were several methods to avoid the above possible issues. To start with,

as a participant observer, the researcher was able to record all the group chats and conduct regular discussion sessions in class once every two weeks with the GCSE Mandarin students in terms of their intercultural experience. This even involved comments on students' private WeChat chats which participants preferred to keep as private sometimes. Secondly, the researcher kept a reflexive diary to record participants' interactions, developments, and any unexpected incidents as these happened (see 3.6.2.2). Thirdly, the researcher held regular meetings with supervisors and debriefing talks with colleagues for alternative explanations and interpretations of her observation. Similarly, the researcher conducted regular checks with the participants being interviewed to double check whether their voice and reflections had been understood correctly. Last but not least, the researcher designed this case study to span over about two academic years, it was believed that a relatively longitudinal case study would enable the researcher to observe any changes of the group of CFL beginner learners' development and understand their interactions in more depth, which could help to avoid short-term bias.

3.6.2.2 Field notes

As Punch and Oancea (2014) pointed out, researchers' ideas about the data or case may occur at any point during the data collection and analysis process. Therefore, it would be wise for case study researchers to note down the ideas, views, and thoughts as they might be useful in the future. In particular, the field notes that record researchers' reflections can be regarded as some sort of early analysis as memos (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Finley, 1998). In this case study, the researcher kept a regular reflexive diary about informal comments in any form from participants, language partners, and parents. The field notes were also recording unexpected exchange incidents with screenshots and descriptions, as well as the researcher's thoughts upon

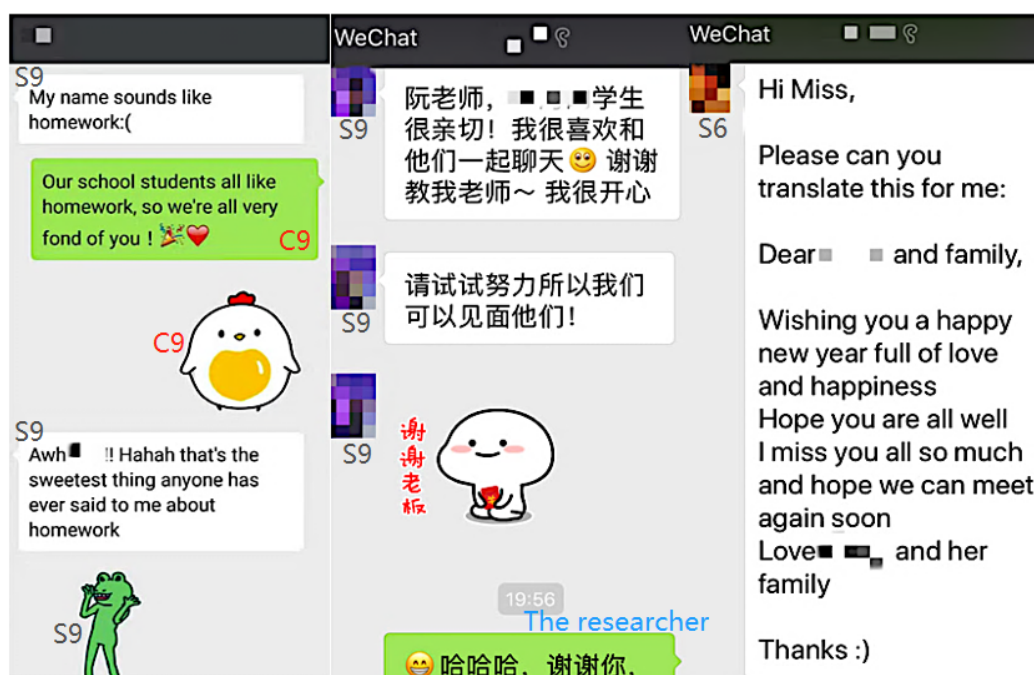
them. The role of field notes was to supplement the researcher's participant observation of the online group chats. It was intended to form interview questions for participants and help to categorise and interpret the data as the project went on.

For example, it was recorded in the researcher's field notes that an English student came to the researcher to show her chats with her language partner in a small group. She expressed how she enjoyed using WeChat to talk to Chinese people and how well she practised writing Chinese sentences. She said she sent her Chinese friend a long sentence in Chinese that ‘我的猫真的很不喜欢洗澡，但是今天我洗了澡她，她很不开心！’ (Literally: My cat really doesn't like taking showers, but today I gave her a bath. She was very unhappy!). She was very impressed with herself because her language partner understood it and they continued chatting about their cats and dogs for quite a while during the weekend. The researcher can see that she used something from a lesson last week - 了 in the sentence which is a marker to describe a completed action in this case. Although there was a mistake (洗了澡她 should be 给她洗了澡) in her sentence, her language partner did not pick the error up to disrupt the conversation which otherwise may demotivate English students to chat more in Chinese.

Additionally, students from both countries sometimes sent the researcher informal feedback via WeChat messages to express how they thought of their exchange experience and to tell the researcher how their interactions with their friends were like. For instance, as Figure 12 shows, the left screenshot was a piece of English conversation that student 9 EZ's language partner C9 YH sent the researcher after chatting with EZ around the pronunciation of her Chinese name. The middle screenshot was a piece of Chinese conversation between student 9 EZ and the researcher in that ‘阮老师，C9 学生很亲切！我很喜欢和他们一起聊天😊谢谢教我老师~我很开心；请试试努力

所以我们可以见面他们！ [谢谢老板表情包]’ (English translation: Miss Ruan, the students are so nice! I enjoy chatting with them very much. Thanks for teaching me Miss~ I’m very happy; Please try your best so we can meet them! [Thank you boss emoji]). The right English WeChat text was from an English student S6 who was asking for my help with translation because she wanted to send a card to China to wish her language partner and family a happy Chinese Spring Festival. Although not all students mentioned similar affective feelings in this way, the feedback and information were very important for the researcher and enabled her to better understand students’ interactions and sometimes the friendship between families. Therefore, it was necessary to use field notes to record the data for later analysis.

Figure 12 Example of recorded information in the field notes



In this case study, the researcher used field notes to keep track of English students’ parents’ and their Chinese language partners’ informal feedback, in order to have a better understanding about their uses of social networking tools. For instance, Student 3 EE’s language partner C3 YN sent the researcher a paragraph of feedback as follows:

“我最开始加入 Edmodo 小组和英国学生聊天的时候，希望可以找到一个比较开朗乐观外向的好朋友。我已经找到了她叫 EE！嗯哈哈，EE 特别好，我很喜欢她，她很外向很热情，跟我交流一会我们就成为好朋友了，我很喜欢她的性格。微信上面的沟通是我想象中的，嗯，很好，气氛也很棒，一点都不会尴尬，因为我们在 Edmodo 上面已经聊过一段时间了。我们沟通的时候，EE 主要是用英语，有时候也会说一些中文，毕竟她只学了 3 年中文，这样已经很不错了！她们一起写的故事很有脑洞啊！我有给她看过中国菜的照片，也简单介绍了一下中国和上海，她很希望可以来到中国。我很希望明年 EE 可以来到上海，我也会热情地招待她。[Translation] I hope to find a relatively optimistic and outgoing friend when joined the Edmodo group to chat with English students. I have found her. She is EE! Ah ha-ha, EE is so nice, and I really like her. She is very outgoing and enthusiastic. It didn't take long before we communicated with each other and became good friends. I really like her characteristics. The communication in WeChat is as good as I expected. The atmosphere is awesome, and there is no awkwardness at all because we have chatted for a while on Edmodo. When we communicate, EE mainly uses English, and sometimes she also uses Chinese. This is not bad at all, as she only learnt Chinese for 3 years after all. The stories that they wrote are quite creative. I have shown her pictures of Chinese dishes and introduced China and Shanghai to her. She really hopes to visit China. I hope that next year EE can come to Shanghai so that I can welcome and treat her as my guest.”

Another example is that S3's parent provided some feedback as follows:

“WeChat and Skype really helped this time, otherwise they would still be complete strangers to each other. They talked with language partners and knew whom to host and made good preparation early on, which made things a lot easier. I think the WeChat app really helped with their communication and exchange. She is using it every day. They became so close that she immediately hugged her partner when she arrived to stay with us in January. She was so sad to see her leave but they can still use WeChat to keep in touch with each other. So that’s good.”

To conclude, while conducting participant observation over the two academic years (2015-2017), the researcher kept an diary of field notes to record a group of CFL beginner learners’ informal feedback or questions to the researcher in person during lessons or break time at school, important and unexpected incidents, Chinese language partners’ and parents’ informal feedback to the researcher in any form, and the researcher’s thoughts on the CFL students’ use of social networking technology throughout these two years. Some field notes simply described particular online behaviours or activities which the researcher did not expect before that helped the researcher to understand the case better in the process. More often the researcher recorded students’ interesting intercultural communication or interaction activities in the present Community of Inquiry, their offline discussion during lesson time and informal chats with the researcher about their use of social networking tools, and most importantly the researcher’s thoughts and reflections upon them. Examples of field notes can be seen in Appendix 13. In this research, these field notes especially helped the researcher to reflect on participants’ interactions among themselves and with their language partners more effectively. The field notes enabled the researcher to write down ideas that came to her mind during observation and discussions with students. By

keeping field notes, the researcher was able to better understand the potential benefits of using social networking technology for real-world intercultural communication, and also reflect upon its possible impacts on participants' ICC development. The field notes were analysed together with the other sources of data and used to lay the basis for questionnaire and interview questions.

3.6.2.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are an economical way to collect structured information and data without being present at the research sites (Cohen et al., 2011). A weakness of the questionnaire technique is its intrusion into participants' lives because of the time needed to answer questions and possible invasion of privacy (Robson, 2011). In this research, the data collected from participation observation were coded thematically to generate themes for questionnaires. The main purposes of conducting questionnaires in the current study were to explore a group of CFL students' perspectives on the use of social networking tools, their experience of using social networking technology to communicate with language partners, and their reflections on their ICC development. One advantage of questionnaires is the potential for anonymity and straightforward descriptive information (Munn, 1995). Because attitudes, motives, and perspectives are not that easy to collect based on observation, questionnaires were chosen as a more suitable approach.

Over the two academic years, three sets of questionnaires were distributed to all participants in this research: 1) a questionnaire after half a year of conducting this project on CFL learners' general experience and views of using Edmodo in February 2016; 2) a questionnaire after one year on students' specific experience and perspectives of using Edmodo and Skype to learn Mandarin and to communicate with language partners in October 2016; 3) a questionnaire after one and half years on students'

experience and reflections of using Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat to develop intercultural communicative competence in March 2017. For each questionnaire, the researcher's MFL colleagues were asked to help double check the question list and the piloting was conducted with another year group of five Mandarin students who were also using Edmodo. After piloting, the revised questionnaires were designed online using Survey Monkey website and the relevant link was created and sent to student participants. For students who were not available to use online questionnaires, they were provided with the printed paper versions in times of need. The data collected from these questionnaires were recorded, coded, analysed, and then used to develop the follow-up interview schedule and focus group interviews with CFL students.

To conclude, in this case study, three sets of questionnaires were conducted with all nine participants, which resulted in 27 copies of responses. The first open-ended questionnaire in February 2016 mainly provided data in terms of students' views about what aspects of Edmodo in this study did they found most interesting, enjoyable, and motivating; what did they like and what did they dislike about certain features and affordances of social networking technology, and what were the reasons. The second semi-structured questionnaire in October 2016 generated data about students' experience of using Edmodo and Skype for intercultural exchange, what went well, and what could be even better. The third questionnaire in March 2017 created data on participants' opinions about using Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat in general to develop ICC in a Community of Inquiry. The last questionnaire used elements from the key concepts of the CoI framework and ICC model to form a Likert Scale list of statements. For example, if participants chose Scale 5, it meant that it was strongly agreed that their knowledge of target language and culture developed (Byram, 1997; please see Appendix 6 for examples of answered questionnaires).

3.6.2.4 Interviews

Interviewing can be defined as a conversation between the researcher and those being researched with a purpose to obtain a special kind of information (Cohen et al., 2011). To better answer the research questions, it was essential to explore a group of CFL beginner learners' beliefs and perspectives on their use of social networking technology and their ICC development, which might be probed through more in-depth interviews of the participants. Patton's (1980) explained that interviews could help researchers to collect data that are not easy to be observed directly (e.g. feelings and intentions). In this case study, immediately after receiving the questionnaire responses, the researcher read and analysed participants' answers to decide which students to interview. This process typically took one month. It was decided that after conducting each questionnaire, two active users of social networking technology and two less active participants would be interviewed to further explore their experience and views.

Then the researcher considered what types of interviews would be carried out to meet the research purpose of this study. Literature revealed that there are mainly three types of interviews for qualitative research, including unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and structured interviews (Cohen et al.; 2011). Semi-structured interviews can enable researchers to obtain data within a designed range of questions, and at the same time to allow interviewees to raise relevant issues by themselves (Cohen et al., 2011). Newby (2010) concluded that semi-structured interviews fit between questionnaires and the evolving interview. A major strength is its ability to allow researchers to ask additional questions, reflect and clarify misunderstandings. According to Merriam (1988), researchers can use semi-structured interviews to respond immediately to some emerging views of respondents and collect new ideas around the main topic. Therefore, in this case study, semi-structured interviews were

employed at three different stages after receiving three sets of questionnaires. This would allow both flexibility and freedom for the researcher to generate new questions in times of need, and to explain the relevant topics depending on participants' response (Kvale, 1996). Please see Appendix 7 for examples of interview transcripts.

However, possible disadvantages of interviews are that they are time-consuming, interviewers need to be trained, need for scepticism and relatively high cost. To tackle these, in this study, a list of questions was created according to the codes and themes emerged from the previous participant observation and questionnaire responses. Also, new questions were allowed to be generated during the interviewing process at three different stages. For the first two interviews (one after the first questionnaire and one after the second questionnaire), two most active CFL students in the social networking contexts and two least active ones were invited for interviews to talk about their perceptions on their online activities and ICC development. In order to understand students' involvement in more depth, the last interview was conducted near the end of the case study. All CFL students were invited to participate in a focus group to further talk about their two years' use of social networking tools and their perspectives on their Mandarin learning and their ICC development. All three interviews with CFL students informed the researcher of what they thought they did in the CoI and what they believed worked to develop their ICC. The responses were then compared to what participants answered in the questionnaires and what the researcher observed as a participant in the Community of Inquiry, as different sources of data can be used together to present the findings in a more transparent and trustworthy way.

As a result, in this case study, three rounds of follow-up interviews were carried out after questionnaire responses were analysed. The first one-to-one interviews were conducted with two active users of Edmodo (S4 and S9) and two least active

participants (S2 and S6) in March 2016. Thesecond one-to-one interviews were carried out with two active participants of exchange with Edmodo and Skype (S3 and S8), as well as two least active students (S1 and S5) in November 2016. These above one to one interviews were all around 30 minutes (between 27 to 31 minutes) locating in languages office or classrooms during students' free time (e.g. school lunch time or after school) according to participants' appointments with the researcher. An audio recorder was used to record the interviews under participants' consent and parents' permission. Also, the researcher managed to note down some brief information which was used later to help transcription and compare with the recordings. The last interview was a one-hour focus group interview with all the nine participants regarding their experience of using Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat to develop ICC in April 2017. This used one Mandarin lesson in the language classroom with school laptops. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for later coding. It was interesting to observe that some participants were able to express themselves in longer stories while some others, for the same question, could only respond with one or two sentences. The researcher had to adapt to different communication styles of participants to help them develop their reflections and thoughts using semi-structured questions.

To sum up, there were nine interviews conducted in total in this case study: four in the language office, four in free MFL classrooms, and one during a Mandarin lesson in the Mandarin classroom. As each interview lasted around 30 minutes to fit around school timetables and four students were interviewed during the first two rounds plus a one-hour focus group interview during a Mandarin lesson, there were approximately 5 hours' interview recording which resulted in roughly 24260 words' transcript (see Appendix 7 for examples of interview transcripts). This research did not manage to interview the Shanghai students or parents formally due to different timetables and other reasons, however, they were explained that their feedback was welcome in other

forms throughout the study. Some of them sent the researcher their thoughts about the exchange informally via WeChat which were recorded in the field notes and analysed in later chapters.

3.6.2.5 Summary of data collection

In summary, the dataset collected consisted of four main parts:

- Participant observation of a group of nine GCSE Mandarin learners' online communication and exchange with nine Shanghai link school language partners of the main case study (2015-2017) (2 years' chat history on Edmodo and WeChat and notes of two Skype video conferences in a word document of 328 pages, 34173 words plus 92 screenshots);
- Field notes of unexpected activities and critical incidents taking place in a Community of Inquiry created by the nine participants and their language partners over the two academic years, informal comments from participants, language partners, and parents, and the researcher's reflections upon them (2 years' field notes in a word document of 69 pages, 25224 words plus 36 screenshots);
- 27 questionnaire responses with GCSE Mandarin students on their experiences of using social networking tools to develop ICC and views on what tasks went well and what could be better: the first set about using Edmodo in February 2016; the second set about using Edmodo and Skype in October 2016; the third set about using Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat in March 2017);
- About 5 hours' follow-up interviews on participants' reflections upon the intercultural experience and exchange tasks with social networking tools to develop ICC: the first round of interviews with S2, S4, S6, and S9 in March 2016; the second round of interviews with S1, S3, S5, and S8 in November 2016; and a final focus group interview with all nine participants on 3 April 2017 (roughly 24260 words'

transcript).

To conclude, in this case study, direct data was recorded and derived primarily from asynchronous Edmodo forum posts, WeChat text messages, and two synchronous Skype video conferences. The group of GCSE Mandarin learners practised the reading and writing of short Mandarin sentences, collaborative longer narratives, and tested their Mandarin listening and speaking skills through intercultural exchange tasks. The researcher, as the Mandarin teacher, observed students' communication and interactions with language partners as a participant in the social networking groups. Meanwhile, direct data was supported by indirect data. This involved keeping a diary to note down the CFL learners' critical incidents and informal feedback and discussions, the language partners' and parents' informal comments in any form, and the researcher's thoughts on participants' use of social networking tools throughout the exchange project.

The purpose of this case study was to observe and investigate how a group of CFL beginner learners could use social networking tools to explore and develop ICC. Although the concept of ICC was not covered in class hours and teaching materials of GCSE Mandarin course in the secondary school previously, it was introduced and explained to participants and parents prior to and throughout this research in times of need. Participants were encouraged to use Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat to communicate with peers and language partners. At the same time, they were asked to feedback the researcher their user experience and reflective thoughts through questionnaires and interviews formally and through casual chats informally at any time, which were then noted down in observation and field notes. The total number of meetings on Skype was two (in May and September 2016) and they were recorded in the form of observation notes. The frequency of using Edmodo and WeChat was at least

once every two weeks during one hour Mandarin lesson with school laptops.

3.6.3 Data analysis in this study

The following sections will explain methods of data analysis to examine themes and patterns about using social networking to create a Community of Inquiry to develop different aspects of ICC within data in this case study.

3.6.3.1 Thematic analysis in this case study

Originated from the field of psychology, the thematic analysis approach underlines the participants' experience and views as the core research object. For example, the data often were from observation of human beings' behaviours and interviews that allows people to talk about the topics in their own words. As one of the most frequently used qualitative data analysis methods, thematic analysis values searching for themes and identifying patterns based on collected data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Guest et al., 2011). Thematic analysis is not a fixed approach but rather reflective according to different research purpose and various data types. Typically, the process of thematic data analysis involves: 1) reading transcripts to become familiar with data, 2) generating initial codes to identify possible themes, 3) reviewing, comparing and contrasting themes, and 4) naming themes to produce reports and build theoretical models (Braun and Clarke, 2006). These multiple phases of thematic analysis are very similar to Miles and Huberman's (1994) three stages of data analysis in educational research (i.e. data reduction; data display; conclusion drawing and verification), and Robson's (2011) six phases of thematic analysis: 1) familiarising the data, 2) gathering initial codes, 3) identifying themes, 4) constructing the thematic map, 5) making comparisons, and 6) integration and interpretation.

Thematic data analysis could involve inductive approach, deductive approach, or a combined approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2012). In the inductive tradition, the themes would be identified in a “bottom-up” manner, in which the researcher will not fit the data into a pre-existing coding framework. On the other hand, the deductive approach would be theory-driven in a “top-down” fashion. However, the coding process in qualitative studies is not an either-or decision (Hammond and Wellington, 2012). Rather, it was believed that the choice of these analysis approaches largely relies on the researcher’s ontology and epistemologies, as well as the research questions and purpose. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested, research questions could help to decide how to analyse heavy loads of data. The central research question of this qualitative case study was to explore how a group of GCSE Mandarin learners could use social networking tools to develop their intercultural communicative competence. Therefore, the researcher adopted a combined approach to better understand participants’ online exchange and ICC development by using pre-existing Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework and Byram’s (1997) ICC model, as well as allowing new and revealing themes from the dataset. The top-down coding process used the themes from the original models of CoI and ICC, and the bottom-up approach involved analysis of participants’ feedback and generating of new themes that did not fit into the CoI and ICC frameworks. For example, some of participants’ feedback was coded as “multimodality” when they talked about the multimodal features of these networking tools.

In this case study, the pre-existing Community of Inquiry coding template (Garrison et al., 2000; see Figure 13) served as a guideline for thematic analysis of a group of CFL students’ online behaviours and Byram’s (1997) model (see section 2.3.1.3) served as the thematic analysis principle of participants’ ICC development. These coding frameworks could help the researcher to better understand the CFL learners’

intercultural communication and interaction in the social networking context before creating random new themes from the data. For example, the CoI template demonstrated three main categories of online learning behaviours and provided possible examples of indicators of such presences as below. The researcher constructed the codes from “most revealing” themes based on the dataset in this study (Bryman, 2008:552). These codes and early analysis were returned to the GCSE Mandarin students to check the interpretation of their answers and interactions to offer any changes of opinions. After that, new indicators were added to the original example indicators of CoI presences which were finally chosen as key analytical points in NVivo to code similar segments of data in later stages. For example, the researcher used the original CoI categories to analyse the Teaching Presence in the present Community of Inquiry, but it was felt necessary to add some new indicators to explain students’ online experience more accurately (see section 4.2.3 for more information).

Figure 13 CoI Coding Template (Garrison et al., 2000:4)

| Elements | Categories | Indicators (examples only) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Cognitive Presence | Triggering Event | Sense of puzzlement |
| | Exploration | Information exchange |
| | Integration | Connecting ideas |
| | Resolution | Apply new ideas |
| Social Presence | Emotional Expression | Emoticons |
| | Open Communication | Risk-free expression |
| | Group Cohesion | Encouraging collaboration |
| Teaching Presence | Instructional Management | Defining & initiating discussion topics |
| | Building Understanding | Sharing personal meaning |
| | Direct Instruction | Focusing discussion |

(Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, p. 4)

Firstly, the researcher started the thematic analysis from reading transcripts, online chat history, and field notes to become familiar with various data. The large set of data collected was organised in different media including interview recordings, video conference notes, field notes of informal comments and incidents, questionnaire responses and Internet chat history in word documents. The researcher selected all entries of students' Edmodo posts and WeChat messages, copied and pasted them into a word document. Then, the researcher read all the responses, chat history, and video conference notes, and listened to the interview audio recordings again and again before transcribing them. The researcher thus became more familiar with all the data, as well as the differences and similarities between different sets of data. The 'oTranscribe' website was used to transcribe students' interview recordings and the transcripts were sent back to students to be double-checked whether their voice had been understood correctly and whether their thoughts were presented fully and accurately. The researcher became familiar with the large dataset including 2 years' online chat history on Edmodo and WeChat; notes of two Skype video conferences in a word document of 328 pages, 34173 words plus 92 screenshots; 2 years' field notes in a word document of 69 pages, 25224 words plus 36 screenshots; 27 questionnaire responses with GCSE Mandarin students on their experiences of using social networking tools to develop ICC and views on what tasks went well and what could be better; about 5 hours' follow-up interviews on participants' reflections upon using social networking tools to develop ICC (roughly 15 hours transcribing time into 24260 words' transcript). In short, the mass of different sets of data was selected, abstracted, and transformed into word documents, to appear as tangible transcripts that could be uploaded into NVivo for further data display and coding.

The second stage of thematic analysis in this study was to start initial coding and identify possible themes. Analysis has been regarded as a process of breaking down

dataset into components and putting those parts together in a different format under codes and themes (Hammond and Wellington, 2012). Themes could be regarded as tags or patterns across various datasets that would be the key to explain and interpret the phenomenon based on research questions. It was pointed out that the depth of qualitative study can be obtained by exploring the data closely through generating codes and identifying themes from data based on interview transcripts, written texts, and field notes (Patton, 1980). Coding usually refers to the process of applying labels and tags to data, which could be managed in software like NVivo. In the present case study, data collected from participant observation, field notes, questionnaires, and interviews were transcribed into word documents and then entered into NVivoPro software to generate initial codes (please see Appendix 14 for screenshots of NVivo coding surface). The researcher not only examined the frequency of phrases in the transcripts based on the CoI and ICC coding frameworks but also identified explicit and implicit indicators for new themes from the original data. This stage of thematic analysis helped the researcher to develop initial codes and identified potential additional themes from repeated ideas within the raw data. To conclude, this stage provided a more organised format of data including producing extended texts for initial codes based on different sources of data.

The third stage of thematic analysis in this study was to review the initial codes, and to compare and contrast the generated themes. The code lists from CoI and ICC frameworks were developed in order to map out more practical thematic analysis paths for the particular data in this case study. After collecting the questionnaire responses, the early analysis began. This allowed the researcher to have more fresh ideas for interpreting the data. The early analysis could also help with the discussion with students during Mandarin lessons with laptops once every two weeks. The main themes from the data of participant observation and questionnaire responses were reviewed and compared. Relevant questions were generated for the follow-up interviews. After the

early interpretation of questions and interviews were checked by participants, all the transcripts together with online chats and field notes were coded in NVivo Pro and the new themes were compared. Themes related to the use of social networking technology and intercultural competence which were identified as similar or identical across dataset were extracted for further analysis (see sections 4.2 and 4.3). The thematic analysis at this stage focused on comparing themes related to participants' experience of online communication and their opinions on how social networking technology contributed to their ICC development. The interpretation of the initial codes included comparing theme frequencies, identifying theme recurrence, and using Nvivo node tree to display relationships between different themes. Crucial contradiction, contrast, and irregularity between participants' views and online behaviours in the exchange project were analysed as well.

The fourth phase of thematic analysis in this case study was to define and name the themes to build theoretical models and produce reports. All the data were coded with nodes highlighting themes and patterns around three CoI presences with ten CoI categories and recurring themes around key ICC elements in NVivo software. These pre-existing CoI and ICC coding categories were used as a base to code student utterances and interactions (see examples in Figure 14 and Figure 15), but further subsidiary indicators were also developed as the content and context of this research were unique and different from earlier studies (e.g. "multimodality" and "translanguaging"). Regarding defining and naming themes and codes, Garrison et al. (2000) argued that the major challenge is the problem of defining the appropriate unit of analysis. Based on existing literature, there are three main types of unit analysis: 1) sentence unit analysis (e.g. defining each individual sentence as a unit), 2) message unit analysis (e.g. defining each complete post or message as a unit), and 3) idea unit analysis (i.e. defining a thematic idea in posts or messages as a unit). In the current

study, idea units in a post or message or a conversation were used as the unit of analysis to name the codes and themes. Idea unit analysis was felt to be more suitable for this study than sentence or message unit analysis because normally several short WeChat messages or sentences could have the same idea or topic. Also, a post on Edmodo or a long message on WeChat may contain more than one idea or topic. For example, the Chinese language partners came to England to visit the CFL learners after about one and a half years in this project and stayed with English students' families for a week. After the Chinese students left, the English students sent many entries of short messages to say that they were so sad to see them leave, that they wished them a safe flight back to China, and that they really could not wait to visit their language partners soon. Although there were around 50 messages, the general theme or idea was the same in that all of them were expressing emotions. Therefore, all these messages were coded as "Emotional Expression" category of "Social Presence" in the Community of Inquiry framework. In short, the initial coding process was both inductive and deductive in the present case study. The approach for defining all the themes was to continue to include new codes until no further revealing ones could be identified. When data saturation was identified, the researcher summarised all the codes to draw conclusions. The researcher stepped back to the core and sub-research questions to consider what the data really indicate and how the final codes and analysis could answer the core questions at hand.

Figure 14 An example of CoI coding of participants' chat history

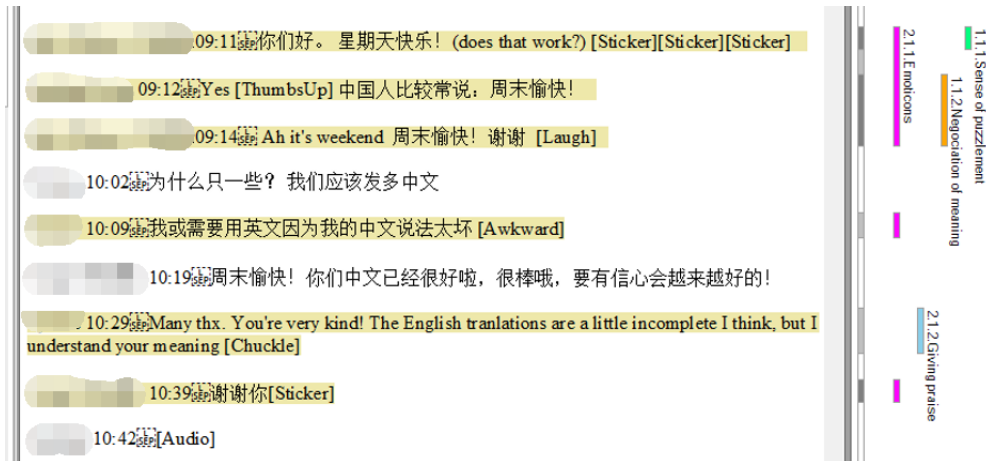


Figure 15 An example of ICC coding of participants' chat history



3.6.3.2 Critical incident analysis in this case study

The critical incident analysis could be a useful tool ‘for developing reflective practice’ in education (Francis, 1997:169). In this case study, the researcher employed critical incident analysis in order to come to know and understand participants’ online behaviours and their experience in a Community of Inquiry. In the present research, a critical incident can be defined as a dramatic event that created particular meaning, raised unexpected questions, or brought significance for the researcher. Such critical incidents needed to be observed and analysed because they might have had a crucial impact on participants’ ‘learning processes that underpin the acquisition of their intercultural understandings, knowledge and competence’ (McAllister et al., 2006:367). At the start of the research, all participants were given a number of intercultural tasks based on their Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook (see 3.6.1.2). The researcher explained that all participants could contact the researcher at any time with social networking tools or in any form to report their reflections regarding WWW (what tasks went well) and EBI (what could be even better if). The concepts of WWW and EBI were the marking and self-assessment codes in School S so all GCSE Mandarin students were familiar with how to use these codes to reflect upon their Mandarin learning and ICC development. The critical incident approach could enable the researcher to explore ways of understanding participants’ experience in the exchange project and help participants to develop ICC “through reflection on the significance of unplanned incidents” (Finch, 2010:422).

For example, a critical incident was observed and recorded in the researcher’s field notes that a GCSE Mandarin learner found particularly demanding to understand the message of his language partner’s comments. The British student posted on Edmodo in Mandarin that ‘我的生日是下星期六’ (meaning: my birthday is next Saturday). His Chinese language partner soon replied under the same thread in Mandarin that ‘祝你越

来越帅，越来越健康’ (meaning: wishing you more handsome and healthier). According to the researcher’s field notes, the British student did not reply to his language partner because he thought that the Chinese student could have replied something like ‘happy birthday’ or ‘have a great day next Saturday’ instead. For some reason, the British student felt that his language partner was implying that ‘he is not handsome or healthy enough currently so he needs to become better-looking and stronger’. This was a critical incident because the GCSE Mandarin student’s intercultural experience was not positive and the researcher had to intervene to explain that this incident was an example of cultural differences around sending birthday wishes. As a result, the British student released the gap in his understanding and replied ‘谢谢 thank you’ to his language partner. Other participants also benefited from this incident when the researcher described the event in the Mandarin lesson with laptops. During the lessons and interviews, the GCSE Mandarin students were asked to mention specific examples and critical incidents during their exchange which was intended to develop some relevant particular intercultural attitude and skills. The purpose of discussing these critical incidents in lesson time was to challenge participants’ cultural understanding, increase their critical intercultural awareness, and develop their ICC. In this case study, the researcher recorded these critical incidents in the field notes and used some of the typical events to illustrate students’ CoI presences and ICC development in chapter 4.

3.6.3.3 Summary of data analysis

In this case study, the frameworks that were actively used for data analysis were the Community of Inquiry framework for online exchange and Byram’s (1997) ICC model for intercultural development. It needs to be highlighted that this research used thematic analysis and critical incident analysis to explore and interpret the various sources of

data. The three presences of the CoI framework and the intercultural competences in the ICC model were intended to intersect and interact to better answer the research questions. This will be discussed in more detail in section 4.4. To sum up, the analysis of the participant observation data mainly consisted of browsing CFL learners' Internet chats and communication history, coding emerging patterns and themes based on CoI template, and comparing them with the information from the field notes. The field notes, as discussed earlier, were kept as a research diary of unexpected student interactions and the researcher's own thoughts and reflections upon them. The analysis of field notes was conducted to see whether there were any repeated patterns and themes appeared in the participant observation of Internet communication and interactions in the Community of Inquiry.

The overall style of data analysis in this case study was qualitative, which allowed some degree of interpretation from the researcher who was the main instrument in this research project (Patton, 2002). In this case study, the coding scheme and analysis framework were designed to be both rigid and flexible, demonstrating both imposed ideas and new emerging themes (please see Appendix 15 for a brief list of codes with examples). The thematic analysis was both top-down and bottom-up in that the researcher imposed an established analytical framework to help data reduction and display, and at the same time identified coding as an iterative process. Therefore, there was a balance between deductive and inductive processes during data coding and analysis in this case study. NVivo Pro software allowed the researcher to create additional nodes and codes, which helped her to be more flexible when using an existing coding framework. In addition to codes adapted from the existing CoI coding template, new themes were identified and additional codes were generated from field notes, questionnaires, and interview data. The analysis was sent back to the participants to check, in order to interpret their online communication and interactions more

accurately. The meanings of those coded themes were negotiated with and explained to the participants for many times so as to improve the trustworthiness of this research. Further, the basic analysis results were distributed to participants to double-check that they were understood completely and correctly.

3.7 Transparency and trustworthiness of this case study

Long and Johnson (2000) stressed that rigor is required in all types of research, in order to ensure sound research methods and accurate research findings. Bryman (2008) concluded that validity relates to the integrity of the conclusions generated from a study, and reliability refers to whether the research results are reproducible under a similar methodology. It was claimed that there are three types of validity in qualitative research: the validity of the description, the validity of the interpretation, and the validity of the theory (Shenton, 2004). However, qualitative research has been challenged in terms of the validity and reliability of data collection and research findings. For example, two main threats tend to challenge the validity of qualitative studies: 1) reactivity which is the influence of researchers on the research settings and the research participants, and 2) subjectivity which refers to researchers' bias in describing and interpreting the data. Validity can be defined as the credibility of the description, explanation, and interpretation of the phenomenon that researchers claim to investigate (Hammersley, 2008). It can be achieved through three main categories: content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity (Long and Johnson, 2000).

Although the importance of validity is emphasised within positivist paradigms (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), it might be inappropriate for other perspectives. Trustworthiness including transparency, rather than validity, has been preferred by many case study researchers to use as the quality criteria so that readers can evaluate the basis of the conclusions and methods (Shenton, 2004). As Hammond and Wellington (2012) stated,

trustworthiness has become a term used within qualitative and mainstream interpretive research, which focuses more on the transactional relationship between researchers and readers. They concluded that a trustworthy account is closely linked to four key factors: 1) confirmability enhanced by member checking and peer review; 2) credibility increased by prolonged engagement with participants; 3) transferability undertaken through comparison with other studies; 4) dependability promoted by audit trails.

It can be concluded that there is no agreed set of criteria to assess all research, and such quality criteria should be chosen and justified based on research questions. In this study, instead of validity, reliability, and generalisability, the researcher accepted the concept of trustworthiness as the quality criteria in a qualitative interpretive case study tradition and kept the research report as transparent as possible. Merriam (1995:56) argued that what matters to qualitative research is not whether or not the results of one study are identical to the findings of future studies, but ‘whether the results of a study are consistent with the data collected’. Also, Long and Johnson, (2000) echoed that in qualitative research, there are several ways to improve research rigor and trustworthiness, including triangulation, respondent validation, prolonged involvement, persistent observation, peer examination, self-description, and reflective journal.

To sum up, transparency is the basis of trustworthiness and validity in this study. As indicated by Goetz and LeCompte (1984:216), a case study should be described in such details that interested readers can use the original report to replicate the study. In this research, different strategies were employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis. The data in this case study were collected from various sources and a combination of four methods, including participant observation, field notes, questionnaires, and interviews. Furthermore, the interview transcripts, the data analysis, and interpretation were presented to CFL learners to be double-checked so that their

voice was correctly understood and interpreted. Although this process was extremely time-consuming, this study intends to provide not only what participants said but also what they wanted to say or update, by allowing prolonged engagement and communication with participants. Also, this research was a two-year longitudinal case study which allowed the researcher to crosscheck and reflect upon the analysis of data at different periods of time to ensure that the same results and findings were achieved and the results were consistent within participants' voice over the two years in this research. To conclude, as a single exploratory qualitative case study, this research did not attempt to offer statistical generalisations, but to investigate a particular phenomenon of a single GCSE Mandarin class's use of social networking technology in its natural setting, and also to provide a clear, transparent, and trustworthy description and interpretation of how the group of CFL beginner learners developed their ICC in a Community of Inquiry.

3.8 Ethical considerations of this case study

Ethical issues could be grouped in four categories: 1) privacy, 2) informed consent, 3) anonymity and confidentiality, and 4) harm (Cohen et al., 2011). It was explained that ethics derive from the application of moral principles, to prevent harm and to promote respect and safety for respondents. A major concern of case studies is the unusual problems arising from ethics, simply because researchers, as human beings, are the main instrument for collecting and analysing data (Merriam, 1988). The current research abided by the requirements of the guidelines adopted by the School of Education from British Educational Research Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research 2004, and a detailed ethics protocol was discussed with the researcher's supervisors, a relevant statement of Research Ethics form was submitted and Ethical Approval was obtained from the University of Nottingham, School of

Education Ethics Committee (please see the scanned copy in Appendix 5).

Informed consent refers to participants' willingness to get involved in a study (Cohen et al., 2011). Before gaining access to the school in this case study, precise statements of the research purposes, the means of access to CFL students and planned research methods were discussed with the researcher's supervisors. The gatekeeper of the school, the students in the GCSE Mandarin class and their parents were fully informed about the research purpose and procedure. The information sheet describing the nature of this case study and participants' rights were set out for both English and Chinese students (please see the scanned copy in Appendix 1). The Chinese teacher in our link school helped the researcher to explain the information sheets to the Chinese partners. The researcher also obtained verbal consent from those who provided feedback on their interactions with English students to the researcher via WeChat. The information sheet explained that CFL learners' participation was totally voluntary, and no names would be used. Their participation was not a mandatory part of their lessons, and whether participating in this research or not would not affect their assessments in any way. As this was a case of school children using social networking tools, special ethical considerations applied to the conduct of this study. This research was carried out strictly according to the school safeguarding policy and any form of harm was prevented proactively and consciously. All participants were informed about the possible E-safety issues while using social networking tools and their parents agreed to help safeguard children's use of social media when they were at home. At school time, there was always a member of staff monitoring students using social networking technology. All students knew that they could withdraw freely from this research at any time when they wanted without any risks and their dignity were respected at all times. All information collected in this study were treated with strict confidentiality and the anonymity of participants' information was respected. The findings and results of the research were

communicated to the participants, and their voices and feedback were appreciated and valued. Anonymity and confidentiality were well respected in this research.

One important ethical issue in this study was the relationship between the researcher as the Mandarin teacher and the participants as GCSE Mandarin students. As explained in section 3.3 and 3.5.3, one change in the present research was that the researcher had to alter her role in the school after starting the pilot studies. The researcher acted as a teaching assistant to observe the former Chinese teacher's teaching since December 2014 in the school, and become the GCSE Mandarin teacher in September 2015 when this two years research project began. The researcher's role changed from an outsider to an insider, which raised the issue of the power dynamic with the participants in this case study. It was necessary for the researcher to clarify her stance as a postgraduate researcher to the GCSE Mandarin students throughout the study. In this present research, the researcher's stance can be described as an insider as the researcher was the CFL learners' teacher and a complete member of the CoI groups under study. Insider practitioner research refers to when the researcher shares a similar experiential base with the participants (Asselin, 2003). As a result, the insider role allowed the researcher to be accepted more quickly by the participants who were the GCSE Mandarin students. They were using the same site for teaching and learning in a natural setting. Also, this insider instance helped the researcher to gather a more substantial and greater depth of data which could contribute to a thick description and discussion of this case for readers. Nevertheless, the researcher was aware of the possible trade-offs in terms of access and influence, and reflections upon the limitations of this stance were kept throughout this research (see section 6.6).

3.9 Summary of methods and methodology

This chapter has presented the research design, setting and participants, discussed the

ontology, epistemology, and methodological research paradigm, elaborated the qualitative case study approach and established the data collection and analysis methods. The process of selecting the case and participants, and the advantages and disadvantages of case study research were justified. To ensure trustworthiness of this study, the procedure of data collection and data analysis methods, and the quality criteria of research were discussed. Finally, ethical issues were explained. To sum up, this research was carried out in the qualitative interpretive tradition in that the researcher intended to explore and understand the particular phenomenon of a group of CFL beginner learners' use of social networking technology to develop ICC in its natural educational context. Several methods of data collection were employed including participant observation, field notes, questionnaires, and interviews, and thematic analysis and critical incident analysis were conducted (see Table 5 below for a summary). This exploratory single case study was designed to provide a trustworthy account of the GCSE Mandarin learners' voluntary use of social networking tools to promote ICC development in the natural CFL teaching and learning context. In the next chapter, the main results and findings of this case study will be presented based on the research questions.

Table 5 Summary of data collection and analysis

| Project (2 years) | Terms | Research process |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 1st academic year 2015-2016 | Term 1 (09/2015) | 1. Introduced the research and obtained consent forms; 2. Trained students using Edmodo website and app; 3. Introduced Chinese language partners to the big Edmodo group and nine small private groups; |
| | Term 2 (01/2016) | 4. Started observing students' posts and comments on Edmodo; 5. Started keeping reflective field notes; 6. Conducted 1 st questionnaire; 7. Conducted 1 st follow-up interview; |
| | Term 3 (04/2016) | 8. Coded and analysed questionnaire responses and interviews; 9. Trained students using Skype software and app; 10. Started observing students using Edmodo for posts and Skype for video-conferences; |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 2nd academic year 2016-2017 | Term 4 (09/2016) | 11. Conducted 2 nd questionnaire; 12. Conducted 2 nd follow-up interview; 13. Coded and analysed questionnaire responses, interviews, and field notes; 14. Trained students using WeChat app; 15. Started observing students using Edmodo for posts, Skype for video conferences, and WeChat for messages and video calls; |
| | Term 5 (01/2017) | 16. Chinese language partners visited England and staying with participants' families; 17. Conducted 3 rd questionnaire; 18. Coded and analysed questionnaire responses; |
| | Term 6 (04/2017) | 19. Conducted 3 rd interview (focus group); 20. Coded and analysed last interview and field notes; |
| Project ends | 09/2017 | 21. English students visited China and staying with language partners' families; 22. Retrieved all posts and messages history for closer coding and analysis; 23. Combined analysis of all Internet chats, field notes, student responses to questionnaires and interviews. |

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the case study of developing ICC in a GCSE Mandarin class based carried out in the UK Midlands. This empirical research addressed the central research question: How can a group of Chinese as a Foreign Language beginner learners use social networking technology to develop their intercultural communicative competence? The present case study examined the development of a single class of nine CFL beginner learners' ICC based on their participation during two academic years in an intercultural exchange project. In the majority of situations, the outcomes of participants' communication and exchanges have been interculturally effective and appropriate, although there were some disappointing moments. The findings and results of this study will be presented under two research questions in the following sections to highlight the potential of using social networking technologies to support a group of nine GCSE Mandarin learners to developing ICC with nine language partners from the link school in Shanghai, China.

4.2 Question 1: In what ways did a group of CFL beginner learners use social networking technology to build a Community of Inquiry?

The findings in this section will be categorised according to the three overlapping presences of the Community of Inquiry framework and coding template: Cognitive Presence, Social Presence, and Teaching Presence. Over two academic years (2015-2017) at the case school (School S), the researcher had been engaging a group of nine GCSE Mandarin learners in an intercultural Tandem exchange to use the target language to communicate and collaborate with Chinese language partners from Shanghai link school (School C).

In the review of the literature, the development of ICC was identified as a key goal of modern foreign language teaching, and one that is particularly challenging for teachers of Chinese in the UK because of physical and cultural distance. However, it was believed that social networking technology could be used to create a Community of Inquiry (CoI) to promote social communication and intercultural interaction for Tandem style exchange projects. In this section, the researcher will present the findings of how a group of CFL beginner learners could use social networking technology to create a community of learning for intercultural communicative tasks in this case study. The CoI framework has been used widely as a thematic analysis model for online learning and exchange, as well as a pedagogical tool because it could provide a coherent and validated guide to the creation and assessment of an effective and sustained learning community (Arbaugh et al., 2008; Garrison et al., 2010).

One of the key findings of this study was that the participants used Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat to create a Community of Inquiry for Mandarin learning and ICC development. This section of the findings will present the thematic coding and analysis of participants' Internet chats, questionnaire and interview responses, and use these results to argue that this case is a case of a Community of Inquiry. To argue this, the researcher has structured the findings relevant to this sub-question under the headings "cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence" because these are the constituents of a Community of Inquiry, discussed in the literature review (see section 2.5.4). In the present study, the distribution of three presences in the Community of Inquiry is summarised in Table 6 below. Apart from using all the original CoI categories and indicators to code participants' online learning and exchange in a top-down fashion, the researcher also generated some new indicators from the dataset in a bottom-up manner. It was hoped that these additional CoI indicators (*Italic in Table 6*) could help

explain participants' Tandem style exchange more accurately for this particular case study and illustrate how a Community of Inquiry framework could interact with the ICC model. The number and percentage of instances were calculated based on the references of nodes of group chat history and observed exchange notes in NVivo Pro and NVivo Text Search Query (see Figure 16 for a screenshot) has been conducted to double check the accuracy and relevance of content.

It can be concluded that in this study, social presence (55.86%) and cognitive presence (44.93%) were the two main presences from students, and teaching presence (32.28%) could be a shared presence of both the teacher and more capable participants. The overlap of these three presences was 33.07% in the current Community of Inquiry which was maintained to be beneficial to an educational online learning experience (Garrison et al., 2010; see section 2.5.4.1). However, there were some variations of participants' use of certain social networking tools over time. Although WeChat was not introduced until the 4th term, there were more CoI presences identified on WeChat interactions (901 in total) than on Edmodo communications (816 in total). In the second academic year (the 4th term to the 6th term), all students gradually transferred to using Edmodo only for academic reasons (e.g. sharing learning resources; doing paperless homework), and preferred to use WeChat for social and intercultural communication purposes. In particular, students used WeChat the most to communicate around exchange trips, including in the 5th term to welcome the Chinese students to visit England, and in the 6th term to prepare themselves for the trip to China after this project. Students started using Skype in the 3rd term for video conferences but stopped using Skype in school since the 5th term due to difficulties in organising them and the fact that Chinese students came to England to visit GCSE Mandarin students and stayed at their homes. Therefore, participants' CoI instances in Skype was inevitably the lowest (55 in total) which only happened and were observed in the two video conferences. The

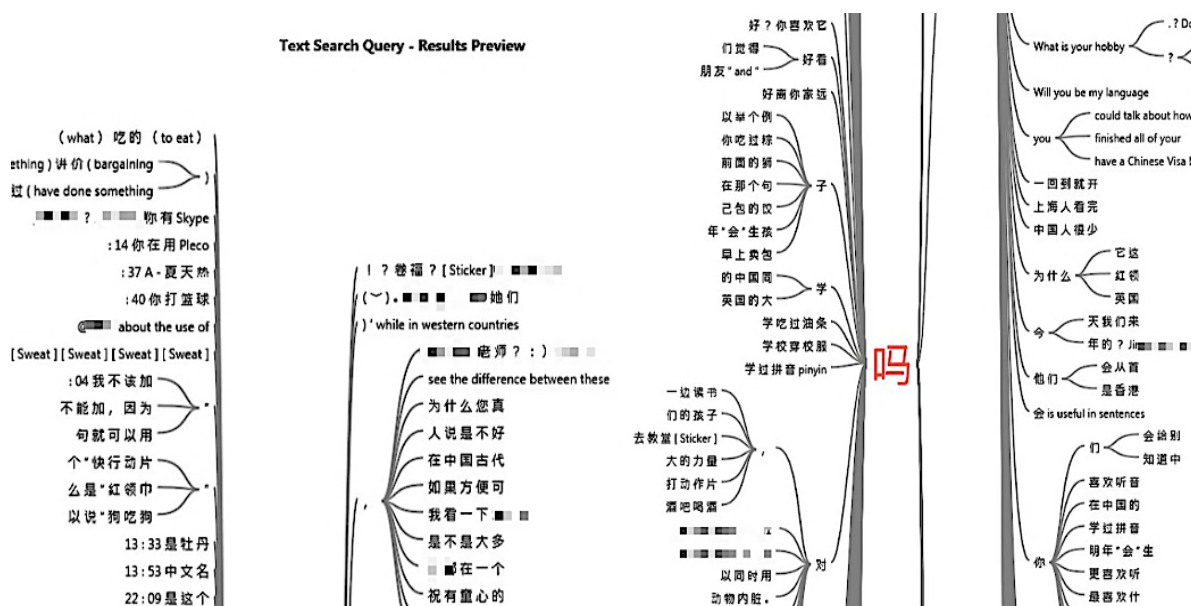
following sections will present typical examples of participants' online exchange and analyse their typical intercultural performance under ten original CoI categories (Garrison et al., 2010).

Table 6 Distribution of three presences in the Community of Inquiry

| CoI elements | Categories | Indicators (<i>examples only</i>) | Number of instances | Percentage of instances |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Cognitive Presence (engagement with content: 796; 44.93%) | Triggering event | Sense of puzzlement | 274 | 15.46% |
| | | <i>Negotiation of meaning</i> | 126 | 7.11% |
| | Exploration | Information exchange | 112 | 6.32% |
| | | <i>Resource sharing</i> | 96 | 5.42% |
| | Integration | Connecting ideas | 67 | 3.78% |
| | | <i>Comparing perspectives</i> | 84 | 4.75% |
| | Resolution | Applying new ideas | 25 | 1.41% |
| | | <i>Creating solutions</i> | 12 | 0.68% |
| 2. Social Presence (engagement with participants: 990; 55.86%) | Emotional expression | Emoticons | 173 | 9.76% |
| | | <i>Giving praise</i> | 114 | 6.43% |
| | Open communication | <i>Using Salutations</i> | 212 | 11.96% |
| | | Risk-free expressions | 78 | 4.40% |
| | Group cohesion | <i>Asking questions</i> | 243 | 13.71% |
| | | Encouraging collaboration | 170 | 9.59% |
| 3. Teaching Presence (engagement with goals/direction: 572; 32.28%) | Instructional management | <i>Briefing tasks</i> | 104 | 5.87% |
| | | Initiating discussion topics | 98 | 5.53% |
| | Building understanding | <i>Facilitating discourse</i> | 129 | 7.28% |
| | | Sharing personal meaning | 62 | 3.50% |
| | Direct instruction | Focusing discussion | 76 | 4.29% |
| | | <i>Injecting new knowledge</i> | 103 | 5.81% |
| Total | 10 categories | 20 indicators | 1772 (WeChat 901; Edmodo 816, Skype 55) | 133.07% |

Note: new generated indicators from this study were in Italic in the table.

Figure 16 NVivo Text Search Query of chat history in this study



4.2.1 Cognitive Presence (engagement with content)

One aspect of a Community of Inquiry is Cognitive Presence, which refers to learners' engagement with the learning content, which often cultivates a feeling of competence in the process of triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution (Garrison et al., 2004). It was found that when L2 learners were given tasks regarding problem-solving, they demonstrated more engagement in exploration and resolution of problems in question (Mazer et al., 2007). It was pointed out that when students engage in tasks requesting solutions and related discussions, the progress is more about integration and resolution. Here, the researcher presents the cognitive presence of the students in the class in their use of social networking tools for learning Chinese. The characteristics of cognitive presence were broken down into four codes used for analysis. These were: triggering event; exploration; integration; and resolution. All these categories were used when coding the internet behaviours, interviews, and interactions in this case study.

4.2.1.1 Triggering event

The ‘triggering events’ were a category of cognitive presence identified by Garrison et al. (2004). Triggering events consisted of sense of puzzlement and negotiation of meaning in this case study. The findings of this study identified that students experienced triggering events when seeking help or exploring meanings of words in order to continue the conversation flow successfully. Such triggering events happened often in the study when students needed help from their peers or language partners. An example of the coded “sense of puzzlement” data can be seen in Table 7. As observed, students frequently used questions to indicate their sense of puzzlement to trigger events that can be discussed later to help develop their cognitive presence.

Table 7 Example entries of sense of puzzlement

| Triggering event - Sense of puzzlement | |
|--|--|
| <i>Example entries</i> | <i>English meaning</i> |
| 你也喜欢 Bay Max 吗? | Do you like Bay Max too? |
| Chaser 是恐怖片吗? | Is Chaser a horrific movie? |
| 可爱! 是小猫吗? | Cute! Is it a kitten? |
| 你们有什么爱好吗? | Do you have any hobbies? |
| 你们喜欢 EXO 吗? | Do you like EXO (Korean band)? |
| 上海天天雾霾吗? | Is there smog in Shanghai every day? |
| 你们觉得好看吗? | Do you think it is pretty? |
| 你的爱好是什么? | What is your hobby? |
| 第一节课是什么? | What is the first lesson? |
| 漂亮! 什么花? | Pretty! What flower is that? |
| 谢谢! 棒有什么意思? | Thank you! What does 棒 mean? |
| 这个周末做什么? | What is the plan for this weekend? |
| 你有什么宠物? | Do you have pets? |
| 猜一猜我把巧克力放哪里? | Guess where did I put my chocolates? |
| 你喜欢我的狗? | Do you like my dog? |
| 我常常在夏季生病, 因为我有因为花粉过敏。你有花粉过敏? | I am often sick in summer because I have hay fever. Do you have hay fever? |
| 你讨厌作业吗? | Do you dislike homework? |
| 你们什么时候来英国? | When do you come to visit UK? |
| 你什么时候和我们 Skype? | When do you Skype with us? |

These triggering events, as observed, lead to frequent negotiation of meaning. The majority of triggering events were found in Edmodo and WeChat group discussions, and all the students had them. However, four of the nine students were more active in asking questions and requesting for help, and for them, triggering events were repeated more often as they generated new questions once they changed topics. As Student 3 EE said, “If I’m not sure about how to say certain things in Chinese, I’ll ask my language partner and she’ll help me”. Also, Student 2 LD said that he was pushed to negotiate the meaning of the messages sometimes if he “still struggles to understand some of the words where they reply to each other only in writing without speaking or speak without writing” and he thinks to engage with the knowledge is part of the learning processes. For instance, LD once triggered an event by posting “羡慕嫉妒恨 - what does this actually mean? 🤔🤔🤔”, followed by Student 1 NB making a guess of the meaning “Means you’re green with envy?”, and then a Chinese language partner TY explaining “it’s just a mixture of those three words 羡慕, 嫉妒, and 恨”, ended by LD replying “Okay 哈哈 🤔🤔🤔”. It was a simple example of how students triggered events by asking questions about the meaning of new words. Student 4 NE recalled in the interview that the Chinese students sometimes trigger sense of puzzlement as well:

“They usually tell me if they don’t understand. So if they don’t understand something they say could you say that again. If I’ve said a voice message they don’t understand, they’ll ask me to rephrase it or say it in Mandarin if I sent it in English.” (S4)

Another example of negotiating of meaning in this study is that a Chinese student C1 TY posted that she was looking forward to the first Skype Video conferencing and more students joined the conversation saying they could not wait for it (see Table 8). Another

Chinese student C9 YH posted “我也很高兴见到你们啦 ㄟ^•x•^ㄟ 楼上是我的 classmate” (literally: Nice to meet you too. The person ‘upstairs’ is my classmate.). In her second post “哪一个同学在楼上? 为什么? ^🙄^”, English Student 9 EZ asked why YH used the word 楼上 here because she knew that it is used when describing a house or any other buildings with multiple stories. Having received EZ’s signal of puzzlement, a third Chinese student C2 LZ explained that “她说我是她 classmate, this is the real meaning. 楼上 means the person who replies before him or her. 英语可能不好☺ Please do not mind.” Then EZ replied “oooohhahah thank you!~ 我们今天在课学习这个☺”, which ended the negotiation of meaning process. Not until LZ’s post did EZ realise that 楼上 means “the post above” because the Internet usage of 楼 (floor) is ‘every reply in a forum thread’. In this example, students solved the puzzle successfully, which demonstrated their Cognitive Presence by triggering an event, engaging with the learning content, and negotiating new knowledge (Garrison et al., 2000). However, the meanings of Chinese words can differ in different contexts. For example, in other discussion forums, 楼上 can mean the person who replies later if the earlier posts are below the newer posts. In this case, social networking technology facilitated the group of CFL beginner learners to become more familiar with the potential meaning changes in different contexts of Chinese discourse. The success of such exploration depended on students’ engaging with content, knowledge, and negotiation of meaning, and the indicators of this in this case study included these triggering events. They were found to have contributed to participants’ cognitive presence and development of linguistic competence, discourse competence, knowledge, and skills of discovery and interaction of intercultural competence according to the ICC model (Byram, 1997).

Table 8 Students negotiating the meaning of 楼上 on Edmodo

| | |
|----|---|
| C1 | <p>好吧，我已经很久没来 Edmodo 了。 _(:」 ∠)_ 我很期待我们的第一次视频会议！！</p> <p>[Translation: Right, I haven't been to Edmodo for quite a long time. _(:」 ∠)_ I look forward to our first video conference very much!]</p> |
| S7 | <p>我也是 😊</p> <p>[Translation: Me too]</p> |
| C2 | <p>我们也等不及了(; 'O')o</p> <p>[Translation: We can't wait too]</p> |
| S9 | <p>我也很久没来 edmodo 了哈哈我很高兴见你们 🐱</p> <p>[Translation: I haven't been to Edmodo for a long time. LOL, It's nice to see you here]</p> |
| C2 | <p>我也很高兴见到你们 😊</p> <p>[Translation: I'm glad to see you too 😊]</p> |
| C9 | <p>我也很高兴见到你们啦 ㄟ^•••^ 楼上是我的 classmate</p> <p>[Translation: I'm pleased to see you guys too ㄟ^•••^ The person 'upstairs' (meaning: the person posted earlier than me) is my classmate]</p> |
| S9 | <p>哪一个同学在楼上？为什么？ ^ 😳 ^</p> <p>[Translation: Which classmate is upstairs? Why? ^ 😳 ^]</p> |
| S4 | <p>我也等不及了 :-)</p> <p>[Translation: I can't wait either. :-)]</p> |
| C2 | <p>她说我是她 classmate, this is the real meaning. 楼上 means the person who replies before him or her. 英语可能不好 😊 Please do not mind.</p> <p>[Translation: She meant that I am her classmate. This is the real meaning of the word 楼上, which means the person who replies before you. My English is not good. Please do not mind it.]</p> |
| S9 | <p>oooohhahah thank you!~ 我们今天在课学习这个 😊</p> <p>[Translation: Oh haha thank you! We learnt this word during lesson time today.]</p> |

In this case study, the Shanghai language partners provided informal and authentic communication for the group of British students when there were questions or inquiries. More importantly, participants reported that those “triggering events” and the informality of the follow-up intercultural conversations with social networking tools helped them to develop “true friendship” with the language partners. For instance, Student 3 EE mentioned in the interview that the social networking tools helped them to ask questions and maintain the friendship:

“I think these tools made it much easier. And now we can keep in contact with

them all. I really hope that we can go and visit China. I really want to experience their country and culture. I hope we can all meet them and be together again! So yeah these tools helped us to communicate with each other. They helped me to talk to all of them and will do so for a long time.”(S3)

4.2.1.2 Exploration

Another category of cognitive presence is student exploration of learning resources in a Community of Inquiry (Garrison et al., 2000). Students demonstrated their cognitive presence by exchanging useful information and sharing learning resources and tools in an exploratory way. So in a sense the tool itself became a subject for sharing thoughts and supporting each other. The information exchange and resource sharing indicators were mostly found in Edmodo conversation history, and eight out of nine participants had demonstrated exploration behaviours there. For instance, Student 2 LD posted his exploration of using Pleco dictionary: “Use the Pleco app, it is free and shows you Pinyin and dictionary entries”. Likewise, another student S1 NB added to the discussion by posting a screenshot (see Figure 17) to show peers how convenient the Perapera Chinese pop-up dictionary was:

“I use Perapera Chinese. It shows the pinyin and English meaning immediately after you select a Chinese word. It’s an alternative to Pleco. Maybe using a plugin for your browser.” (S1)

He then explained that Perapera helped him to understand the word 犯规 (sound: fànguī; meaning: foul) in another student’s post ‘我不喜欢俄罗斯足球观众因为他们犯规’ (meaning: I don’t like Russian football audience because of their foul). This is an interesting feature of the electronic resources, which provided a trace of the interaction,

in ways speech does not do, and also a medium to reflect upon these discussions.

Figure 17 A screenshot of Perapera Chinese pop-up dictionary



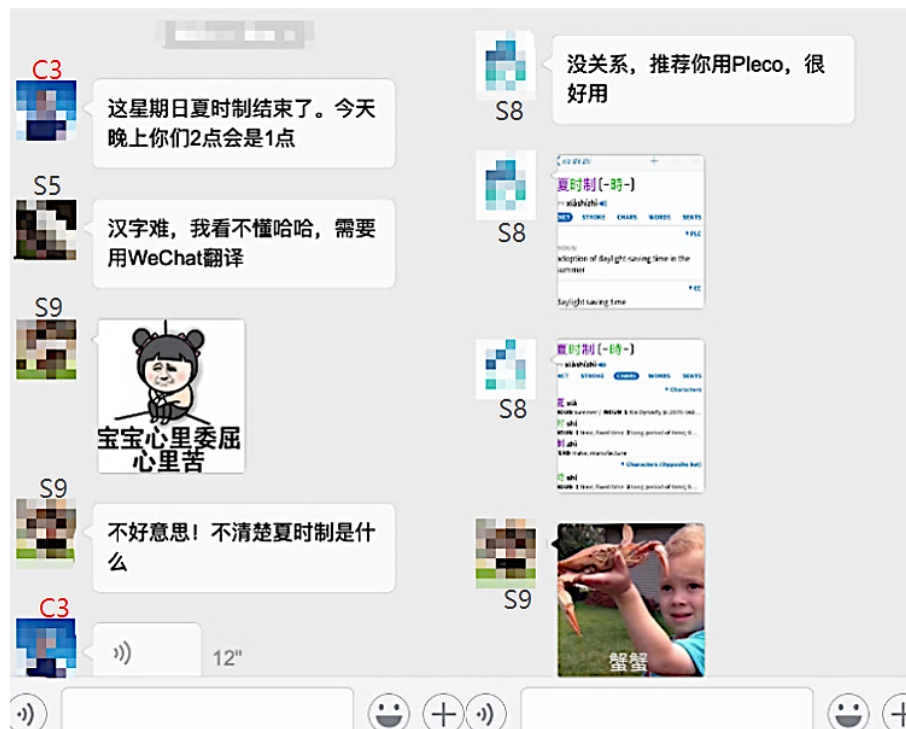
Other students also shared their experience of using Chinese digital dictionaries on WeChat. For example, Student 3 EE explored the translating function of WeChat (which allowed students to translate Chinese messages to English) and shared it with the group of students. She introduced that ‘I can understand most things in WeChat. Some not, but I use the translating button to help me. In WeChat, the Mandarin texts can be translated into English - the system language’. She explained in the interview that Chinese sentences can be hard to understand sometimes, especially when they are long, and WeChat translating function is very useful:

“There’re not many times that people write to me and I don’t understand it completely, but there are quite a lot of times where I understand 70% or 80%. One language partner was saying that her younger brother was being naughty because he’s hidden the air conditioning control, and she was very hot. I knew what she was saying, but I didn’t know the word for “hidden”. So to double check that what I thought it was, I pressed translate and I was like “ah it’s 藏起来 hidden”. If the WeChat translate button wasn’t there, I’d assume it was correct and just carried on. So I think it’s a good way, and also when you don’t understand something, sometimes I just copy and paste into translate website

and do it there, but I think checking stuff immediately on WeChat is quite handy.” (S3)

Student 8 AT also explored the dictionary Pleco and used it to help explain new Chinese words more accurately to peers. As shown in Figure 18, Chinese students were talking about the UK’s adoption of daylight saving time in the summer (i.e. 夏时制). However, the GCSE Mandarin learners did not understand the word and considered using WeChat translation button. Although the Shanghai student used a voice message to explain the word, S8 immediately shared the screenshots of Pleco explanations of the word and characters to the big group so that all students could understand the word accurately. Students like S3 and S8 were able to utilise a variety of sources and recourses to explore problems posed in this exchange project. According to lots of responses in the student interviews, with the help of these social networking tools, they were more willing (and able) to read challenging Chinese texts independently. According to the researcher’s field notes, this was an interesting teaching issue as the use of the translating function and digital dictionaries could be seen to reduce students’ practice at negotiation of meaning or decoding of words in traditional ways (Levy and Steel, 2015). However, this was balanced against their ability to engage with more complex meanings and more sustained dialogue. These examples of student exploration enhanced their cognitive presence by promoting more developed engagement with meanings, in ways which would not be possible if students only had access to their very limited vocabulary or resources.

Figure 18 Students exploring Pleco and new words on WeChat



It was found that the group of CFL beginner learners explored the multimodal and non-linguistic features (e.g. changing profile pictures and using stickers; see example in Figure 19) of the social networking tools in this case study. They were especially interested in using the multimodal functions of social networking tools to produce Mandarin output to test their language skills out and to express their language partners. For example, as shown in Figure 20, Student 8AT posted photos and English or Mandarin texts in WeChat moments to share about her life. She reported that the multimodal features of WeChat allowed her to share her life with partners in various ways. Likewise, whenever a GCSE Mandarin learner or a Shanghai student posted WeChat Moments, participants would send their “Likes” and comments to interact with peers and language partners once they saw the updates. Student 9 commented about how the multimodal features of social networking tools helped with their understanding of spoken and written Mandarin: “The experience is compelling because in real life it is usually impossible for us to follow what two native speakers are saying to each other

but the social networking tools have made it very accessible in that some of the text is written exactly as spoken/read out by the Chinese students.”

Figure 19 Participants explored non-linguistic WeChat Stickers used by friends

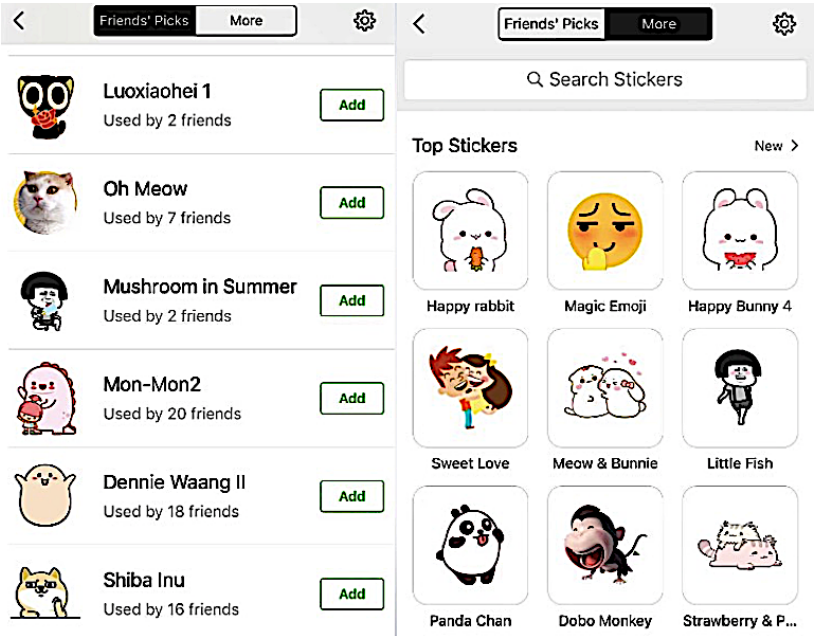


Figure 20 Student 8AT exploring multimodal WeChat Moments



According to the researcher's field notes, at the start of this exchange project, some participants wanted to impress their language partners so much that they would send their draft comments to the researcher individually by WeChat to be checked before sending them out. They were very careful with the comments because they can be seen by all the language partners who were added as friends. As can be seen in Figure 21, participants commented with Mandarin text and Emojis to respond to peers' and language partners' photo and video clip. Although there were still errors (e.g. 成为有点胖) in their Mandarin comments, their interactions were very effective. In this study, the Community of Inquiry served as a voluntary space where participants could feel free to use the multimodal features of social networking tools to communicate with the group members. However, there were a couple of learners (e.g. S2 LD and S1 NB) who preferred reading posts, browsing messages, and sending "Likes" than responding with Mandarin comments. It was believed that they might be experiencing silent periods before feeling comfortable producing any Mandarin output. Participants' exploration was found to have contributed to their cognitive presence and the development of linguistic competence, discourse competence, knowledge, skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating according to the ICC framework (Byram, 1997). Participants' desire to impress others, the multimodal features and non-linguistic features of social networking tools will be further discussed in sections 5.3.2.1, 5.3.2.2, and 5.3.3.2.

Figure 21 Participants gaining Likes and comments in WeChat Moments



4.2.1.3 Integration

Integration is a category for Cognitive Presence in a Community of Inquiry, which includes indicators like Convergence and Connecting Ideas (Garrison et al., 2000). As shown in Table 6, students' Integration presence in this case study consisted of Connecting ideas and Comparing perspectives. This was consistent with the researcher's field notes, students tended to demonstrate their connection and integration of ideas in given tasks and discussions around unplanned topics about Chinese societies and modern life. For example, participants learnt Chapter 4 "Media" (see Figure 22) during the fourth school term (September-December, 2016) in this exchange, and they were asked to use social networking tools to interview link school students about their media user experience. The group of GCSE Mandarin students asked their Chinese friends what TV programmes and music they enjoy, who their favourite celebrities are, what websites they often use, and what is online shopping like in China. There were

some unplanned topics arising from the WeChat group chat, such as their favourite movies' Chinese names, their idols' Chinese nicknames, 弹幕 (dàn mù: barrage) on Chinese websites, and interesting Chinese cyber talk buzzwords.

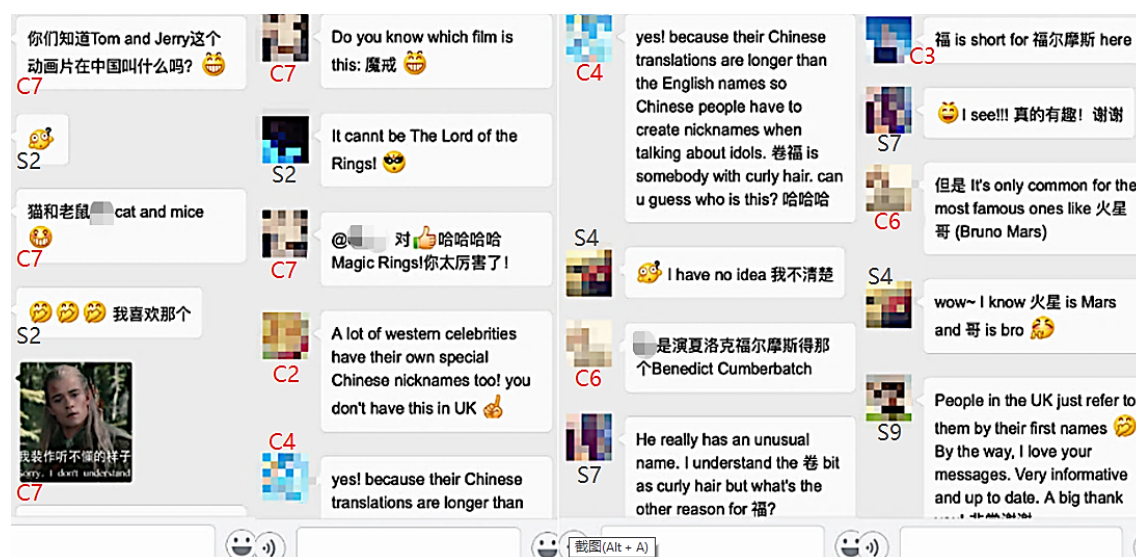
Figure 22 Chapter 4 Media of Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook

| 4 媒体 <small>méi tǐ</small> MEDIA | | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|----|
| 复习 <small>fù xī</small> | Review | Understanding basic information about media | 64 |
| 1 BBC 和 CCTV <small>BBC hé CCTV</small> | 1 BBC and CCTV | Giving opinions about the media | 66 |
| 2 电视 <small>diàn shì</small> | 2 Television | Giving opinions about programmes | 68 |
| 3 上网 <small>shàng wǎng</small> | 3 Surfing the net | Talking about preferences | 70 |
| 4 电影和音乐 <small>diàn yǐng hé yīn yuè</small> | 4 Film and music | Talking about films and music | 72 |
| 5 名人 <small>míng rén</small> | 5 Celebrities | Talking about people's lives | 74 |
| 6 不同的生活 <small>bù tóng de shēng huó</small> | 6 Different lives | Making comparisons | 76 |
| 听力和阅读 <small>tīng lì hé yuè dú</small> | Exam – Listening and Reading | Preparing for the Listening and Reading exam | 78 |
| 口语 <small>kǒu yǔ</small> | Speaking assessment | Preparing for a speaking task (open interaction) | 80 |
| 写作 <small>xiě zuò</small> | Writing assessment | Preparing for an extended writing task about films | 82 |
| 重要语言点 <small>zhòng yào yǔ yán diǎn</small> | Key language | Key words and phrases in Chapter 4 | 84 |

As shown in Figure 23, the Shanghai students introduced the Chinese names of the famous cartoon “Tom and Jerry” (i.e. 猫和老鼠; Cat and Mice) to the GCSE Mandarin students. Then they discussed the Chinese translations of the film “The Lord of the Rings” and the Chinese nicknames of some western celebrities (e.g. Benedict Cumberbatch and Bruno Mars). Although they used English to complete most of the communication, they managed to connect ideas and compare perspectives about the unplanned topics promoted by the given tasks. According to the researcher’s field notes, the GCSE Mandarin students were very grateful to their Chinese friends for bringing up new topics related to modern China because they felt the modern life and pop culture were not reflected well or accurately in their textbooks. The Shanghai students sent them many Chinese Emojis and taught them many Chinese Internet buzzwords like 网红 (cyberstar), 女汉子 (tomboy), and 戏精 (dramaqueen) etc., which would not happen without the use of social networking tools. Participants reported in the interview that discussions in the social networking groups were valuable in helping them to appreciate

different views and cultural perspectives. They also maintained that through using social networking technology, they managed to combine various new information to help conduct tasks and answer questions. It was evident that the use of social networking tools allowed intercultural discussions which helped participants to appreciate different perspectives to co-construct reasonable explanations of Chinese ways of life, and connect ideas to reflect on their cognitive development based on purposeful tasks and unplanned topics. Participants' integration was found to contribute to their cognitive presence and the development of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, knowledge, skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating according to the ICC framework (Byram, 1997).

Figure 23 Students connecting ideas on Chinese translations of films and idols



4.2.1.4 Resolution

Resolution of Cognitive Presence in this case study consisted of “applying new ideas” and “creating solutions” in a Community of Inquiry. It referred to participants’ behaviours like brainstorming, applying knowledge and developing solutions to

exchange related problems that can be applied in real life. One example from this case study was that participants used the social networking tools to negotiate with Shanghai language partners regarding the possible exchange visits to each other. However, the visits were a problem in real life due to various reasons like the distance between the UK and China. The students in School S never visited China nor hosted any Chinese students. According to the researcher's field notes, the intercultural communication with social networking technology helped all students to get to know each other gradually and successfully built trust among them. After about a year's contact with each other, participants managed to formally convince their parents and governors to start inviting their Chinese friends to visit them and stay at their homes. As a result, the Shanghai teacher and students visited the GCSE Mandarin students in January 2017 and the participants visited Shanghai and stayed with their language partners at the end of this exchange project. This indicated that participants in this case study used social networking tools to find solutions for real life problems. Participants used social networking technology to make arrangements for their planned exchange and trips. It was a good example of finding solution to a real-life issue with social networking tools which was believed to be contributing to participants' sustained motivation in developing intercultural communicative competence.

Another example was students' applying new ideas to address anxieties and problems related to using voice messages. It was hoped that using voice messages to communicate with language partners could develop participants' Mandarin listening and speaking, as well as their spoken intercultural communicative competence. However, disliking the voice messages was a huge issue in this case study that needed the group of GCSE Mandarin students to resolve. According to the researcher's field notes, students reported that their confidence was boosted when chatting with language partners using text messages. However, "not understanding the voice messages" was

one of the group of participants' biggest anxieties and some students mentioned that sometimes they were worried that they "might pronounce things wrong" (S1, S2, S5, S8) in voice messages. For instance, Student 2 LD expressed his fear of using voice messages: "they won't understand, or I might say the wrong thing". He further explained that "I know that I can probably pick up some pronunciation or tones from those voice messages, but they are still very intimidating". Also, Student 8 AT commented about her preference for text messages and the difficulty in using voice messages:

'I found it too hard to understand the voice unless it's in the middle of a conversation and I know what's likely to be next or roughly what they are going to say. But if someone sends me a voice message out of blue, I have to replay it several times, so yeah can't always make out what they are saying. I only use voice messages when I want to say something short and funny, but rarely, I'm talking about one message out of every thousand. I can sit there and look at the vocabulary and have a conversation and digest text message vocabulary as I'm going. I can type a sentence quicker than I can think to say.' (S8)

Also, there were a couple of students (S1, S7) who mentioned that they did not like their own voices although they did not mind receiving language partners' voice messages. For example, student 7 EM commented in the focus group interview that "my voice sounds horrible" so that she preferred to send text messages than using her own voice. Additionally, a couple of students (S4, S5) pointed out that they felt that it would be more thoughtful and considerate for them to send text messages which can be read directly and quickly by their language partners, rather than using voice messages which could take a lot more time to be understood. It was interesting to find that some students (S2, S6, S7, S8) related their dislikes of voice messages to the "convenient translating function of text messages" in WeChat. They explained that text messages in WeChat group and individual chats can be translated by WeChat's 'hold-text-to-

translate' feature (although the translations were not very accurate sometimes).

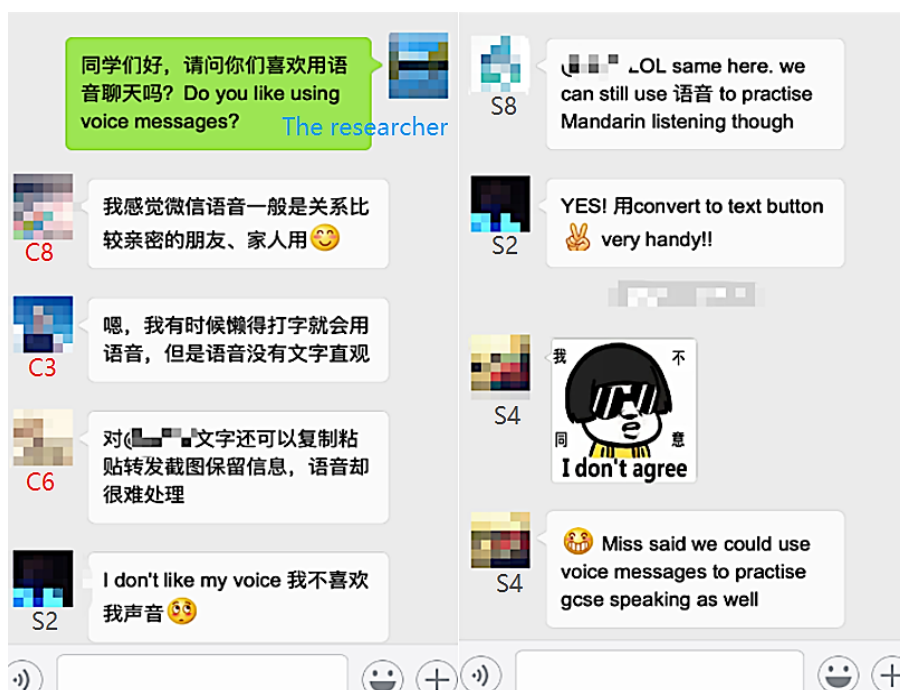
Also, Student 3 EE mentioned that when using WeChat Moments (similar to Facebook Timeline), the text updates could be translated as well so that she could understand her language partner's everyday life, even when she did not recognise some of the words in the Chinese Moment posts. When it comes to sending voice or text messages, they often preferred text messages because it gave them more confidence when "the meaning of text messages can be double-checked before sending anything wrong". Moreover, they could even "recall any wrong message" within one minute of sending it, if they found any mistake in the text message. However, they could not do these things with voice messages. Hence, they felt more anxious and less confident when using voice messages, and more confident when using text messages. All the participants regarded the translating button in WeChat as a possible solution. For instance, Student 6 YL commented that:

"I used the translate button quite a lot. It's quite helpful. I try to read it first, and press translate, one to see if I got it right, if I'm not too sure, and two if I don't know what it is. and then I will copy and paste the text that I don't know into translate to find out what the characters mean, what the pinyin is for them, and try to remember them or log them somewhere."

When asked about their views on voice messages, most GCSE Mandarin learners and Shanghai language partners confirmed that they dislike voice messages in this exchange project (see Figure 24). They explained in a Mandarin lesson that the main reason was that they needed extra help and support from the teacher when understanding and sending voice messages. However, when the teacher was around, it was often noisy to listen to each other at the same time during the Mandarin lessons. This was consistent

with the researcher's field notes that class-to-class Skype video conference was very different from one-to-one WeChat voice messages. When using Skype, participants were considerate and took turns to ask and answer questions based on their drafts in an orderly manner. When using WeChat, almost all Mandarin students were talking at the same time and it was very difficult to hear a voice message clearly when others were talking. Also, four students pointed out that even though they could hear the audio clearly, they found others using voice messages during Mandarin lessons "very distracting" (S1, S2, S6, S7).

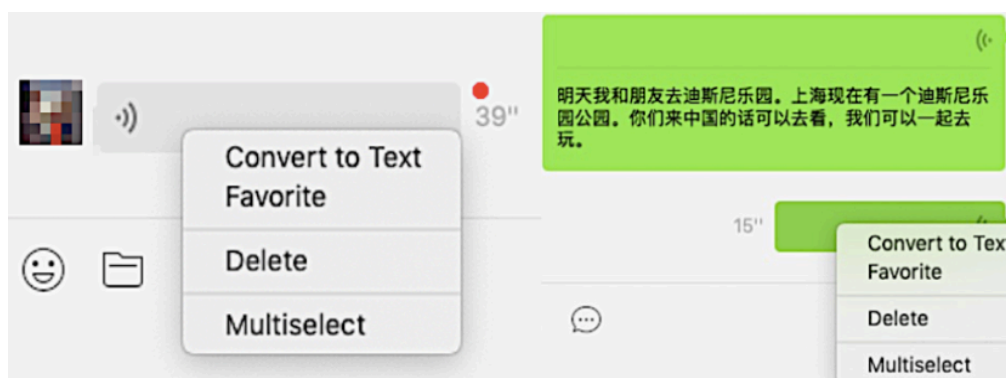
Figure 24 Students' resolution regarding voice messages



According to the researcher's field notes, participants came up with a new idea that they could ask the teacher to check their speaking drafts during lesson time in times of need but listen to and send voice messages after class or at home when the environment was quiet enough. In addition, according to the researcher's field notes, S8 suggested everyone to use the "Convert-to-Text" feature of desktop WeChat (see Figure 25) to transcribe Mandarin audio to text during Mandarin laptop lessons when they couldn't

hear the audio clearly due to the noisy environment. All participants agreed with this solution. Above examples revealed that the group of GCSE Mandarin learners in this case study were able to apply new ideas when facing problems and they were capable to develop Cognitive Presence in a Community of Inquiry by finding solutions to content and exchange related problems. Participants' resolution was found to contribute to their cognitive presence and the development of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, knowledge, skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating according to the ICC framework (Byram, 1997).

Figure 25 The “Convert-to-Text” feature of desktop WeChat



4.2.2 Social Presence (engagement with participants)

Social Presence is regarded as L2 learners' engagement with people and the projection of their personal characteristics, which can help them to relate to other people and communities (Garrison et al., 2000). It often involves the use of emotional and affective expressions, as well as a variety of strategies to establish group collaboration and cohesion (Yang et al., 2014). The participants' social presences were broken down into three categories in the following sections: emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion.

4.2.2.1 Emotional expression

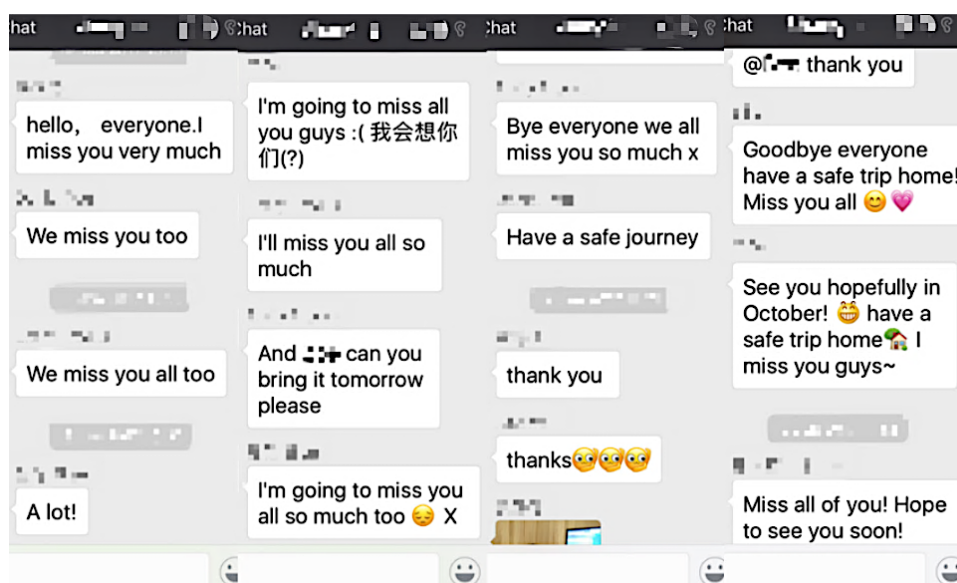
Emotional expressions is one typical category of Social Presence in a Community of Inquiry, and it often includes indicators like using Emojis, Emoticons, Internet meme pictures, self-disclosure and projection, and giving praise. Students showed a large number of social and emotional expressions when they learnt and discussed Chinese language and culture on Edmodo and WeChat, as well as in the process of Skype video conferences. Participants' emotional expression in this case study consisted of using Emoticons and Giving praise. It was hoped that the online-based communication could serve as an excellent medium to help participants to send their emotional expressions to distant language partners. In this study, it was found that participants successfully demonstrated their use of Emoticons (e.g. Emojis, Stickers, Internet memes) to facilitate their social presence which helped them to express their emotions to other members of the social networking groups.

All participants reported that they felt comfortable expressing their emotions and feelings through social networking tools. They enjoyed receiving praise from Chinese students and also loved to give back their gratitude and praises, which made them feel “a strong sense of belonging to a community in the exchange project”. For example, Student 9 EZ mentioned that she was using social networking tools to make friends with the Chinese students and she especially liked to send her partner C9 stickers and pictures. This was consistent with the researcher's field notes that the Shanghai student C9 talked about how she enjoyed communicating with S9. As can be seen in Figure 26, C9 sent the researcher a screenshot of her conversation with S9 and a picture that S9 sent her after their visit in January 2017. In the left screenshot, S9 used a love sticker to invite the language partners to visit England (我希望你们可以来这里), and a rose emoji to thank her partner C9 for chatting with her (谢谢和我一起聊天!). The right

along really nicely and we all had a lot of fun while they were here so I'd carry on speaking to them on WeChat. And video calling them when we can. We should not be shy about who or what we are saying or what they are saying. Because the more like yourself you are, the more likely you are going to find someone who is similar to you. And then you'll become much better friends because you can't really become friends with someone who don't know much about you." (S4)

It was found that all participants used social networking tools to engage in real-life communications and frequently expressed their feelings, though sometimes they were not using the target language. As can be seen in Figure 27, one example is that after the Shanghai language partners' visit to the school in January 2017, the GCSE Mandarin students sent many WeChat messages to say how sad they were to see friends leave. They used English messages to clearly express their farewells to the language partners which was observed to be an example of their social presence.

Figure 27 Students saying farewells to friends in WeChat



Another example was that, when one Chinese language partner sent a voice message to

the WeChat big group, Student 2 LD replied ‘很好，谢谢你，但是你说话一点快。’ (Very good, thank you, but you speak a little bit fast.). When Student 3 EE saw her language partner posting a photo of her brother, she replied ‘太谢谢了。很可爱的男孩。’ (Thank you very much. Very cute boy.). Also, Student 5 YE posted ‘祝你天很愉快！’ to say ‘Have a nice day!’ Although there were grammatical errors, it showed YE’s politeness and friendly wishes to the Chinese students. Student 9 EZ posted ‘你们中文对帮助我很多。谢谢你们！’ (‘Your Chinese is very helpful for me. Thank you all.’). These expressions of gratitude indicated English students’ politeness and also potentially encouraged Chinese students to help them more with Chinese language and cultural learning.

Apart from using Chinese words and sentences to express their gratitude, English students sometimes just put their gratitude in English. For example, Student 4 NE replied to a post ‘Thank you for sharing!! This is wonderful!!’ when Chinese students posted pictures of their school and classmates. As observed, students also learnt how to express themselves in a more conventional Chinese way. For example, students messaged thanks in Mandarin (谢谢, 感谢, 感恩) on a regular basis when they received praises or encouragement from language partners. As can be seen in Figure 28, when English students shared their individual or collective Mandarin story writings with the Chinese students (please see Appendix 12 for examples of story writing), the WeChat group was full of praise, such as ‘棒棒的’ (excellent), ‘666’ (a popular and humorous Internet slang to say ‘awesome’) and ‘写得很好’ (well written). In particular, Chinese student C1 TY replied that he thinks English student 1 NB’s story was so creative and brilliant, and he was very pleased with and proud of NB as his language partner. Then Chinese students (C6 and C5) explained that the Internet slang ‘666’ means ‘excellent’

here because it is a wordplay based on the same or similar pronunciation of 六 (sound: liù; meaning: number six 6) and 溜 (sound: liù; meaning: smooth) or 牛 (sound: niú; meaning: awesome) in Mandarin Chinese. Student 1 NB also expressed his modesty and appreciation at the end, by saying that ‘哈哈都写得很好 (meaning: Everyone did a good job in story writing)’.

Figure 28 Chinese students giving praise to CFLstudents' writing



In this study, students from both countries used Emoticons and Internet memes frequently to express their feelings in their posts and reported that they enjoyed this aspect of social networking technology very much. Taking Figure 29 as an example, on Edmodo, a Chinese student C9 introduced the Internet culture around using “Face Pack” Emojis in modern China, and English students replied that these Emoticons are so fun and they often use Emojis in the UK. Similarly, participant S9 learnt to post a sentence with a Chinese Internet meme to humorously express her 悲伤 (sadness) of coming back to school from the summer holiday break and a Chinese student C7

encouraged her to enjoy the new term. It was found that participant's emotional expression promoted their social presence and contributed to the development of their sociolinguistic competence, skills of discovery and interaction, and skills of interpreting and relating of intercultural competence in the ICC model (Byram, 1997). This will be discussed further in 4.3.1.2.

Figure 29 Examples of students' use of Emoticons on Edmodo



4.2.2.2 Open communication

Open communication is another category of Social Presence, and its typical indicators are Vocatives, Inclusion, Salutations and Risk-free Expression towards a learning climate. In this exchange, participants' open communication consisted of using salutations and risk-free expressions. It was found that salutations were very common in this Community of Inquiry as students frequently sent messages, posts or emojis to make a greeting or acknowledgement of other group members' arrival, departure, as well as new entries and comments. For example, Student 4 NE sent a post in Chinese

“你好上海的同学们! :-)(Welcome Shanghai classmates!)” to say hello and welcome the Chinese friends who joined the Edmodo group. Also, Student 2 LD messaged “你好.你好吗? (Hi, how are you?)” to greet a Chinese student, and LD received the reply “你好! Hallo. 很好很好~😊 (Hello, I’m very well.)”. When participants wanted to initiate a conversation, they would ask “有人吗? 有人在吗? (Is anybody there?)” to check whether there were other group members online. These were very typical examples of salutations for open communication in this exchange project.

Another important indicator of Open communication was Risk-free expression in this study, meaning that participants feeling comfortable interacting with others and talking about stereotypes and sensitive topics with language partners. For example, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners demonstrated open communication in a wide range of unplanned topics emerged from discussion about given tasks, including “中国人吃狗吗? (Do Chinese people eat dogs?) 中国菜很辣? (Are Chinese dishes spicy?) 为什么中国有一个孩子政策? (Why does Chinese have one-child policy?) 中国人在电影院很吵? (Are Chinese noisy in the cinemas?)”. According to the researcher’s filed notes, sometimes the so-called sensitive topics were raised by Chinese students. For instance, as shown in Figure 30, after Student 4 NE sharing two WeChat postcards about her family to the group, the Shanghai students spoke highly of her writing. Shanghai student C3 mentioned the term “nuclear family” when answering S4’s question “你有几口家人 (How many people do you have in your family?)”. Then, they did some research about the one-child policy in Mandarin laptop lessons before to prepare further discussions about Chinese families. All participants reported that they felt comfortable taking risks in asking questions to develop a greater understanding of both cultures. They explained that it was risk-taking but rewarding participating in

opencommunications and discussions. As they stressed, this Community of Inquiry has allowed them to “agree or disagree with other group members while keeping a sense of mutual understanding and trust.” This was in line with the researcher’s field notes and observations. For example, Student 2 LD mentioned that talking freely with the language partners about China helped with his intercultural learning but he disagreed that two-child policy was an improvement:

“Overall, our Shanghai friends have taught us a lot. They have made many efforts to help us with information about China. When we were talking about families, it’s surprising to know that all of our language partners are the only child in their family, whereas most of us have one or two siblings. They mentioned the term nuclear family. We were told me that the one-child policy has been abolished recently and Chinese people can choose to have a second child now. But I think the two-child policy is still sick.” (S2)

Figure 30 Open communication in WeChat group



As can be seen in Table 9 below, students had a conversation in Chinese about watching films in China and the UK from different perspectives on Edmodo. Student 9 EZ posted that she read something online about the fact that many Chinese people are impolite and rude in Chinese cinemas. She mentioned some examples like Chinese people's taking pictures and chatting on the phone while watching films. Chinese student C9 YH explained that it only happened for some people at sometimes. Then English Student 4 NE replied that maybe it happens when there is a very small audience watching a movie and the ticket price is high. But she said she was not very sure because she had not been to a cinema for a long time. Student 9 EZ then introduced to her Chinese language partner that in the UK people can have a cinema card for unlimited movies which only costs 16 pounds. Then she added that in UK cinemas, most people have very good manners. The Chinese student YH pointed out that it is a cultural difference in that some behaviours in cinemas can be accepted by Chinese culture but not by English culture. EZ then explained that she is just not used to this certain cultural perspective. Another English Student 4 NE suggested a solution “更宽容” which means ‘more tolerance’ towards other cultures. In this case, students connected their ideas around the topic of cinemas and realised that China is still developing and a particular issue should not be generalised. The group of CFL beginner learners started to discuss cultural manners and perspectives and concluded a solution that they should develop more tolerance towards the target culture and community. The researcher also used a Mandarin lesson to share her personal understanding of the issue participants raised. According to the researcher's field notes, during this lesson, the group of GCSE Mandarin students discussed the differences of related social norms between the UK and China, for instance, citizens' awareness of boundaries between public space and private space in China. The Shanghai language partners also introduced Chinese people's cultural preference of “热闹” (meaning: lively with noise and excitement) in public. It was observed that the present Community of Inquiry provided a space where

all participants felt comfortable talking about cultural taboo and different behaviours to develop CFL beginner learners' intercultural understanding and tolerance.

Table 9 Students' discussion about movie manners

| | |
|----|--|
| S9 | 我上网看了中国电影院是世界上最没礼貌地方，多人一边看一片拍照和用手机聊天，是吗？ [Translation: I read online that Chinese cinema is the rudest place in the world. Many people take photos and chat on phones while watching films. Is it true?] |
| C9 | 恩，但是只有有的时候有的人是这样 [Translation: Hmm, but only sometimes some people do that.] |
| S4 | 在英国的电影人比较少，因为价格比较大😓但是我长时间没去过在英国电影院... [Translation: In the UK, there are not that many people in the cinema due to big prices😓, but I haven't been there for a long time.] |
| S4 | 高* [Translation: high*] |
| C9 | 在英国看电影很贵吗... [Translation: Is it expensive to watch movies in the UK?] |
| S4 | 在英国我们有那个电影院卡，每个月需要花 16 英镑，能去看无限电影，在英国电影院大部分人有礼貌 [Translation: In the UK we can have a cinema membership card which costs 16 pounds per month to allow you to watch unlimited movies. Most people in the UK cinemas are polite.] |
| C9 | 可能是因为中国和英国的电影院文化不一样，有的时候有个别人用手机聊下天没关系 [Translation: Perhaps it is because of cultural differences. Sometimes it's fine for people to use mobile phones in the cinema.] |
| S9 | haha 我对中国电影院文化没习惯了😏 [Translation: LOL. I am not used to the culture of cinemas in China.] |
| S4 | 对，更宽容就行 [Translation: Right. We can be more tolerant.] |

Another type of risk-free expressions in this case study was that participants used to make jokes when commenting on Shanghai students' posts because they treated their language participants like their school friends. For instance, a Chinese student C2 LZ posted about her best friend and English Student 2 LD commented frankly “你的朋友 Ben 是体重过轻! Your friend Ben is underweight!”. And then C2 LZ replied in both English and Chinese as well “yes! I think so! But however much food he has eaten, he is always a thin boy! 我也这么觉得! 可不论他吃多少食物，他一直都是个瘦男

孩”Then, LD replied honestly in that “那很糟 That’s bad”. This example was a very casual social interaction between students from different cultural backgrounds. Some participants reported that in the current Community of Inquiry, they commented directly about other people’s appearance or weightbecause this was what they do with friends. Although they thought it might be impolite or rude in Chinese culture, they found that their language partners did not mind at all. Students commented that the learning climate in this Community of Inquiry provided open communication based on mutual understanding and trust of cultural differences and intercultural tolerance. It was found that students demonstrated social presence by providing friendly salutations and conducting risk-free open communication, which was believed to contribute to their sociolinguistic competence, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness of ICC (Byram, 1997).

4.2.2.3 Group cohesion

Group cohesion is a category of Social Presence in a Community of Inquiry and its indicators normally include Continuing threads, Asking questions, and Encouraging collaboration etc. In this study, participants’ Group cohesion mainly consisted of asking questions and encouraging collaboration. For example, a typical indicator of group membership and cohesion in the present computer-mediated communication was the use of words such as 我们(we; us) and 一起(together) (Herring, 2004). It was observed that asking questions was one of the students’ favourite activities. In this study, participantswere free to use social networking tools to ask questions at any time anywhere. According to the researcher’s field notes, the group of CFL beginner learners made significant efforts in maintaining the relationship and encouraging collaboration with language partners using social networking tools. Participants reported that using

social networking tools to get to know others and discuss both cultures granted them a sense of community, collaboration, and belonging in this exchange project. It was found that asking questions and encouraging collaboration created a friendly learning atmosphere and educational experience, which contributed to greater group cohesion and indicated the group of GCSE Mandarin students' social presence.

For example, as Student 8 AT commented, it was a good experience asking the Chinese people questions and answering their questions too in the current Community of Inquiry. She enjoyed asking and answering questions about Shanghai students' everyday life and the cultural differences between England and China. Also, Student 1 NB agreed that asking questions to get to know the Chinese students in the social networking groups was a "really good and informative" way. Student 4 NE explained how asking questions helped with her writing skills:

"It is like having a real conversation with a friend. I think we get to know each other very well by asking questions. We found out that we have a lot of shared interests. We both like the same things. And also we could both practise the languages that we are learning like I could message her in Chinese and she could message me in English. It helped with my writing skills and that was really useful." (S4)

In this study, participants asked various questions to decide who to become friends with, who to talk individually and who to host for future exchange trips. Therefore, asking questions in a Community of Inquiry helped the students to establish the partnership and create greater group cohesion. Student 9 EZ commented that "the Chinese students are so nice! I really enjoy talking to them. I am so happy. I especially enjoyed the Skype video conferences because we can see them live and ask

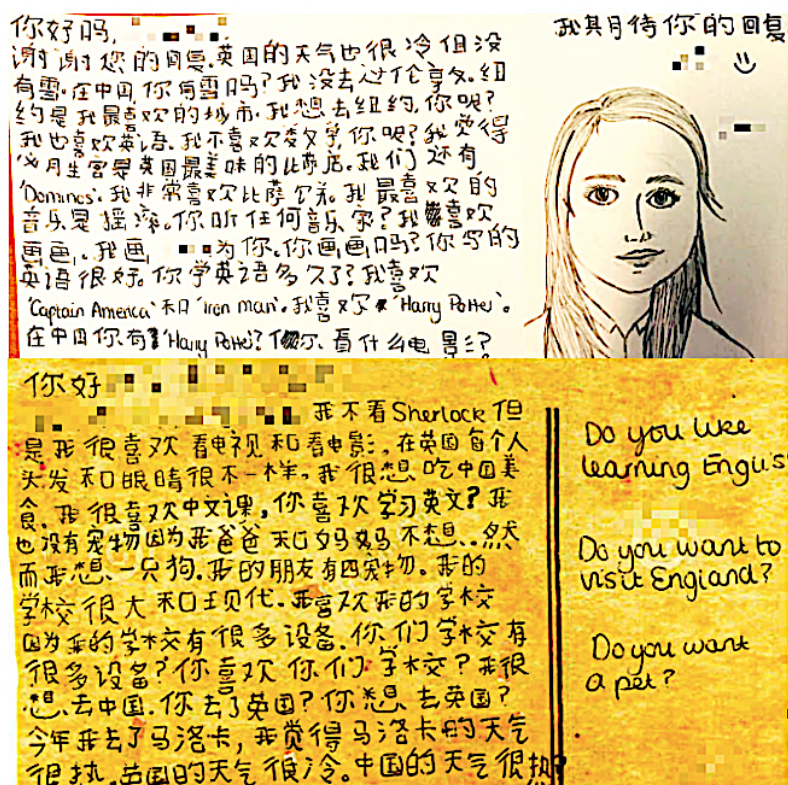
them questions”. Student 2 LD added in the focus group interview that he loved the experience of asking questions as the intercultural interaction was “brilliant banter”. Further, Student 3 EE explained that asking questions in the social networking groups helped them to become closer with language partners:

“I chatted with quite a few of them (the language partners). We can ask each other questions to find out more about each other. I could ask them if they can teach me anything that I need to know in Chinese and I can just ask them any questions and they can answer me before the exchange trip. But it was YN who I have most in common. I asked her about hobbies, what subjects she likes, and what kind of music she likes. We both like music. And then we share different kinds of music. She told me about what she wants to be when she is older. She wants to be a teacher teaching English and Chinese. She really enjoyed it. I know she likes music and she was really passionate about school. We talked to each other about what we do in school. She said some things were similar. And the difference is that in school, they have to stay a lot longer and it is more difficult and more subjects and more lessons. I felt that my points of view were often acknowledged by my partner. We talk so much and we kind of knew each other well. Because of all the interest and things, I feel close to her.” (S3)

This was consistent with the researcher’s field notes that students enjoyed using social networking tools to ask questions and develop group cohesion in the present Community of Inquiry. When it was related to “more personal” information regarding partners, the group of GCSE Mandarin students preferred to handwrite their questions and answers in a postcard or a piece of paper to be sent through WeChat. For instance, as shown in Figure 31, Student 8 AT enjoyed asking and answering questions in her WeChat postcards to develop understanding about her language partner C8, including

在中国你有雪吗(Do you have snow in China)? 我不喜欢数学, 你呢(I don't like Maths, what about you)? 你听任何音乐节(Do you listen to any musician)? 你会画画吗(Can you draw)? 你学英语多久了(How long have you been learning English)? 你有 Harry Potter 在中国 (Do you have Harry Potter in China)? 你看什么电影(What movies do you watch)? 你喜欢学习英文(Do you like learning English)? 你们学校有什么设备(What facilities do you have in your school)? 你喜欢你们学校(Do you like your school)? 你想去英国(Do you want to visit UK)? 中国的天气很热(Is the weather hot in China)? The Shanghai students also reported that they loved reading British students' handwritten Chinese and would reply with their own handwritten WeChat postcards according to participants' needs. It was observed that this mode of communication and interaction contributed to a better understanding of each other and greater group cohesion in the present Community of Inquiry.

Figure 31 S8's WeChat postcards to language partner C8



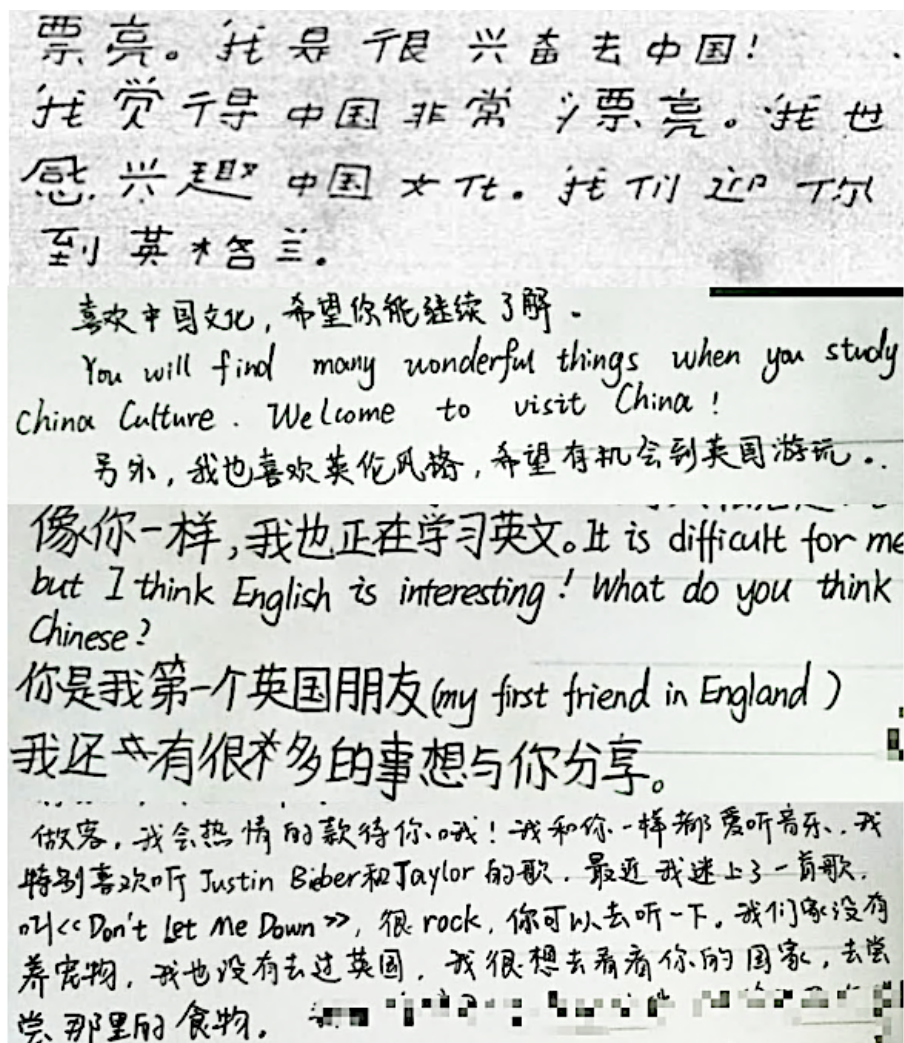
According to the researcher's field notes, the real-life events contributed to greater group cohesion in this exchange project. All participants were so interested in the possible exchange visits that they had to keep using Mandarin to keep in touch and maintain a harmonious relationship with their Shanghai friends. For example, as shown in Figure 32, the group of GCSE Mandarin students expressed in their handwritten postcards through WeChat that they were looking forward to opportunities to the real-life visits very much. As a result, in January 2017, the Chinese language partners successfully visited the GCSE Mandarin learners and stayed at their homes for a week. After this research, the participants visited back to China to stay with their Shanghai friends. It was evident that these visits significantly motivated the participants to keep using social networking tools to develop their friendships and group cohesion. The real-life events and participant's increasing motivation will be further discussed in section 5.3.1.2.

“我是很兴奋去中国！我觉得中国非常漂亮。我也感兴趣中国文化。我们迎你们到英格兰。[translation] I am very excited to go to China! I think China is very beautiful. I am also interested in Chinese culture. We welcome you to England.” (S6)

“我也喜欢英伦风格，希望有机会到英国游玩。……你是我第一个英国朋友，我还有很多的事想与你分享。……你如果来中国做客，我会热情的款待你哦！我和你一样都爱听音乐。……我也没去过英国，我很想去看你的国家，去尝尝那里的食物。[translation] I also like the English style and hope to have a chance to visit England. You are my first English friend, and I have many things to share with you. If you come to China, I will treat you

warmly. I like listening to music as much as you do. I haven't been to England. I'd like to visit your country and try the food there." (Shanghai students' replies to S6 regarding exchange visits)

Figure 32 The exchange and visits were motivational



The group of GCSE Mandarin learners also encouraged collaboration with language partners about their given tasks and new activities which was believed to have promoted group cohesion using social networking tools. It was observed that participants initiated a story co-writing activity with peers and language partners in the second academic year (2016-2017). For example, after Task 6 (Holidays), the group of CFL beginner learners had already learnt about weather, transport, countries, holiday activities, as well as the

previous five chapters (see Appendix 9). As shown in Figure 33, participants co-wrote two stories: one was about Sullivan's holiday plan to visit America and China; one about Mario and his brother Angelo's journey to China. According to the researcher's fieldnotes, participants had collaborated with language partners by asking their help with geography and provinces of China, as well as checking some Mandarin structures and vocabulary (e.g. 以前 previously; 有...高 is...tall; 很有钱 very rich; 暴雨 stormy rain; 吃惊 surprised; 打电话 make a phone call) before typing the stories. As participants typed the stories in Mandarin lessons, the time was limited for them to check all the words so they kept some words and sentences in English. The participants developed their intercultural communicative competence in this collaborative writing and translanguaging process. They learnt how to use their linguistic competence and skills of discovery and interaction to combine Chinese cultural products and practices into their stories. At the end of the lessons, they shared the stories to the WeChat group, and the Shanghai students praised their imagination in the stories.

Figure 33 Students' translanguaging collaboration regarding story writing

Sullivan六十九岁。他想明年坐飞机去美国。在美国，他想去New York看家人。他和弟弟喜欢在New York的Central Park一起打橄榄球。他也想去Time Square买衣服。Sullivan的中文名是哈德尼尔。

哈德尼尔在New York买了magic cream，他吃后suddenly是了三十岁。他非常想去北京的长城和天安门广场。他在New York买了北京故宫的门票，因为他以前看过一个有意思的故宫电影。他也去了北京动物园，看了两个漂亮的可爱的大熊猫。他还meet了有名的Bruce Lee。

Bruce Lee很高，有两米高。他在天安门广场stop了一个robbery。哈德尼尔非常爱Bruce Lee，因为他很喜欢看Bruce Lee的电影。他们hire了一个导游，叫Jackie Chan。他们一起去了北京的Tesco饭店吃饭。他们吃了很热的面条和饺子，喝了中国茶。

Mario想去北京。但是他没有钱。他也没有房子。他的哥哥很有钱。他们住在意大利的北边。他哥哥叫Angelo。Angelo买了一船。他们打算row去中国。天气是了暴雨。他们的船sank，所以他们游泳去中国。他们看见了two dolphin，所以他们骑了dolphin。他们arrived at中国海南省，很多人非常吃惊。天气不好，有大风。

他们met一老阿姨，她叫美。她有两女儿。美买了Mario面条和牛肉。美告诉他们，我可以带你们去福建省见我的女儿们。但是，Angelo说，我不想去福建，因为我有女朋友了。Mario说，我想去，因为我没有女朋友。Suddenly，Angelo的女朋友打电话他，说：我们break up。

他们decided要去福建见美的两女儿。大女儿叫小红，小女儿叫小蓝。小红喜欢Angelo，小蓝喜欢Mario。但是，Mario不喜欢小蓝，他喜欢小红。Angelo和Mario had a fight. Mario won。他stole Angelo的房子和钱。而且，Mario还stole Angelo的ex女朋友Bella。他们一起坐地铁去北京看京剧。

In summary, participants' collaboration and interaction with other group members contributed to the group cohesion in the current Community of Inquiry. It can be concluded that emotional expressions, open communication, and group cohesion indicated the group of CFL beginner learners' social presence in this study. According to the researcher's field notes, it was noticed that the majority of social communication in the Community of Inquiry consisted of free interactions which contributed to group cohesion. Participants in this case study reported that one of the main purposes of their communication in the Community of Inquiry was to maintain a good social relationship and to strengthen the social bonds between them and the language partners. It was believed that participants' social presence significantly contributed their persistence and sustained interest in using Mandarin, and promoted the development of attitudes, knowledge, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating, critical cultural awareness in the ICC model (Byram, 1997).

4.2.3 Teaching Presence (engagement with goals/direction)

According to Garrison et al. (2000), Teaching Presence typically refers to the instructor's engagement with goals and directions to facilitate students' online learning and so is a major part of creating a community of inquiry. Teaching presence is a significant determinate of student satisfaction, perceived learning, and sense of community, and it often includes teachers' instructional design, organisation and management, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction, which is needed to establish the cognitive presence and social presence. Teaching presence also encourages learners to become meta-cognitively aware in the lengthy inquiry process to develop regulatory skills for themselves and others (Anderson et al., 2001; Yang et al, 2014). Therefore, teaching presence might come from more capable learners with regulatory skills and

reflection as well. In this study, the researcher analysed the teaching presence understand the original categories: Instructional management, building understanding, and direct instruction for this particular exchange project. The following sections will present findings under these categories.

4.2.3.1 Instructional management

This section will present examples of how the researcher briefed tasks and initiated discussion topics for a group of GCSE Mandarin learners to analyse instructional management of Teaching Presence in this case study. At the beginning of the first school year in September 2015, the researcher introduced the GCSE Mandarin course to the group of Year 9 Mandarin learners and welcomed them and the Shanghai students to the Edmodo group. At the same time, all the students were explained about the research process and the exchange project. The nine GCSE Mandarin learners were aware that the researcher was determined to develop their Chinese language proficiency and intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and this research was designed to explore how they could use social networking technology to communicate with Shanghai link school language partners to achieve ICC development.

As the teacher of the GCSE Mandarin course and the exchange project, the researcher demonstrated her teaching presences by clearly briefing the tasks and communicating relevant goals to all participants. Students were aware that the goal of the exchange project was to develop GCSE Mandarin students' intercultural communicative competence - the ability to interact with language partners in the target language. To achieve this goal, six intercultural activities were designed based on the first six chapters of the Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook that participants were using (see Appendix 9 for the textbook index). At the start of the exchange project, the

researcher discussed the tasks with experienced MFL and CFL colleagues to make sure that they would challenge but not overload students in this case study. The design of these tasks was hoped to help the group of GCSE Mandarin to build real-world intercultural proficiency based on something they were familiar with - classroom community and textbook topics. Then, the researcher used a language classroom with laptops (see Figure 34) to introduce the outline of GCSE Mandarin textbook and scheme of work to students. Participants were briefed with the given tasks based on the first six chapters (see section 3.6.1.2) and were trained on how to use Edmodo on school laptops. As section 3.5.5.2 and 3.6.1.2 explained, the participants created their Edmodo accounts with their school emails and practised using Edmodo to send posts and comments with the researcher's support.

The key dates and deadlines for intercultural activities and tasks were explained to GCSE Mandarin students to follow. It was planned that all the participants could use social networking tools to complete the intercultural activities by the end of each of the six school terms. To keep the group of GCSE Mandarin learners on task, the instructional language was in both English and Mandarin to facilitate both the participants and the Shanghai partners. In addition, the researcher used 20 reflective Mandarin lessons with laptops each year (once every two weeks out of 39 school weeks) to initiate discussion and reinforce the development of a sense of intercultural learning community among participants. During these Mandarin laptop lessons, the researcher asked the group of GCSE Mandarin learners to use Google Input Tools to practise typing characters with pinyin and prepare for the given tasks (the school IT department did not install Chinese keyboard in school laptops). Also, they were asked to use WWW (what went well) and EBI (even better if) to reflect upon their intercultural exchange performance once they had completed each task. Mrs Z the Shanghai link school teacher also agreed to help observe and monitor students' discussion and communication with

each other in the social networking groups and any feedback was recorded in the researcher's field notes.

Figure 34 One hour Mandarin laptop lesson every two weeks



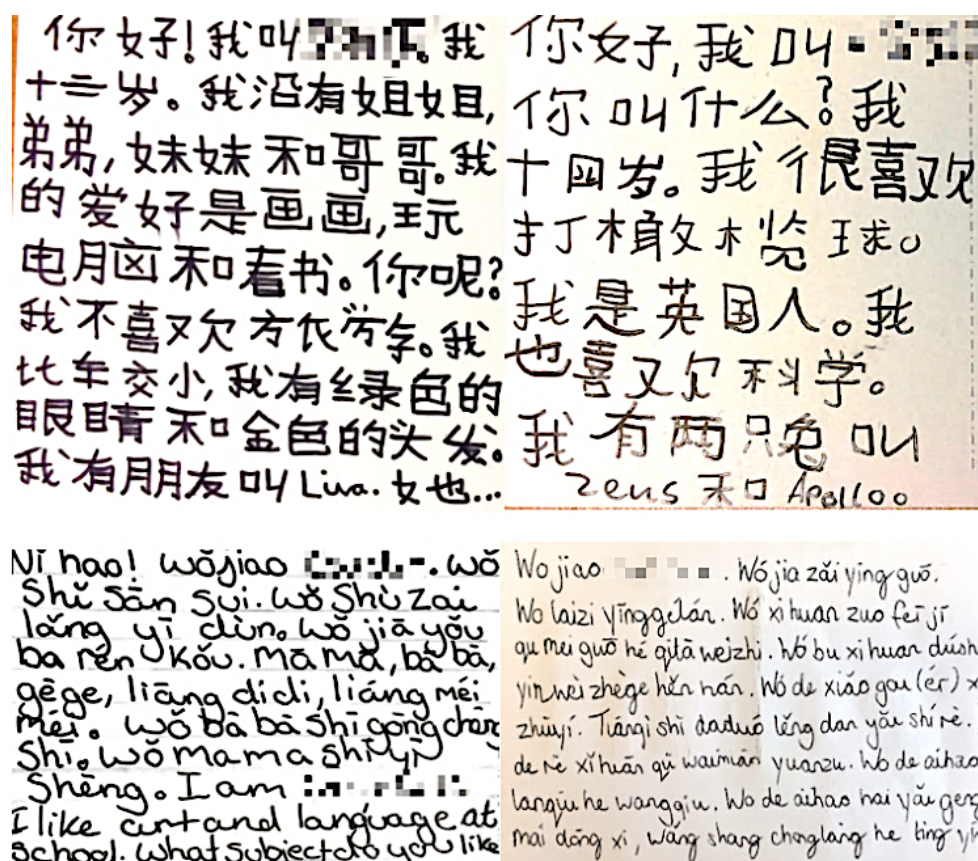
At the start of each school term, an intercultural task was announced and briefed to all the students in the Edmodo and WeChat groups for participants to conduct relevant discussion and collaboration. For example, in the first school term (September to December 2015), participants needed to learn five units in chapter 1 “My Life” (see Figure 35 below). The related intercultural task for the exchange project was to send an introductory post in Mandarin to language partners after learning this chapter. The researcher briefed the task in a “To-With-By” manner. Firstly, the researcher demonstrated a mind map of her own introduction in Mandarin “To” participants that included information about name, age, nationality, daily routine, family, best friend, personal likes and dislikes, and hobbies. Then, the researcher showed how to use a shared Google Document to type characters and wrote her introduction draft in

Mandarin “With” the students together. At last, all the participants were asked to create their own introduction mind map and write or type their introduction drafts “By” themselves in their own Google documents. To prepare for their first intercultural task, the GCSE Mandarin students were asked to write down their drafts (some in Mandarin, and some in pinyin: see Figure 36) on a piece of paper to be typed later. After that, they all used school laptops in the language classroom and shared their Google documents with the researcher to check their drafts. Once they felt ready, they copied their drafts to post on the Edmodo website in the big group for Shanghai students. Similarly, in this way, the researcher managed to brief all the given tasks during the learning of each chapter and initiated relevant purposeful communication and discussion. There were a large number of unplanned topics arose spontaneously from the given tasks which will be discussed in section 5.3.1. To conclude, as the Mandarin course teacher, the researcher demonstrated Teaching Presence by designing and organising tasks, clearly communicating important course topics, goals, and deadlines, and providing briefing and clear instructions on steps to take part in the intercultural activities.

Figure 35 Chapter 1 My Life of Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook

| 1 我的生活 wǒ de shēng huó MY LIFE | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---|----|
| 复习 fù xī 1 | Review 1 | Revising basic Chinese | 6 |
| 复习 fù xī 2 | Review 2 | Understanding basic introductions | 8 |
| 1 我喜欢 wǒ xǐ huan | 1 I like | Likes and dislikes | 10 |
| 2 我的父母 wǒ de fù mǔ | 2 My parents | Jobs and daily routines | 12 |
| 3 我的朋友 wǒ de péng you | 3 My friends | Describing people | 14 |
| 4 爱好 ài hào | 4 Hobbies | Asking yes/no questions | 16 |
| 5 国籍 guó jí | 5 Nationalities | Talking about places you have visited | 18 |
| 口语 kǒu yǔ | Speaking assessment | Preparing for a speaking task (open interaction) | 20 |
| 写作 xiě zuò | Writing assessment | Preparing for an extended writing task about a famous personality | 22 |
| 重要语言点 zhòng yào yǔ yán diǎn | Key language | Key words and phrases in Chapter 1 | 24 |

Figure 36 Students' drafts for Task 1



4.2.3.2 Building understanding

Another category of Teaching presence in the CoI framework is Building understanding. In this case study, to facilitate discourse and discussion among participants and Shanghai students, the researcher often shared links to online resources either related to given tasks or about Chinese language and culture in general in times of need. All participants agreed that the researcher was helpful in briefing tasks, spotting disagreement about various topics, and helping them build their own cultural understanding in the present Community of Inquiry.

The textbook that participants were using in this study manifested the perspective of an outsider tourist, which was regarded as inadequate for developing an “intercultural

speaker” (Byram,1997; 2015). To help the group of GCSE Mandarin learners to empathise with language partners and build their own understanding about the target culture, the researcher shared a wide range of materials (e.g. authentic resources: pictures, videos, and texts) and explanations related to Chinese social norms and cultural practices to the social networking groups and Mandarin lessons. For example, when the group of GCSE Mandarin learners were planning to initiate a “WeChat postcard” activity, the researcher introduced the format of writing a Chinese letter and postcard with frequently used vocabulary and sentence structures, to build their understanding. When participants did not understand their language partners’ writing and could find related answers on the Internet, the researcher would explain the some of the words and sentences during the Mandarin lessons to promote further discourse and interaction among students. As shown in Figure 37, participants asked about the meaning of “海内存知己，天涯若比邻” in a Shanghai student’s WeChat postcard reply, the researcher presented its rough translation to all participants and explained about the history of this Chinese poem about friendship. After that, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners were asked to construct their own interpretation of the poem and then reply to their language partners with their understandings.

Figure 37 Building participants’ understanding of Chinese students’ replies

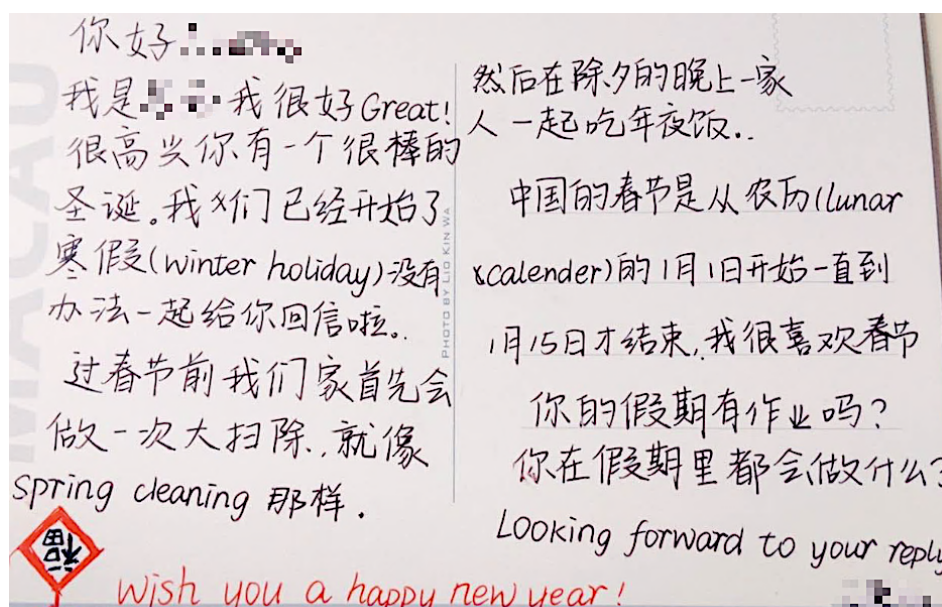


Another example was that the researcher offered guidance regarding the learning goals and personal meaning when students were preparing and carrying out given tasks. When participants were preparing for Task 2 (School), they were asked to use social networking tools to describe their school with pictures and compare similarities and differences between Chinese and British schools. To help participants build their own understanding of this topic, the researcher introduced about her own experience and personal thoughts of schools and education in China and presented related YouTube videos to further help them compare the educational systems, daily routine, and school subjects in China and England. Then, all participants were asked to talk to their Shanghai language partners to ask about their favourite subjects, figure out a typical school day, and reflect on their own favourite experience for a group presentation next Mandarin laptop lesson. It was observed that students were very interested in the facts that the link school shared many subjects in common (e.g. Math, English, Chinese, Physics, Chemistry, Biology) with their own school. They found that the link school did not have subjects like Religious Education, Food and Technology, and Business. The group of GCSE Mandarin learners expressed a strong wish to visit the link school to experience the subjects and activities that they do have (e.g. morning exercise, flag ceremony, Martial Arts, Ping-Pong, Chinese Calligraphy and Painting, Beijing Opera).

According to the researcher's field notes, the group of GCSE Mandarin students were very interested in relating the event of Spring Festival to Christmas and they asked many questions related to Chinese New Year during follow up Mandarin lessons. The researcher introduced the reasons why Chinese people do not celebrate Christmas but it has been related to online shopping by Chinese companies. Also, all the participants have learnt how to sing and compare Mandarin Christmas songs and Happy Chinese New Year songs. During the Spring Festival week, they were presented with concepts like “年夜饭 reunion dinner” (i.e. 团圆饭 that Shanghai mentioned in the above

discussion) and pictures of Chinese dishes. Through cultural products like the fish dish and the spring festival couplet and cultural practices like giving red envelopes and saying best wishes, participants could explore the cultural perspectives behind them. All participants were asked to compare the Spring Festival celebrations with the British tradition of celebrating the new year and communicate with their language partners regarding their thoughts on both festivals. When they received WeChat postcards about Chinese New Year from their language partners, participants presented them in Mandarin lessons. As seen in Figure 38, Student 8 AT shared her partner C8's postcard and raised the question about the drawing of “福” (good fortune). The researcher then translated the postcard and explained the wordplay of 到 (arrive) and 倒 (upside down) and the cultural meaning of “福到了” (good fortune has arrived) to build students' understanding about Chinese culture.

Figure 38 Language partner C8's WeChat postcard about Chinese new year



In summary, all participants agreed that the researcher was very helpful in keeping them on task, guiding them towards a better direction and understanding about the tasks and topics, and sharing personal meaning to encourage them to explore more and produce

more reflective dialogue in a Community of Inquiry. When facilitating discussion about intercultural topics, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners were presented with various information and resources regarding relevant cultural products and practices, in order to help them reflect upon the cultural perspectives (Page and Benander, 2016). It was hoped that the teaching of Chinese culture was not an addition but an integrated part of the exchange and Mandarin lessons to support learners build understanding and ICC gradually in a Community of Inquiry. However, it is worth noting that more capable learners also shared their resources and information to the group to promote others' understanding of certain topics, which was believed to have contributed to the teaching presence in the Community of Inquiry. Therefore, it was felt that the teaching presence in the present case study was a shared one among the teacher and some participants.

4.2.3.3 Direct instruction

Direct instruction is another category of Teaching Presence in a Community of Inquiry. In this case study, it consisted of focusing discussion and injecting new knowledge. It was felt that distant exchange needs to be balanced with direct instructions with textbooks. Language partners were helpful in terms of demonstrating the correct forms of words but they lacked clarity in explaining grammatical points, and that was when the teacher was needed to provide Teaching Presence by effectively reminding students of the errors, providing direct explanations to focus discussion on task, and injecting relevant new knowledge in times of need. Participants agreed that the researcher, as the GCSE Mandarin course teacher, provided direct instruction and feedback in a timely fashion typically by interacting with participants on the Mandarin content followed by either comments to give modified sentences or restate the Mandarin in correct forms.

For example, when doing Task 1, in a writing activity on Edmodo at a very early stage of this project, students posted their self-introduction for their language partners for the first time (see Figure 39). There were many errors in their writing and typing that they did not notice so that the researcher had to check their drafts to provide instant and direct feedback during lesson time. At this stage, common mistakes were: using L1 English logic (e.g. the use of ‘和’ to link sentences); forgetting the measure words; the use of 二个 instead of 两个 (special two with a measure word); selecting the wrong characters when using pinyin input (e.g. the use of 第第 instead of 弟弟 and 唱哥 instead of 唱歌) or using strokes input (e.g. the use of 皮月天 instead of 皮肤 and 唱哥欠 instead of 唱歌); using 是 instead of 很 when linking nouns with adjectives (cannot distinguish between ‘noun+是+noun’ with ‘noun+很+adj’ structures); and selecting the wrong Chinese translation (e.g. the use of 因为她很种 to say ‘because she is very kind’ instead of 因为她很善良; because ‘善良’ means ‘kind-hearted’ and ‘种’ means ‘kinds’ or ‘types’). These mistakes were so common among the group of CFL learners and they could hardly work out the patterns themselves as they were beginners at this stage. In addition, the Chinese language partners did not necessarily know how to explain the grammatical points even they noticed the mistakes. Therefore, the researcher had to question and remind students of the errors directly and provide the explanation instantly.

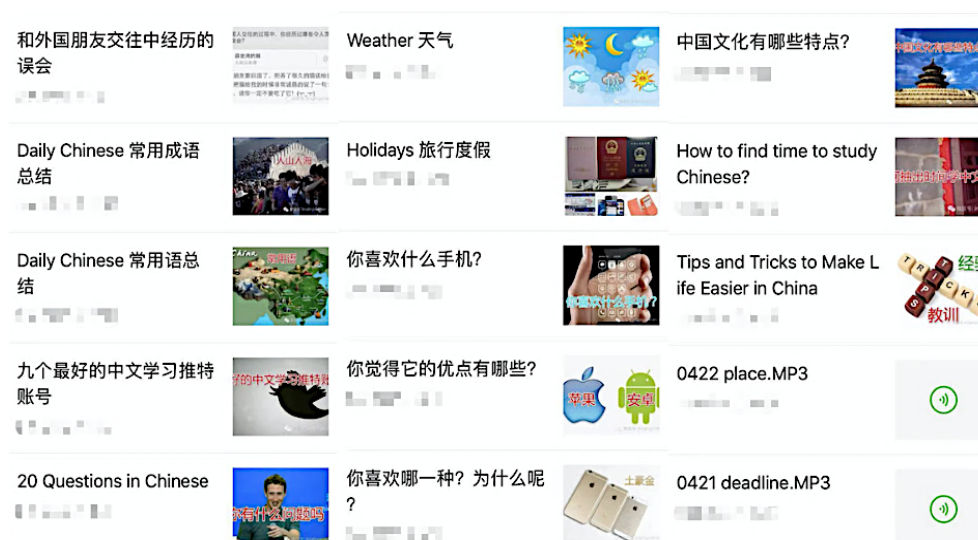
Figure 39 Participants' Task 1 Edmodo posts



Also, as the teacher, the researcher needed to provide direct feedback to help solve GCSE Mandarin students' pragmatic difficulties - where they were concerned with the strange word order of Chinese sentences and questions, and where they were confused about the implied meanings behind some Chinese words in intercultural communications with language partners. These were some of the linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic difficulties that the group of GCSE Mandarin students faced but could not address easily by the use of a dictionary. For instance, the researcher used the multimodal features of WeChat official accounts to offer direct instruction to address participants' questions regularly. The published articles were based on participants' needs and levels, and some were Mandarin text with slow comprehensible voice messages so that participants could check the Mandarin transcripts after listening to the audios. As can be seen in Figure 40, the majority of the links of WeChat official accounts shared to participants were either related to the given tasks or of interest to the group of CFL beginner learners. According to the researcher's field notes, the Shanghai students also shared links and videos about Chinese language and culture with both Mandarin and English subtitles which broadened the group of GCSE Mandarin students' horizons. Participants reported that they were more motivated and engaged to

explore more about the things that the Chinese language partners were interested in. According to the researcher's field notes, when Teaching Presence was not presented, students may experience communication breakdowns and sociolinguistic and discourse difficulties. It was hoped that the researcher's direct instruction could provide instant support and accurate feedback to help the group of GCSE Mandarin learners to recognise and understand their strength and weakness in the present Community of Inquiry. The multimodal features of social networking tools will be further discussed in section 5.3.2.2.

Figure 40 Direct instruction through WeChat official accounts



Another example was that a WeChat official account was used to provide direct instruction and instant feedback to support participants throughout the second academic year in this exchange project. As S3 emphasised in the interview, she really appreciated the constructive feedback and direct support from the teacher through the social networking tools and WeChat official account too (see Figure 41). They found it very helpful when the researcher guided them to understand each other's different views on the same posts and messages. S5 echoed this view that she enjoyed using social networking technology to contact the researcher to ask about messages that she did not

understand because she felt it was a reliable and quick way to reach the teacher with tools that she was already familiar with. All participants replied in the focus group interview that the researcher's direct instruction and focus discussion during the Mandarin laptop lessons was extremely helpful because the Mandarin teacher was always there to check their drafts and explain messages and alternative interpretations before they replied language partners. For instance, participants faced difficulty in understanding language partners' WeChat Moments about their visit experience (Figure 42). The researcher then provided direct instruction to give feedback to their own interpretation and add further explanation during Mandarin lessons. In this present Community of Inquiry, some more capable Mandarin learners often provide their support to peers directly in times of need or when the researcher was not present. It was believed that the teaching presence in this case study was a shared one among the researcher and some more able participants. More capable students' online behaviours promoted the intercultural understanding of both the peers and language participants about both cultures, which indicated the main principles of Tandem projects: autonomy and reciprocity (Little and Brammerts, 1996; Brammerts, 2001; Benson, 2013). This also supports Long's (2000) argument that interlocutors could figure out how to maintain the communication and make it more accessible for the less proficient speakers. It was stressed that there are very few beginner learners who can acquire L2 directly from native speaker talk that has not been modified to some degree. Higher ability Mandarin learners like S2 EE and S9 EZ could understand messages from native speakers through her own cognitive presence and helped less able learners to understand the information. The significance of this for the teaching of languages is that learning languages with groups of learners is important for this, as well as more obvious reasons - but these groups can be virtual, as well as classes. This finding also adds to prior sociocultural research that suggested the need for scaffolding and mediation from teachers and more capable peers to achieve deeper levels of learning in online

communities (Lamy and Hampel, 2007; Mercer et al., 2009). The researcher argues that teachers need to be aware of learners' levels, needs, and interests before moving towards giving tasks and providing direct feedback.

Figure 41 Providing direct feedback and instruction on WeChat



Figure 42 Language partners' WeChat Moments about their visit

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1.到英国的第二天, 参观了伦敦, 一开始没什么感觉, 直到忽来忽去的雨降临, 的确, 我是在英国啊, 英国的天气多变, 但也正是这雨, 让我看见了英国的魅力, 海顿公园里的一个湖, 让我觉得如临仙境, 鸽子, 天鹅, 鸭子等鸟类在湖面或湖边玩耍, 还有蓝蓝的天空与清澈的湖水相映成趣, 果真是美极了, 让我有种难以形容的舒适感! 下午在劳累的车程后来到了朗依顿学校, 亲切的老师和校园, 我的partner更是亲切可人, 丝毫没有紧张感, 她的家人也给了我家的感觉, 可爱的妹妹, 和蔼的爸爸, 还有温柔又幽默的妈妈, 不得不说, 我真的很喜欢他们! 希望以后的每天都可以和</p> | <p>2.今天是和英国在一起的家庭日哦! 今天的行程果然没有辜负我的期望! 我们一起去了诺丁汉, 开始给我生动形象地介绍了一番她很爱的游戏, 并带我亲身体验了一番, 那就是疯狂高尔夫, 玩过才知道, 那真的很疯狂! 首先来到失落的高尔夫世界, 开始闯关, 简单来说就是把球打进洞, 但是要打进真的不简单, 随着关数增多, 难度也越来越大, 我最高记录是打了14球才进洞, 这也就是让人疯狂的所在, 无限循环在打不进, 但这也带来了许多欢乐, 更拉近了我与他们的距离, 让我可以更放松自己, 接着我们去咖啡馆小憩了一会儿, 英国下午茶真的很不错哦, 因为他们包容与关心,</p> | <p>我们的交流也没有很大的问题, 这也让我心中的一块石头放了下来。喝完热可可我和开始shopping之旅, 真的很充实有趣, 我们去了各种各样的购物中心, 形形色色的商店, 琳琅满目的商品, 令我流连忘返, 当然好东西也不能贪心哦, 回家路上我们带着满满的收获经过了诺丁汉大学, 我的父母介绍这是一所历史悠久的大学, 的确从外观上看是很古老, 但又透露出浓浓的韵味, 神秘而引人注目, 真想进去看看呀! 今天虽然很累, 但也收获颇丰, 不止是收获了买来的东西, 更是难能可贵的交流与学习的机会, 相信通过今天, 我和会成为更好朋友, 和她家人的相处也会更融</p> |
|---|--|---|

4.3 Question 2: How did a Community of Inquiry lead to a group

of CFL beginner learners' ICC development?

To answer the second research question, the findings will be presented based on different components of Byram's ICC model. This section involves analysing and exploring how online intercultural communications and exchanges could support the development of GCSE Mandarin students' intercultural communicative competence. Byram (1997) coined the concept of intercultural communicative competence in the foreign language education context for a European project (Council of Europe, 2001). According to his ICC model (1997), students' ICC developments include four aspects: (1) Linguistic Competence, (2) Sociolinguistic Competence, (3) Discourse Competence, and most importantly (4) Intercultural Competence which consists of attitudes, knowledge, skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating, as well as critical cultural awareness that one's own perspective is not necessarily natural or normal but socioculturally constructed (O'Dowd, 2006).

The findings in this case study indicated that, for UK learners of Chinese, social networking can add something special to GCSE Mandarin learning by creating an intercultural Chinese learning space for them to build their own understanding of both cultures to develop ICC. In such a social networking space, students could access authentic and meaningful learning resources in a community of inquiry and benefit from intercultural discussions about Chinese language and culture. The intercultural learning experience in the present Community of Inquiry enabled participants to compare and relate the target culture with their home culture and develop their own awareness, skills of interpretation, and understanding of both cultures and societies (Byram et al., 2001). In this exchange project, the group of GCSE Mandarin students had been provided with extra opportunities to develop intercultural attitudes, knowledge, and skills, either by researching both cultures online or by using social networking tools to communicate

with language partners in a Community of Inquiry. It is worth noting that participants' online interactions, interviews, and discussions often could correspond to several aspects of intercultural communicative competence, therefore there were inevitable overlaps of ICC categories in this case study.

4.3.1 Developing preparatory competences to ICC

Linguistic Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, and Discourse Competence are three preparatory competences to the development of ICC (Byram, 1997). The following sections will present findings of how a social networking based Community of Inquiry contributed to these three preparatory competences.

4.3.1.1 Linguistic Competence

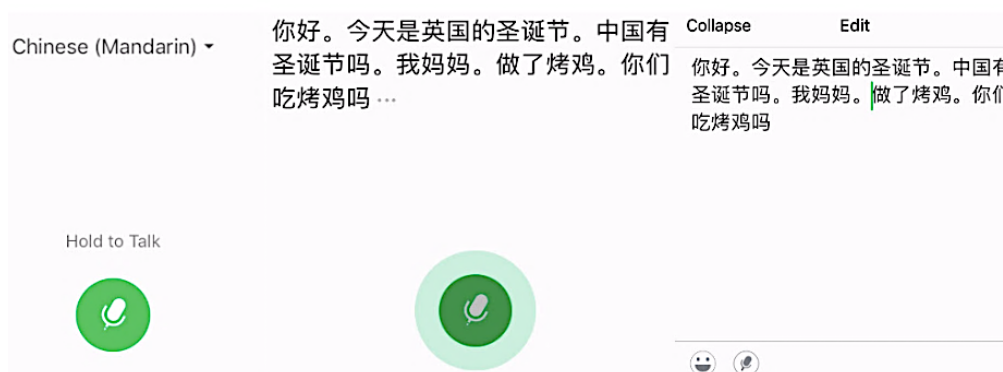
Linguistic Competence refers to linguistic knowledge held by native speakers of a language. In this study, it was believed that a Community of Inquiry was created by the group of GCSE Mandarin learners and their language partners where they experienced a large number of Mandarin linguistic practices. Participants reported that their linguistic knowledge had improved through key linguistic practices such as forming sentences although they would never be as fluent and accurate as native speakers. In the social network technology based Community of Inquiry, they were making sentences in Chinese for genuine communication purposes. Some students mentioned that such a learning community with native speaker language partners had allowed them to 'see authentic sentence structures of Chinese through examples from real Chinese people'. For example, Student 1 NB commented about the benefit of a Community of Inquiry for their Linguistic Competence as below:

“It (the Community of Inquiry) lets you see how people really talk and the ways they use Chinese words. I make progress by looking at the words I’ve learnt and trying to make sentences out of them based on what the Chinese students have written. Then I check to see if I’ve done it correctly and I practise until it is right. These native Chinese language partners I talk to, they help me, and they know I’m trying to learn. So they actually say if they write something in Chinese and they have a feeling I won’t know the character, they’ll put the word in English next to it and carry on the sentence. Or if I write something wrong, they will rewrite it in the right order, or say change this or this. It’s okay because it’s a closed environment where you are comfortable. They know the context, they know what I am trying to achieve. Sometimes I surprise them by writing a long sentence and it’s all correct, they will be like 非常好 (Very good!). They always say: ‘Look, I understand everything you say and everything you mean, just sometimes you should order it differently or use a different character’, and that’s very helpful.” (S1)

All the participants were aware that this exchange project aimed to help them development intercultural communicative competence. The ability to use the target language Mandarin to send messages would be the key base for intercultural communication to take place. Although this was pointed out to be challenging for CFL beginner learners (Everson, 1998), the “hold to talk” and “translate” buttons on WeChat has been reported by participants to be extremely helpful for developing their linguistic competence. As shown in Figure 43, students could hold the green button to produce a Mandarin utterance for WeChat to transcribe into Mandarin text. In addition, if the students spot any error or mistake in the transcript, they could edit and upgrade the text before sending it out to language partners. According to the researcher’s field notes, in this way, participants engaged themselves in Mandarin speaking practices and noticing

errors with planned and unplanned topics. They developed their ability to speak Mandarin more clearly and pronounce Mandarin tones correctly in order to make WeChat transcript to be more accurate.

Figure 43 The “Hold to Talk” button in WeChat



As for the “Translate” button in WeChat, participants could hold a Mandarin text for Mandarin-to-English translation including all the Mandarin chats in WeChat group communication and WeChat Moments timeline. Participants in this exchange project used WeChat Moments to share about their daily life and trips with their language partners. According to the researcher’s field notes, whenever the GCSE Mandarin learners could not understand the link school students’ timeline, they used WeChat Translate button to reveal the basic meaning, followed by further questioning and discussion with language partners, peers and the teacher if the WeChat translation were still confusing. In this way, all the participants reported that they were able to read unfamiliar Mandarin words and phrases in order to better understand their Chinese friends’ life.

Apart from practising Mandarin typing and speaking, some students went a step further by exchanging photos of their Mandarin handwriting with link school language partners on social networking tools to practise their linguistic competence. For example, student

7 EM initiated a postcard exchange activity originally because she wanted to handwrite and draw something for her language partner (see Figure 44). She took pictures of the handmade and handwritten postcards and sent them to Chinese students by WeChat, and her language partner replied in the same way. In EM's postcard, she spontaneously talked about her family, pets, hobbies, friends and her love of Chinese take away. She also asked about the Chinese students' school and favourite food at the end. Influenced by EM and her language partner's intercultural communication, other students also started designing their handwriting postcards and sent them. Their Chinese language partners soon sent their reply postcards back through WeChat as well. According to interview responses, students enjoyed the postcard activity and especially loved reading Chinese student's replies. For example, in Figure 45, the Chinese students thanked the British student for recommending so many films, talked about her favourite Chinese songs and Japanese cartoon, and asked about English students' exams. Almost all the postcard replies from the Chinese students contained some new input of the language and culture that unexpectedly influenced students' learning (please see Appendix 11 for more examples of postcards). In terms of the unexpected language learning experience, Student 3 EE commented that:

“It definitely helped my reading and I learnt a lot more words from it. And it was also a bit more personal than the message because it was longer and it was written by hand. And it helped the researcher to find out a lot about the person so that was good.” (S3)

Also, Student 4 NE echoed this response in that: “my reading and my writing have been improved because you learn to write more Chinese words. Especially reading the postcards really helped me improve my skills.”

Figure 44 S7's postcard to her language partner

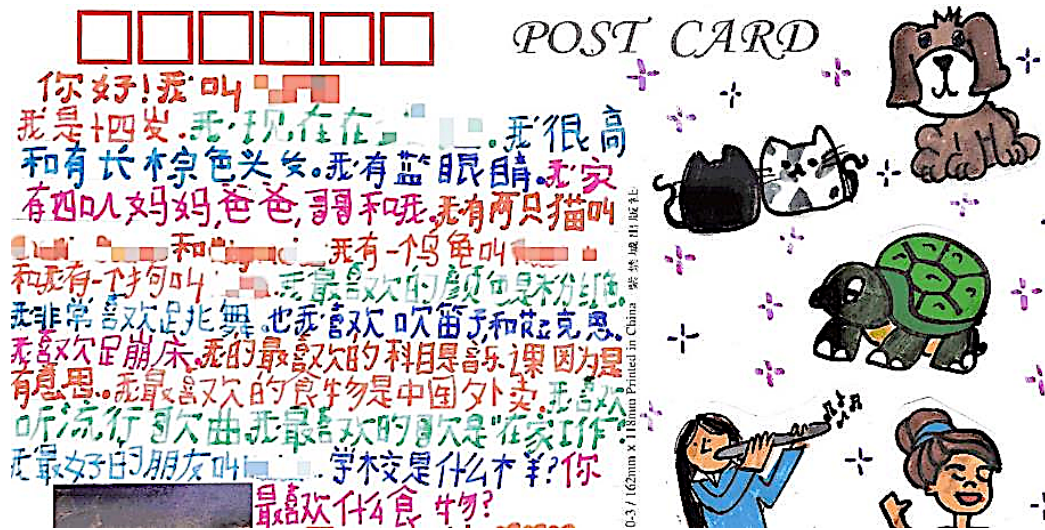
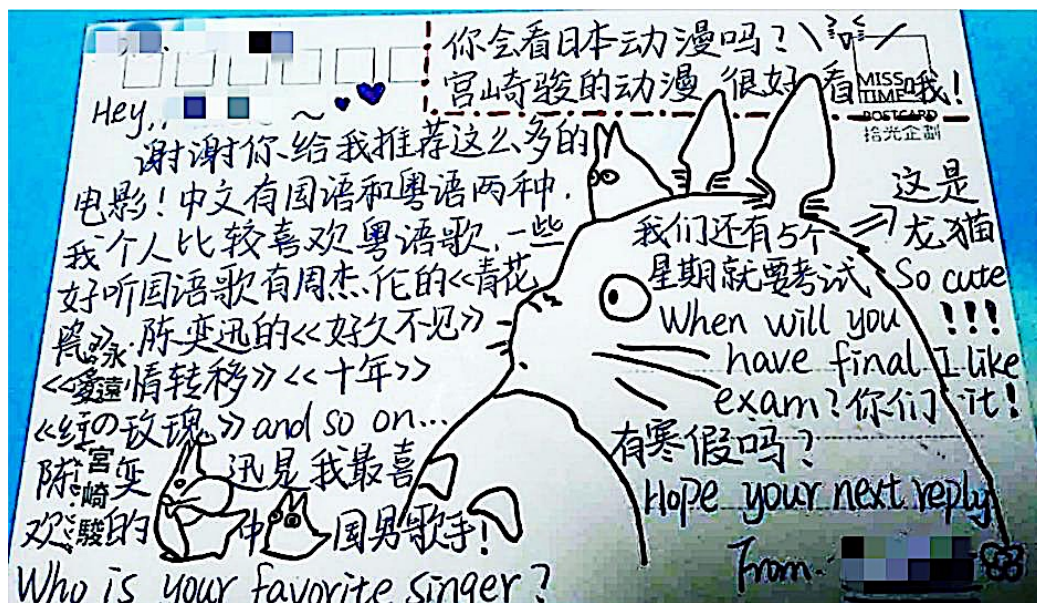


Figure 45 A Chinese student's postcard reply



In this study, the group of GCSE Mandarin students reported that they read and sent a large number of Chinese questions and answers that they would not have had without the Community of Inquiry. Moreover, the chats and communication were updated regularly in the Community of Inquiry which was reported to be beneficial to participant's development of linguistic competence of ICC.

Linguistic competence was claimed by Byram (1997; 2015) to be the system of linguistic knowledge possessed by L2 native speakers, allowing speakers to produce and understand utterances and sentences. In this study, students reported that they believed that their linguistic knowledge had improved by key linguistic practices like making sentences. With social networking tools, they were making sentences in Chinese for genuine communication purposes. As observed, students benefited from extra exposure to authentic communication and interaction in the target language. As Student 5 YE mentioned, she achieved improvement of reading and writing skills when the Chinese also wrote in Chinese:

“I’m grateful to all the language partners. I improved so much. I realised that the more I can type, the more I can practise and feel confident with using Mandarin. I can write better too. Our partners really loved reading the handwritten postcards from us. So this Community of Inquiry had definitely supported the development of our linguistic competence and for me, it enhanced my writing and reading skills the most.” (S5)

Student 9 also stressed the importance of using Mandarin as much as possible to develop their linguistic competence of ICC in a Community of Inquiry:

“I used about 70 to 80% of the time to talk in Mandarin with my partners. For the rest of the time, I use about half Mandarin and half English. I believe that using as much Mandarin as possible would be the only effective way to improve quickly. I had to use WeChat translating button a lot, but after some time it gets easier. After about one year, I can often figure out most of what the Shanghai students were talking about.” (S9)

Student 3 EE highlighted that her spoken linguistic competence and vocabulary improved with the help of her language partner in the Community of Inquiry:

“Firstly, I can talk to my language partner and practise my writing and reading skills. I often ask her questions in Chinese and she likes to help me learn Chinese. So she answers the questions in Chinese or says common phrases to help expand my vocab. In addition, my speaking and listening improved with the use of Skype and WeChat voice messages and calls. It gives us a chance to practise our speaking skills, and the Chinese students can say whether what I said was alright and whether they understood it. In particular, my listening skills have improved by listening to our class speaking as well as the Chinese students communicating with us.” (S3)

It was observed that the present Community of Inquiry pushed the group of CFL beginner learners to take manageable risks in producing more output to talk to language partners. Real-life conversations with social networking tools generated more opportunities for GCSE students to develop their linguistic competence for ICC. For example, Student 9 EZ held that she had enjoyed the opportunities to use the target language for real to develop friendship:

“I like to receive messages so I can use my Chinese. I like to be able to use it and communicate properly and see friendships developing. But I wasn’t enjoying it before, and that’s probably because I wasn’t learning much. The fact that I could have a conversation now like completely in Chinese without any English, I feel like it’s quite nice and quite rewarding. What keeps you going is like I wanted to learn more. If there isn’t a use for it, then you found yourself learning for no purpose. So I’m learning, and want to learn more because I am enjoying it. I enjoy it because I get to use it every day. If you don’t get to use it

for a purpose and with an outcome, I have to learn my Chinese vocab, and five days pass and I don't use it, it's not so fun to learn.” (S9)

It was found that more capable Mandarin learners developed their linguistic competence further by learning from others' correct posts and reflecting on own linguistic mistakes. For example, Student 3 EE said in the interview that she liked to self-correct and make progress by looking at others' work and posts. She constantly reflected upon her own mistakes and resend improvements with a “*” symbol. As can be seen in Figure 46, Student 3 EE posted under a picture in Mandarin ‘四个孩子坐在火车上看书他们的书’ and she self-corrected her previous sentence in a following comment ‘四个人坐在火车上看他们的书’ by changing the word 孩子 to 人, and deleted the wrong Chinese characters 了 and 书. This showed that she noticed her error of mistakenly using 了 to indicate completed actions and her mistake of repeating the object 书. Her demonstration of noticing errors and self-correction set a good example for other students in the Community of Inquiry. Also, Student 8 AT, in a discussion about jobs and future plans, noticed her errors of forgetting to use a comma and mistakenly using 生病人 to say 病人 (meaning: ill people). It was found that more capable participants were able to identify the common mistakes in this case study (see Appendix 17). Self-correction with a “*” was unique in social networking communications. In this case study, when CFL learners noticed any mistake in a sent text, they were able to quickly correct it by sending out a follow-up message, usually consisting of only the corrected word or phrase with the star symbol. These examples indicated participants' development of Linguistic Competence in ICC (Byram, 1997) in a Community of Inquiry.

Figure 46 Examples of students' self-correction



It can be concluded that the present Community of Inquiry provided extra opportunities for purposeful communication and real-life conversations for the group of GCSE Mandarin students to develop their linguistic competence for ICC. In a Community of Inquiry, participants' cognitive presence (i.e. triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution) and social presence (i.e. emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion) allowed them to engage with content and others to explore how Chinese language partners use Mandarin words and sentences meaningfully. The researcher's teaching presence in the Community of Inquiry also supported participants to practise their own Mandarin skills for genuine communication and interaction, which was believed to be an effective way to develop linguistic competence (Mackey and Goo, 2007).

4.3.1.2 Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence was defined by Byram (1997) as L2 learners' skills to understand social meanings of linguistic choices and to use the target language appropriately for communication purposes. It was found that the group of GCSE Mandarin learners had gained Sociolinguistic Competence as they developed their

ability to interpret the social meanings of the words and expressions, and tried to make appropriate use of the social meaning of texts and emoticons for better communication. All participants reported in the interviews that the purposeful communication and unplanned topics in the exchange project had allowed them to improve their sociolinguistic competence, by obtaining new words and using authentic sentence structures to conduct social interactions beyond “textbook Mandarin”.

In this case study, it was found that the purposeful communication prompted a wide range of unplanned topics (see example in Figure 47) which was believed to have contributed to students’ sustained engagement and motivation to develop their skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and sociolinguistic competence. The social networking based Community of Inquiry created a comfortable and motivating environment for a group of GCSE Mandarin students to communicate and interact with language partners of similar ages. This environment generated substantially examples of Chinese language use around purposeful communication and unplanned topics that encouraged and stimulated the group of CFL beginner learners to engage more. The unplanned topics varied according to participants’ personal interests. When they had a particular interest, for example, music, sports, school, cinema, they talked with language partners to figure out how it goes in the Chinese context and to relate back with their own culture. According to the researcher’s field notes, students judged the level of intercultural communication in the Community of Inquiry (e.g. texts and voice messages) as “challenging but not impossible” and enjoyed using social networking technology for task-related communication and exam preparations. They reported that they have learnt how to use authentic Mandarin words and sentence patterns appropriately from their informal conversations with language partners without consciously remembering them by heart. The purposeful communication, unplanned topics, real-life events, and informal conversations in this case study will be further

discussed in sections 5.3.1.1 and 5.3.3.1

Figure 47 An example of unplanned topics between S9 and C9



Another way that students gained their sociolinguistic competence was to interpret and understand their Chinese language partners' social conversations with Internet memes (e.g. Emoticons and Stickers) that would never be learnt through textbooks. In this study, Shanghai language partners introduced the culture of Chinese Internet memes (表情包) to participants (see Figure 48), which was a pictorial representation of a facial

expression using Chinese characters, usually used to express a person's feelings, moods, and attitudes. Taking Figure 49 as an example, Chinese student C9 YH posted a photo about going to an animation fair with friends, but her photo used an Internet meme 冷漠 (coldness or heartless) on her own face whereas there was no Internet meme on her friends' faces. When Student 9 EZ then asked about '什么是图片中的新词语?' (What's that new word in the picture?), C9 YH explained that 表情包 was actually a humorous way to say that she was not that interested in the fair, at least not as interested as her friends were. In this way, students were able to learn about new meanings of Chinese words in a social conversation. As observed, some English students also used Internet Emoticons to reply back to Chinese students. For example, Student 2 LD used the Chinese Internet meme "Smiling Face" to show humour in a group conversation. According to him, he learnt how to use Chinese Internet meme from the language partners and he felt more like a part of the community when he used Chinese friends' preferred socially appropriate communication styles.

Figure 48 Shanghai students introducing Chinese Internet meme



Figure 49 Examples of students' use of Chinese Internet meme



In the present Community of Inquiry, students' interview feedback showed that they found the experience of using the target language for genuine communication enjoyable because "it's very exciting that they all speak Chinese and stuff" (S1) and "it includes different opinions and views" (S9). All the students reported that they enjoyed using the Community of Inquiry to talk to real Chinese people, either in the target language or in English. The most frequently repeated themes from students were that they enjoyed the 'authentic talk' (S1, S3, S4, S6, S7) and 'genuine communication' (S2, S4, S5, S6, S8, S9) in the language with 'real Chinese people' (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9). For example, Student 4 NE commented that:

'It is an enjoyable and compelling way to learn Chinese. I was so excited when I knew that we can talk to real Chinese people because we get to learn about the authentic culture as well as the language, like, how they live, what is like to live in a different country. I can easily communicate in both languages. I can speak

to them in either language and it means that I learn more words that are actually used genuinely by Chinese people. So it was very interesting.’ (S4)

It can be concluded that students gained sociolinguistic competence as they developed their ability to interpret the social meanings of the words and expressions, and tried to use the social meaning of texts and Emoticons appropriately for social communications. The present Community of Inquiry was not a platform designed for peer distance Chinese learning, but a space for facilitating a group of CFL beginner learners’ needs of social communication and intercultural interaction based on their classroom Mandarin learning. With the help of a Community of Inquiry, participants used their Social Presence (i.e. emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion) and Cognitive Presence (i.e. triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution) to obtain more understanding of social norms of the target social groups, as well as the way real Chinese people interact with each other, which is an important part of sociolinguistic competence of ICC (Byram, 2015).

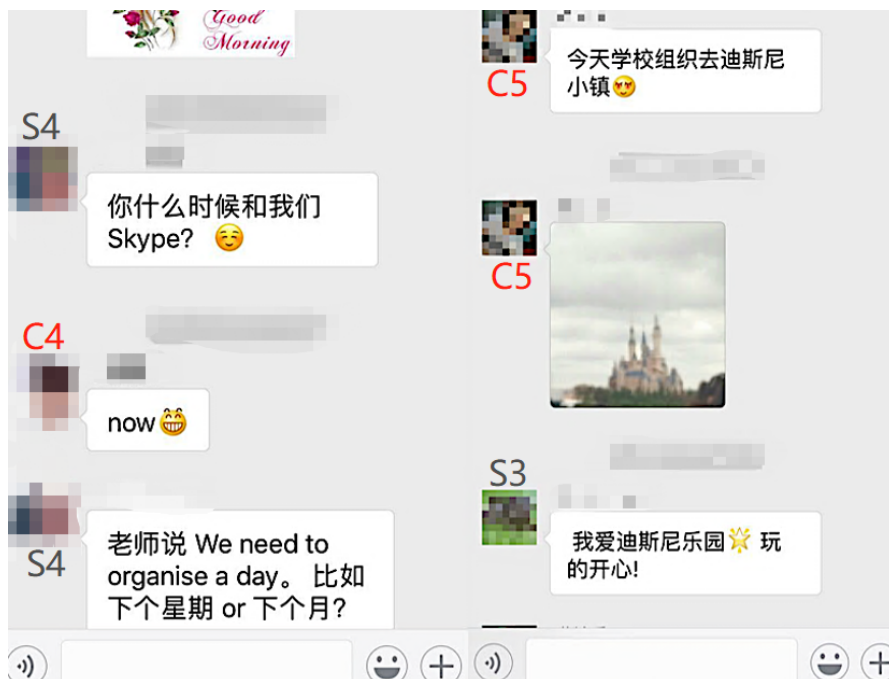
4.3.1.3 Discourse Competence

It was found that stored interaction and chat history contributed to the development of participants’ discourse competence. Discourse Competence is hard to acquire, mainly because CFL learners lack the opportunities to access adequate examples of target language discourse strategies. The present Community of Inquiry provided students with extra opportunities to generate different types of discourse functions meaningfully, which might enhance their Discourse Competence of ICC. In this study, when encountering the native speakers in an online learning community, students performed a wide range of basic language discourse functions, including self-introduction, generating topics, initiating dialogue, sharing their interest and hobbies, establishing a

partnership, and maintaining friendship etc. In real-life intercultural communications, students can benefit from language partners' demonstration of effective Chinese discourse. Moreover, one particular benefit of the existence of an online CoI in this study was that all the shared learning materials and intercultural communication between participants were stored, which can be reviewed, re-listened and revisited by students at any time anywhere, to learn and reflect upon how to produce target language output both more effectively and appropriately.

In this study, Discourse Competence refers to the way how people link their ideas to achieve effective communication across sentences (e.g. written discourse like WeChat messages and Edmodo posts) or utterances (e.g. spoken discourse like Skype video conference or WeChat voice messages). For example, as can be seen in Figure 50, Chinese language partner HW sent a sticker to say “Good Morning” to the big WeChat group, followed by English Student 4 NE asking “你什么时候和我们 Skype? 😊” (When do you Skype with us?). HW then answered “now 😊” expressing that she is available to Skype at that time. NE replied, “老师说 We need to organise a day。比如下个星期 or 下个月?” (meaning: The teacher said we need to organise a day. For example next week or next month?), to suggest a more convenient time for everyone. Student 4 NE demonstrated Discourse Competence by achieving cohesion, where she linked ideas linguistically and made suggestions effectively.

Figure 50 Examples of students' Discourse Competence in WeChat



Another Chinese student C5 YC mentioned that their school organised for them to go to Disneyland so she would not be able to Skype on that day. Then students continued their interaction around the topic of Disneyland in Shanghai (please see the detailed discourse in Table 10). Students demonstrated their Discourse Coherence by linking the meanings of sentences, pictures, and Emojis to achieve effective communication in WeChat. Coherence was observed in the interactions because English students understood that Chinese students were expressing their ‘happiness to visit Disneyland’ and ‘proudness of their hometown’, and therefore reacted accordingly by expressing wishes and praises like ‘玩得开心!’ (meaning: Have a good time!), ‘迪斯尼乐园是伟大的!’ (meaning: Disneyland is great!), and ‘很漂亮!’ (Very beautiful!). In these examples, students used pronouns or repeated nouns (e.g. 你; 你们; 迪斯尼) to refer to who was talking or what has been mentioned previously, which helped them to continue the interaction effectively. Therefore, social networking technology provided and stored adequate input of similar interactions, which created more opportunities for students to practise and develop their Discourse Competence in ICC.

Table 10 Students' discourse history about Disneyland in Shanghai

| | |
|----|---|
| C5 | 今天学校组织去迪斯尼小镇 🍷 [translation: Today our school organised a trip to Disneyland]  |
| S3 | 我爱迪斯尼乐园 🌟 玩的开心! [Translation: I love Disneyland. Have fun!] |
| C5 | Thank you 😊 |
| S3 | 😄 😊 |
| S5 | 迪斯尼乐园是伟大的!!!! [Translation: Disneyland is great !!!!!] |
| C5 | 😊 |
| S5 | 😍 😍 😍 😍 😍 |
| C6 | Yeah, it's interesting 😊 |
| S9 | 你们的学校组织你们去迪斯尼，太 😎 了 [Translation: Your school organised you to go to Disneyland. That's so cool] |
| C6 | 是的，很好玩的呢 😊 [Translation: Yes, it was fun] |
| C5 | 还好啦 😊 人有点多 [Translation: It's okay. There were too many people.] |
| C6 | 人是真挺多的 [Translation: Indeed there were so many people.] |
| S3 | 😍 😊 我真的爱迪斯尼乐园 😊 玩的开心! 😍 [Translation: I really love Disneyland. Have fun!] |
| C5 | 谢谢，英国有迪斯尼吗? [Translation: Thanks. Do you have Disneyland in England?] |
| S3 | 没有，但我希望有! [Translation: Nope, but I hope we do.] |
| C5 | 好的，希望英国将来也会有迪斯尼乐园! [Translation: Okay. I hope in the future there will be a Disneyland in England too.] |
| S3 | 😊 |
| C6 | 上海已建造好。已开放了，来玩吧! :) [Translation: Shanghai's Disneyland is ready. It's open now. Please come and have fun!] |
| S3 | 好的，如果我们去上海，我们去迪斯尼玩:) [Translation: Okay. If we go to Shanghai, we will do.] |

| | |
|----|---|
| C6 | [最高清的上海，颜值已经爆表了！ http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MjM5MDEzMDg0MA==&mid=207558408&idx=2&sn=2386a81927464b1ff3e5449093f5c3dc&scene=1&srcid=0703CEp4dgTef40dpU9WYvSH#rd [Translation: Stunning Shanghai in HD] |
| C6 | 这是我们家乡——上海。美不美？ [Translation: This is our hometown Shanghai. Isn't it gorgeous?] |
| S3 | 很漂亮！ [Translation: So beautiful!] |

As explained by Student 8 AT in the interviews, one thing she did which was particularly useful for developing discourse competence was to “revisit something you have already read just to check whether you have acquired the vocab successfully”. This opportunity to revisit the communication, according to her, helped her to double-check and secure her and development of knowledge and discourse competence. Student 9 EZ also commented about the opportunity of reviewing all the learning resources especially things that were posted a long time ago in the Community of Inquiry:

“Listening and reading things I’ve already read tends to be quite boring, but I love language learning so much so I do it not because I have to, but because I want to. I review the Chinese conversations if I haven’t read them for a very long time. By doing this, I get to refresh my memory and prepare for the new relevant conversation.” (S9)

This was in line with the researcher’s field notes. When conducting Task 4 Media, there was a WeChat discussion about watching videos and cartoons among the group of GCSE Mandarin learners and their language partners. The Shanghai student C9 was very impressed with S9’s Mandarin interaction with her and sent the researcher some screenshots (see Figure 51) to show S9’s discourse competence. It can be observed that S9 talked with C9 (green text box) about a Japanese cartoon movie (i.e. 你的名字 Your

name). The Chinese girl C9 expressed that she was lonely because her friends did not want to watch the movie with her. Student 9 sent text replies and a kiss sticker to make her Shanghai friend feel better, including “Aw:(我和你一起去啊哈哈 (meaning: I’ll go with you) Send me the when and where and I’ll meet you there hahah 你真可爱 (meaning: you are very lovely)”. S9 googled about the movie and sent the screenshot to C9 saying that “现在我也想去 (meaning: Now I want to watch it too) It looks super interesting”. S9 demonstrated her sound discourse competence and care by linking communication and ideas smoothly across sentences, which made the Chinese girl C9 very touched.

Figure 51 An example of S9 EZ’s discourse with C9 in their small WeChat group



Student 4 NE commented about the websites shared to the Community of Inquiry in that “we have links to websites about Chinese culture or festivals which I revisited and read about many times and find out more about celebrations that they have in the country”. Also, Student 5 mentioned that her way to develop discourse competence was to learn from previous chats and see what sorts of communication functions worked well. As

shown in Figure 52, she initiated topics (i.e. favourite football player and a game), asked questions, and expressed feelings to achieve effective communication across sentences. For instance, she politely replied 对不起听到那个 (sorry to hear about that) when Chinese language partners mentioned that a game (i.e. Pokemon Go!) was unavailable in China. Although there were linguistic errors, S5's discourse competence made the conversation flow successfully. Therefore, it can be concluded that the present Community of Inquiry provided students with extra opportunities to learn from the stored chat history to understand effective communication across sentences to develop their discourse competence. Those who wanted to make the most of it could easily use the Community of Inquiry to access and retrieve all the relevant history to improve their ICC.

Figure 52 An example of S5 YE's discourse competence



According to the researcher's fieldnotes, all participants agreed that the present Community of Inquiry: (i) helped them to explore youth cultures (e.g. sending emojis

and Chinese Internet memes); (ii) engaged them in talking about topics people of similar ages were interested in and realizing that despite many differences, they also had many things in common (see Figure 53); (iii) allowed them to communicate with their language partners and peers about Chinese culture and life, which otherwise could not have happened within limited classroom hours; (iv) involved them in meaningful intercultural communication about and reflection upon their own culture and manners; and (v) enabled them to easily access and experience more about modern Chinese culture and life beyond the language. For example, through asking and answering questions, participants and their Chinese language partners effectively exchanged information around Chinese and British language and culture (e.g. 英国平时主食是什么? What is the main food in UK?), requested explanation about previous posts (e.g. 你上次说我们什么时候再 Skype? When shall we have another Skype video conference according to your last post?), requested the teacher's confirmation (e.g. 我们十月份去中国可以吗? Can we go to China in October?), requested language partners' opinions (e.g. 你觉得我们写的中文故事怎么样? What do you think of the Chinese story we wrote?), and requested classmates' suggestions (e.g. 我应该接待谁? Who should I host as a guest?). All the students reported enjoying using social networking technology to talk to Chinese people for genuine real-life communication purposes to develop their discourse competence.

Figure 53 Participants using Mandarin to talk smoothly



In summary, it was observed that the Community of Inquiry provided participants with an archive of real-life Mandarin questions and answers, as well as all the chat history related to the given tasks about Chinese language and culture. In such a Community of Inquiry, participants' cognitive presence (i.e. triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution) and social presence (i.e. emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion) allowed them to engage with real Chinese people and use Mandarin meaningfully and smoothly. Participants developed their linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence through making sentences to write messages, asking and answering questions, sharing written stories, and composing postcards for genuine communication and interaction with their language partners. Compared to the classroom and textbook-based communication, students reported that they were fonder of real-life situational conversations and interactions which was believed to be helpful in developing participants' communicative competence of ICC. Those who wanted to make the most of real-life conversations in the Community of Inquiry could easily access and retrieve all the relevant chat history to reflect on their own performance and improve their Linguistic

Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, and Discourse Competence for ICC (Byram, 1997; 2015).

4.3.2 Developing the core competence to ICC

This section will present and explain how a group of CFL beginner learners used the present Community of Inquiry to develop the core to ICC: Intercultural Competence. Byram (1997:58) concluded that five important aspects of intercultural competence needed to be developed and assessed in foreign language education: 1) Knowledge, 2) Attitudes, 3) Skill of discovery and interaction; 4) Skill of interpreting and relating; and 5) Critical cultural awareness. In terms of how the Community of Inquiry helped to develop their ICC, students reported that this exchange in this study allowed them to see themselves as responsible contributors in a dynamic language and cultural learning environment. Some participants were able to reflect upon their own learning, question the status quo and suggest new solutions (e.g. Students 3 EE and 9 EZ); some were competent to respond without censure and give answers in areas where they feel a sense of achievement (e.g. Students 4 NE and 7 EM); and some were accepting others and absorbing new knowledge through experience to contribute to bigger group cohesion (e.g. Students 1 NB and 2 LD).

In a follow-up focus group interview, students were asked to explain their questionnaire responses and talk about their ICC development in more detail. All the students maintained that the Community of Inquiry allowed them to see and understand the abstract key concepts of Chinese culture and some cultural differences and typical stereotypes in a more effective way. In particular, all of them argued that the Community of Inquiry significantly developed their curiosity and openness towards Chinese culture and their own, and their skills of discovery and interaction and skills of

interpreting and relating have been practised meaningfully. It was pointed out that intercultural competence is central to the development of ICC (Byram, 1997). As observed, all the students developed intercultural competence to some degree by exploring cultural products, practices, and perspectives with language partners, as well as reflecting on their intercultural understanding and stereotypes. The following sections will present the relevant findings under the five aspects of intercultural competence in the present Community of Inquiry.

4.3.2.1 Attitudes

About 20 years ago, the National Curriculum for England started to stress how important it is to help modern foreign language learners to develop positive attitudes towards other language speakers (Byram and Fleming, 1998; Risager, 1998:245). In this Community of Inquiry, it was found that participants clearly demonstrated their positive attitudes, openness, and curiosity to understand and accept differences during the intercultural exchange. Byram (1997:50) had defined “Attitudes” of ICC as “curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own”.

All participants strongly agreed that the social networking based Community of Inquiry had developed their curiosity about Chinese culture and their own culture which is a crucial element of the Attitudes dimension of ICC development (Byram, 1997). For example, Student 6 YL recalled in the focus group interview that:

“Have to be honest here. I hesitated when considering whether to choose Mandarin or not, cause my parents had this impression – ‘It’s Chinese! We won’t be able to support you once you have difficulties.’ People make assumptions

about everything based on how their past experience. But I did okay. I made progress and become more positive and interested in speaking Mandarin in this exchange. My parents wouldn't imagine me using Mandarin to host my Shanghai partner at home. They couldn't be more proud." (S6)

Student 1 NB also commented about how the current Community of Inquiry contributed to his positive change of attitudes in that:

"I used to have relatively negative attitudes towards other cultures. Like when I did French in primary school, it was not fun. Whereas now, I quite enjoy chatting with the Shanghai students. Sometimes I get it wrong and sometimes I get right. They know that I'm trying to learn and they help me. Now I take more interest and want to learn more. I hope I'll be able to use Mandarin when they come to England." (S1)

Likewise, Student 8AT also talked about her becoming more confident when using Mandarin with social networking tools in the Community of Inquiry:

"I used to think that it was really difficult to drawMandarin. Now I just enjoy using pinyin to quickly type Chinese characters. It's amazing how fast you can type a sentence and send it through these social networking tools. You can even input your voice in WeChat. I feel more confident and comfortable using Mandarin now. And it's really exciting to receive Chinese students' replies or comments. But it can get a bit frustrating when they don't reply soon." (S8)

All the participants agreed that the current Community of Inquiry has made the exchange more enjoyable and they were very positive about their intercultural

experience. As Student 3 EE concluded below:

“We don’t always have the confidence to use the language, especially in front of real Chinese people. I have some friends who have been learning Spanish or French for three years. They are still not ready to use the languages. It’s like there is some sort of mental block that British people can’t speak fluent foreign languages. I think sometimes we need to put those blocks down to help ourselves. We have such a great opportunity to talk to Chinese students directly online and we got to do it a hundred percent. This exchange has been a very enjoyable and rewarding experience. I feel that we have a purpose for using the language.” (S3)

Also, all participants found the exchange enjoyable and positive because they had full access to all the multimodal features of social networking tools to experience various sorts of communication in this study. The multimodal features contributed to participants’ openness and curiosity. According to the researcher’s field notes, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners have been continuously using the multimodality of social networking tools to experiment Mandarin and explore more about Chinese culture and the Chinese language partners. Student 4 concluded how the multimodal social networking tools contributed to their attitudes and rewarding experience in that:

“Our ultimate desire is to use these social networking tools to learn and improve. So we embraced challenges of the text messages and the video calls to use Mandarin as much as possible. A lot of the times we made mistakes but we were still positive. We pushed ourselves through the setbacks. Our language partners were really kind to us and they were great in sending us all sorts of links and resources to help us gain an understanding of China, their language, and culture.

Their Mandarin texts and audios can be intense but extremely rewarding.” (S4)

It was considered that students may also have developed their positive intercultural attitudes elsewhere outside of Mandarin classes. For example, they could have gained general openness and curiosity from media or other language courses. However, in terms of intercultural communicative competence in Mandarin, it was believed that the present Community of Inquiry contributed most to their positive attitudes. Participants reflected that they used to regard linguistic skills as the heart of GCSE Mandarin learning, especially when intercultural goals were set apart by other MFL teachers and their parents. According to the researcher’s field notes, during parents meetings, all the parents said that compared to other subjects, they knew nothing at all about the Mandarin language let alone the Chinese culture. They mentioned that they can get to read and try to help with other European languages but not with Mandarin. They appreciated the present research where their children could develop the willingness to be more positive about other languages and cultures. This exchange project was reported to “help our kids to see own country and people through the eyes of Chinese kids and think back about our own culture”.

In this exchange project, the Community of Inquiry provided easier access to various up to date information about China and created extra opportunities to interact with real people from the target culture had raised participants’ interest in exploring more about Chinese culture and their own culture. In the focus group interview, all participants reported that the Chinese language partners have been encouraging them to learn more about Mandarin and Chinese culture, which was believed to have increased the group of GCSE Mandarin learners’ attitudes, motivation, and engagement in this exchange project. According to the researcher’s field notes, the participants and Shanghai students have sent many handwritten postcards through WeChat to each other. All

participants informed the researcher that they were very touched when receiving encouragements, support, and immediate positive feedback from their Shanghai friends and felt that they were part of a warm community (see Appendix 18 for a brief list of positive feedback from target language partners). It was observed that all participants became more positive towards learning Mandarin and exploring Chinese culture and the immediate positive feedback from target language partners boosted the group of CFL beginner learners' confidence. For example, as can be seen in Figure 54, Chinese language partners introduced the features of Chinese culture and asked the GCSE Mandarin learners to keep in touch as below:

“中华文化是特别博大精深的。所以你要好好学习汉语，通过这一个桥梁进一步认识中华文化。希望以后有机会能去英国，多多了解你们的文化。 [translation]Chinese culture is particularly extensive and profound. So please learn Mandarin well so that you can further explore Chinese culture through this channel. Hope to have the chance to visit the UK and learn more about your culture in the future.” (C1)

“你可以来中国游览中国的大好河山。……中国的古诗十分优美。……中文十分有趣，对吧？祝你早日学会中文，加油！ [translation]You can come to visit China's great rivers and mountains. Chinese ancient poetry is very beautiful. Chinese is very interesting, isn't it? I hope you can acquire Chinese as soon as possible. Keep going!” (C2)

“我想回答你的问题。中国是一个拥有千年文化的文明古国，不但风景优美，而且中国人十分热情好客，欢迎你来中国！ [translation]I want to answer your question. China is an ancient civilized country with thousands of

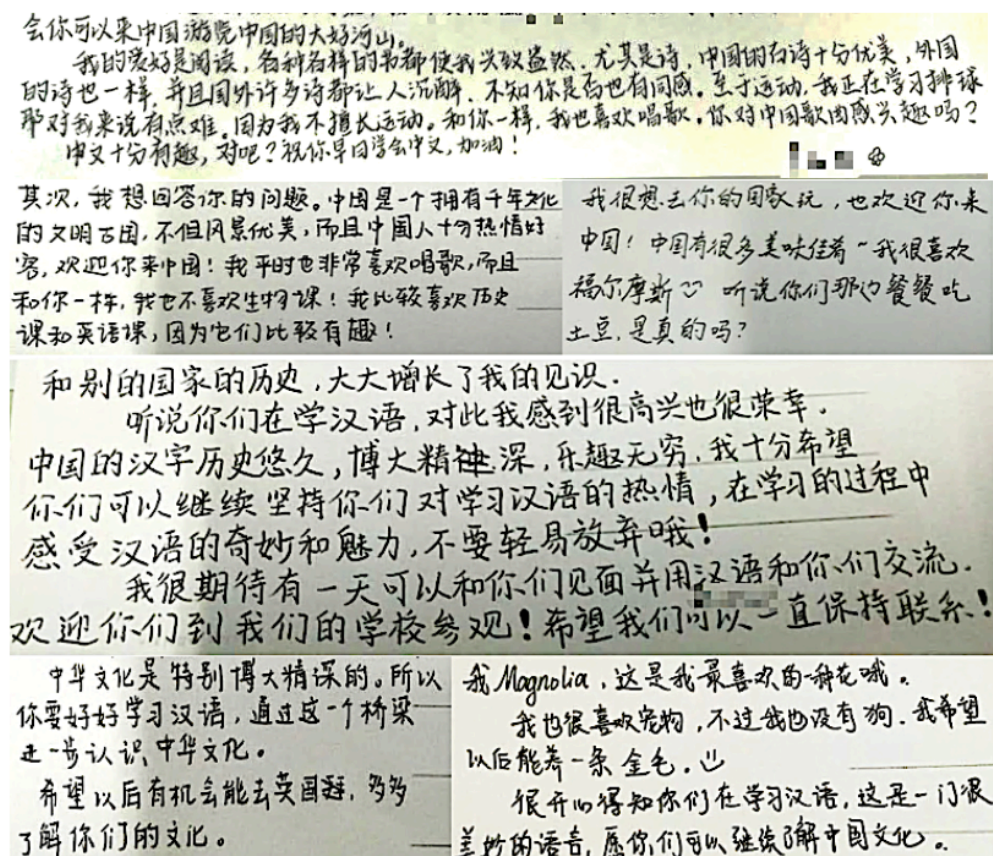
years of culture. Not only is the scenery beautiful, but also the Chinese people are very hospitable. Welcome to China!” (C3)

“很开心得知你们在学习汉语，这是一门很美妙的语言，愿你可以继续了解中国文化。[translation]I’m glad to hear that you are learning Mandarin. It’s a wonderful language. I hope you can continue to get to know more about Chinese culture.” (C4)

“我很想去你的国家玩，也欢迎你来中国！中国有很多美味佳肴。[translation]I’d like to visit your country, and welcome you to China too! There are many delicious dishes in China.” (C5)

“听说你们再学汉语，对此我感到很高兴也很荣幸。中国的汉字历史悠久，博大精深，乐趣无穷。我十分希望你们可以继续坚持你们对学习汉语的热情，在学习的过程中感受汉语的奇妙和魅力，不要轻易放弃哦！我很期待有一天可以和你们见面并用汉语和你们交流。欢迎你们到我们的学校参观！希望我们可以一直保持联系！[translation] I heard that you are learning Mandarin and I am so pleased and honoured. The history of Chinese characters is long, profound and interesting. I really hope that you can continue to adhere to your enthusiasm for learning Chinese to feel the wonder and charm of Chinese in the process of learning. Please do not give up easily! I look forward to meeting you one day and communicating with you in Chinese. Welcome to our school! I hope we can always keep in touch!”(C9)

Figure 54 Examples of language partners' encouragements



In this exchange project, students reported that both sides “had fun”, showed positive attitudes, and maintained a harmonious relationship even though they made grammatical mistakes. Participants agreed that their target language partners were very generous in providing them with immediate attention and positive feedback regarding their Mandarin use even if it was translanguaging and code-switching between Chinese characters, pinyin, and English. They reported that they received extra praise and encouragement for using Mandarin in this exchange project. The group of CFL beginner learners understood that communication is not only about being able to make grammatically correct sentences. The real contact between participants and their language partners made the exchange enjoyable and raised their openness and curiosity to other cultures. It was found that this exchange has helped participants to see how the Chinese language is used among real Chinese people and explore the perspectives of

the young people of the same age. Moreover, students mentioned that they and their parents were not as positive about Chinese people and China because they were very influenced by the western media which always “see the negative aspects of China”. It was pointed out that the Community of Inquiry in this exchange project has allowed them to see the media reports more critically because their language partners have raised alternative perspectives of development and changes of life in China.

However, in this study, there were also elements that affect participants’ attitudes negatively. For example, Student 8 AT explained that “although I enjoyed communicating with the language partners, I felt it’s quite annoying that Chinese students do not talk often or sometimes talk in English only”. Likewise, Student 5 YE mentioned that it took a long process for Chinese people to reply, and she disliked it “when Chinese people don’t type in Chinese”. She explained that “I expected a lot more Chinese conversation, but Chinese people get not a lot of time to write back. They don’t speak in more Mandarin.” Therefore, it can also be summarised that participants’ attitudes may be influenced when their language partners did not reply often or only replied in English. Overall, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners had developed a positive attitude (i.e. openness and curiosity) towards the target culture although they expected that distant language partners could reply more often in more Chinese. In the present Community of Inquiry, participants used their social presence (i.e. emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion) and cognitive presence (i.e. triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution) to develop their curiosity and openness towards the target culture and maintained a positive relationship with language partners, which is an important part of Attitudes of ICC (Byram, 2015).

4.3.2.2 Knowledge

Literature has pointed out that there is little agreement to the question - what knowledge would be needed to understand another culture in foreign language education. In foreign language education, knowledge normally refers to not only the target language linguistic system but also the knowledge of social norms of target culture in everyday life (Witte, 2014). In this study, apart from obtaining the Chinese linguistic knowledge, students faced many opportunities to develop their Chinese cultural knowledge by discovering modern Chinese life. In the absence of a common definition of the term culture, Byram's (1997:35) ICC model has divided knowledge of intercultural competence in two main categories: 1) recognising both cultures' social groups and relevant products, practices, and perspectives; 2) knowing the process of individual and society level interactions. As Chinese culture is such a broad topic, this case study aimed to encourage participants to use a Community of Inquiry to explore all the possible knowledge of people's interaction, attitudes, and values to form a better understanding of the target culture and own culture. In this study, it was evident that the group of GCSE Mandarin learners have all obtained more knowledge and understanding of both social groups to some degree, as well as the processes of interaction at individual and group levels, which were key elements of the development of Knowledge in Intercultural Competence (Byram, 1997). According to the researcher's field notes, the majority of unplanned topics indicated that the group of GCSE Mandarin students showed curiosity and openness to get to know more about the daily life of the Chinese youth (e.g. pop culture, media, living environment, food, pets, and hobbies).

Despite that proposing a universal definition for culture would be impossible, it was believed that human behaviour is an important aspect of it and culture is related to the values, beliefs, and norms that are shared by groups of people which distinguish them from other groups. For one, some of these values and norms may be implicit and

therefore not evident to someone from another group, for instance, the unwritten norms of business etiquette, ranging from forms of address to dress code and punctuality. For another, the individuals within the groups are not necessarily fully aware of all the values, beliefs, and norms that they hold and follow. At the beginning of this exchange project, it was explained to participants that language partners should not be regarded and expected as ‘experts’ who could teach them all aspects of cultural knowledge that they needed. The present Community of Inquiry was designed to help them to ask questions related to the given tasks to gain more information about the target culture to build their own internalised knowledge system. It was hoped that the interactions with language partners would serve as a catalyst for the group of GCSE Mandarin learners to explore more about China, become reflective on the target culture and own culture, and construct the kind of knowledge that they need to really understand both cultures. The data gathered in this exchange project suggested that the present Community of Inquiry made a significant contribution to the group of GCSE Mandarin students’ knowledge of both cultures. For example, when asked about what knowledge she has gained from this exchange, Student 8 AT answered that her language partner has helped her to obtain new information and perspective that could not be obtained from the textbook:

“In task5 (Where I live), we learnt that China is a huge country and they do not necessarily speak Mandarin in all parts of China. There are different dialects and cultural differences within China too. When we were talking about the Chinese houses and rooms, my partner told me that they live in a very small flat in the big city Shanghai. My partner is now studying in Shanghai but her family are from a small village in another province. She told me that we may feel shocked but we need to see the poor villages and rural areas to really understand China. The villages she described are very different from what our villages are. She

was lucky to be accepted by our link school, but I wonder what's going on in the rural part of China and what happens to people in the countryside who were not as lucky." (S8)

In the focus group interview, participants agreed strongly to each other that "the Chinese culture is often reflected in the Mandarin interactions, in each character and word that language partners used." They believed that the Mandarin language plays a key role in the learning and understanding of social groups and cultural practices of both cultures. Also, they maintained that the present Community of Inquiry made them aware that there is a lot to learn about youth and their lifestyle in both countries. They felt strongly that discussions and communication about the given tasks in the Community of Inquiry were learning about various cultural products, practices, and perspectives. All the participants were positive about developing the Knowledge aspect of ICC in the exchange. They explained that the current Community of Inquiry has enabled them to learn and respect the target social group's ways of life, their beliefs, traditions, and customs. They concluded that language partners had taught them that misunderstandings are culturally related and they could always learn more about the Chinese habits and rules of life before visiting China to avoid misunderstandings. As Student 9EZ mentioned, "Developing knowledge of the Chinese culture is really important because even you can speak Mandarin well, if you behave inappropriately, nobody wants to talk to you. So it's great that we have done this exchange and learnt how to interact with the Chinese group." Student 3 EE also mentioned that she gained new knowledge about China after communicating with the language partners:

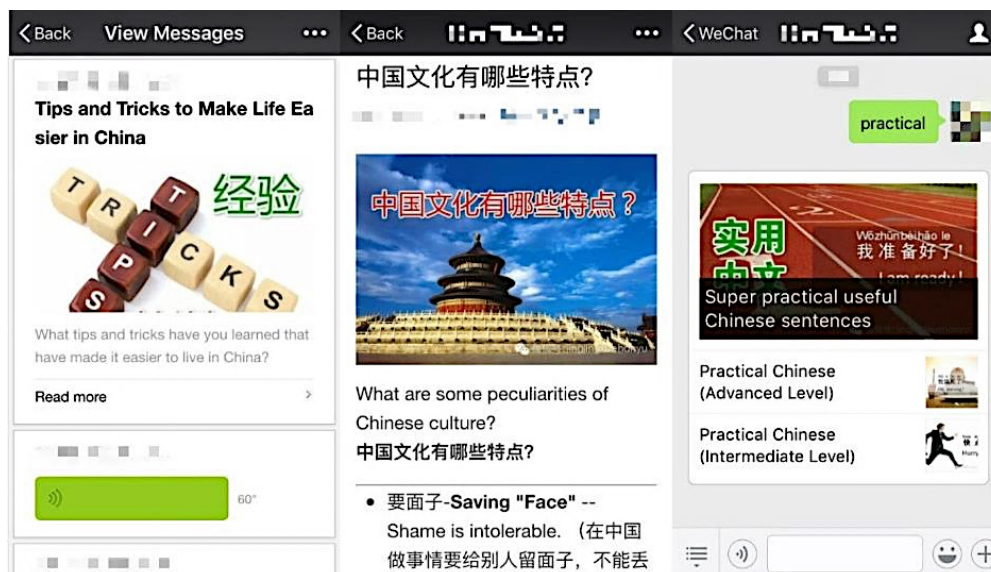
"I think even when we forget everything, what still remains is our cultural knowledge. What's important is not remembering the facts but understanding the Chinese from knowing their products, practices, and perspectives as Miss

said. There are lots of angles we can see and talk about China now. China is a very big country, which is very diverse and has amazing food! I now like the idea that different regions and provinces of China are famous for different things such as food. I think China is a very beautiful country, full of beautiful landscapes and buildings.” (S3)

Student 7 EM also commented that the present Community of Inquiry has helped them to gain more knowledge about the key characteristics of Chinese culture. She mentioned in the focus group interview that language partners had taught them “关系 (connections) are important in China as Chinese people need to build relationship with others to make lives easier. And favours will be repaid”. She also reported that they have followed some WeChat official accounts (see Figure 55) to learn more about Chinese culture and Chinese people. For instance, she has learnt that “面子 (face) is how you are seen”, and explained that “some Chinese people are indirect because they respect other people’s face and try their best not to let others lose any reputation or privilege in public- to save face”. She pointed out that they have gained knowledge about the stereotypes of both cultures:

“We have learnt from this exchange that Chinese people eat differently and their communication style is different from us. But it would be a stereotype if we think all Chinese people just eat rice. Chinese language partners held some stereotypes about English culture too, like many of them believe all British people like tea and are posh which is not true. I think stereotypes are sometimes inevitable but they should be avoided.” (S7)

Figure 55 Participants obtaining knowledge from WeChat official accounts



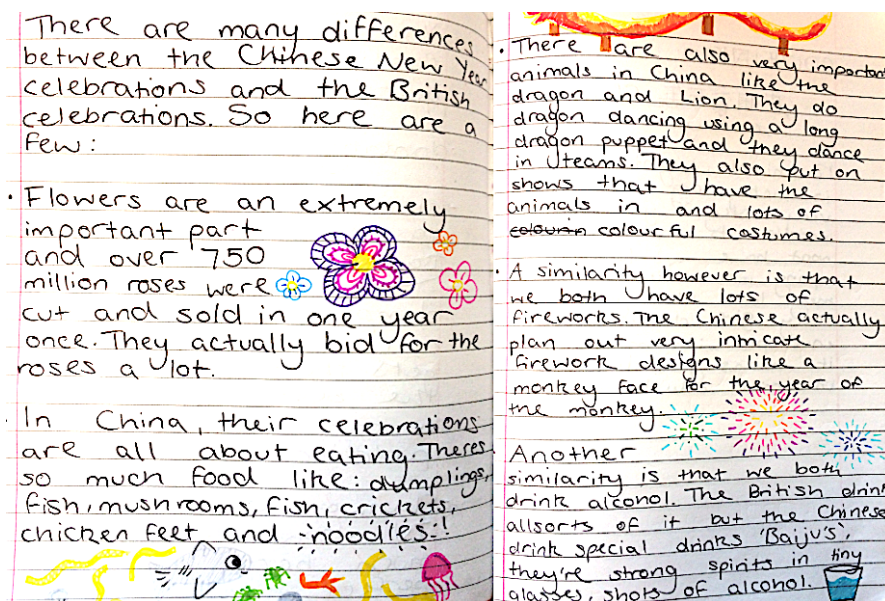
All participants agreed that apart from the group chats with language partners, WeChat official accounts did help them to explore more about up to date Chinese language and culture. According to the researcher's field notes, not only did the Shanghai students shared links of WeChat official accounts to the group, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners have learnt how to follow and receive WeChat official account updates. For instance, Student 4 EM obtained knowledge about Chinese New Year and Christmas from the WeChat official accounts and by making inquiries with language partners (see Figure 56) and then shared her understanding to the social networking group (see Figure 57). Also, Student 1 NB appreciated the knowledge shared and learnt in the present Community of Inquiry:

“We get to know more about what Chinese students are really interested in and learnt about the target culture. The links our partners shared were often in both English and Chinese. They were very informative and fun. It's great that everyone is sharing what they know so there is always something to learn in the Community of Inquiry.” (S1)

Figure 56 S4 asking about knowledge about Chinese New Year



Figure 57 S4 sharing her knowledge about Chinese New Year



In summary, it was observed that participants' Cognitive Presence and Social Presence in the Community of Inquiry contributed to their development of Knowledge of ICC most, including using strategies like Triggering event, Exploration, Integration, Resolution, Emotional expression, Open communication, and group cohesion. The researcher's Teaching Presence was also helpful in terms of instructional management, building understanding, and direction instruction and feedback to the group of CFL beginner learners. It can be concluded that the group of GCSE Mandarin learners had

accumulated more knowledge about the Chinese society and ways of life in China through purposeful communication and negotiation around unplanned topics that emerged from the given tasks. Participants obtained more knowledge about contemporary China and reflected on the key characteristics of Chinese culture that was more interesting for British youth through interacting with a group of Chinese youth. However, a Community of Inquiry was insufficient to teach all the knowledge and culture. Participants also suggested that they expect more opportunities in lesson time to explore more about Chinese history and geography to develop their knowledge more systematically in the future.

4.3.2.3 Skills of interpreting and relating

There were inevitable overlaps among the developments of attitudes, knowledge, and skills of ICC (Byram, 1997). It was argued that to obtain more knowledge about the target culture, learners would need to have the appropriate skills to relate the target culture to one's own culture, and to interpret the target group's "social and cultural practices from an insider's perspective" (Roberts et al., 2001). Likewise, it was pointed out that language learners need to develop various skills (e.g. skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction) to gain knowledge and interpret information about the target culture because it is not possible for the instructors to teach all the knowledge that students would need (Byram, 2002:12). In particular, Byram et al. (1994:45) suggested that it is crucial to help learners develop skills of relating and comparing because this would enable them to see how culturally different others perceive their home culture and realise what they regard as "normal" and "natural" could be very culturally affected. Skills of interpreting and relating had been defined as the ability to interpret documents and events from the target culture and relate it to one's own culture (Byram, 1997:52).

In the present Community of Inquiry, it was found that participants have demonstrated and developed their skills of relating and interpreting through discussions about given topics and unplanned topics. For example, as can be seen in Figure 58, the group of GCSE Mandarin students explored one of the most important events to Chinese people - the Spring Festival and related it to Christmas in England. Student 4 NE initiated the unplanned topic of Christmas, saying that it was exciting (She likes Christmas because it was festival and fun. She had new and comfortable clothes and had turkey and lots of pudding. She loves Christmas music). Then her partner C4 mentioned that there is no Christmas break in China and they have just completed the final exams but still have a lot of homework to do. Student 3 EE asked again do whether they have Christmas in China and C3 answered that yes but without the holiday break and huge celebrations. She also expressed that she wanted to visit the UK to spend Christmas together with British students. Then Student 7 EM, Student 6 LY, Student 2 LD invited Shanghai students to visit. S7 asked whether they are excited about the Chinese Spring Festival and what they do during Chinese New Year, followed by Chinese students' introduction of Spring Festival and typical activities during the winter holiday in China.

Figure 58 Participants relating Spring Festival to Christmas



When asked about their views on and experience of developing skills of interpreting and relating, Student 8 commented that these skills helped her to have a better appreciation of both cultures:

“I felt extremely lucky that the Chinese language partners are talking to us. I think it’s necessary to develop skills of interpreting and relating because when we learn a language we are actually learning to build our own understanding and interpretation of that culture. Also, it helped with relating Chinese culture to our home culture as well. I developed my ICC in this project as I understand more about Chinese culture and how to better make contact with a different social group. I think I’ve developed a real sense of my own intercultural identity too. I mean I now have a better appreciation and understanding of both Chinese culture and British culture, and both communities too.” (S8)

Also, students reported that they felt excited to communicate about the similarities and differences between their own lives and their language partners’ lives. Student 3 mentioned that the present Community of Inquiry helped them to compare both countries which was believed to have developed their Skills of interpreting and relating of ICC:

“I’ve developed my skills of interpreting and relating when we were comparing China with Britain. My partner said China is a huge country with 50 something minority ethnic groups. I learnt that compared to China, England is very small. They have many dialects too. My partner and her family speak both Mandarin and Shanghai dialect. I guess it’s similar to the UK in terms of diversity of people and languages. We also discussed air pollution and water

problem. So they cannot drink the tap water directly in China. Shanghai is fine, but if you go to Beijing you need to wear a special mask. Compared to them, we are very lucky to live in England. I think that China is still quite closed and isolated. Apparently, they cannot use Snapchat and Instagram as we do. I hope there will be more contacts and exchanges between China and the world.”

Student 7 EM revealed that “I liked being able to use my skills of relating to get to know more about the real Chinese people because their lives are different to ours”. Similarly, Student 6 YL added that:

“I would like to learn more about Chinese culture because we got the opportunity to speak to people our age who are similar to us but have different traditions. All of the students in China and England can have conversations on different topics, and we choose new things we want to learn and talk about. So that’s something.” (S6)

Participant’s voice about developing their skills of interpreting and relating was in line with the researcher’s field notes. One example was that students used their skills of relating to talk about differences in terms of homework when doing Task 2 (School). As seen in Figure 59, Chinese student C6 JL posted about Chinese homework and asked a question about British homework. English student 9 EZ replied in Chinese that ‘你好！～有时我没有作业，但是有时我们有很多的作业！我党的我比你没有很多的作业。你们学习非常好！👉😊’ which means ‘Hi, sometimes I don’t have homework, but sometimes we have loads of homework. I think compared to you, I have less homework. You work hard!’ Then C6 said Chinese students will normally spend 5 to 6 hours on homework every day. EZ commented ‘omg 😊that’s crazy! Such a long time, you guys must be tired 很久, 你们一定很累了’. C6 replied that as a result, some

students would sleep during lessons. Another Chinese student C9 YH somehow disagreed with C6 and argued that actually few students will sleep in lesson time in China. English student S9 EZ posted ‘Really?! 😊 Awe! In England that would never work, the classrooms are too small haha 真的吗?! 在英国这个不会, 教室太小哈哈 😊’. According to participants, communicating about differences of both communities made it easier to understand the task and topics in the textbook and allowed them to develop their skills of interpreting and relating of Chinese language, culture, and everyday life.

For example, the topic of homework was something that they were truly interested in. As seen in Figure 60, the GCSE Mandarin students and language partners compared their volume and types of homework and related doing homework to both cultures on WeChat (about one year after their homework conversation on Edmodo). According to the researcher’s field notes, participants’ communication about homework and schools helped them to interpret the information they read online about critiques against educational systems in China.

Figure 59 Students' interpreting and relating about homework on Edmodo

C6

I want to ask everybody, how long do you need to finish homework everyday 😊我想问各位每天用多长时间完成作业? because we have so many subjects need to learn, and every teacher give us many homework 😊因为我们有许多科目需要去学习, 每个老师都会给我们布置很多家庭作业。so I am very curious, students in England have how many homework everyday 😊所以我很好奇, 英国的学生每天有多少作业
🙏🙏thanks for your answers!

3 Likes

7 Comments

Share



S9

你好! ~ 有时我没有作业, 但是有时我们有很多的作业! 我党的我比你没有很多的作业。你们学习非常好! 🙏😊
Hello!~ Sometimes i dont have homework, but sometimes i have alot of homework! I think that compared to you, i dont get much homework. You all study so well! 🙏😊
Like • Reply • Oct 09, 2015, 5:09 AM



C6

oh we have to do homework everyday for 5~6hours 😊我们每天有五 六个小时的时间必须要做作业
Like • Reply • Oct 09, 2015, 5:14 PM



S9

omg 😊 thats crazy! such a long time, you guys must be tired 很久, 你们一定很累了
Like • Reply • Oct 09, 2015, 5:32 PM



C6

oh yes, so some students will sleep in class 😊是的 所以有些学生会会在课堂上睡觉
Like • Reply • Oct 09, 2015, 9:14 PM



C9

很少会睡觉
few students will sleep in class
Like • Reply • Oct 09, 2015, 10:03 PM



S9

Really?! 😊 Awe! In England that would never work, the classrooms are too small haha 真的吗?! 在英国这个不会, 教室太小 哈哈 😊
Like • Reply • Oct 09, 2015, 10:05 PM



S2

🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏
Like • Reply • Oct 09, 2015, 10:51 PM

Figure 60 Students' interpreting and relating about homework on WeChat



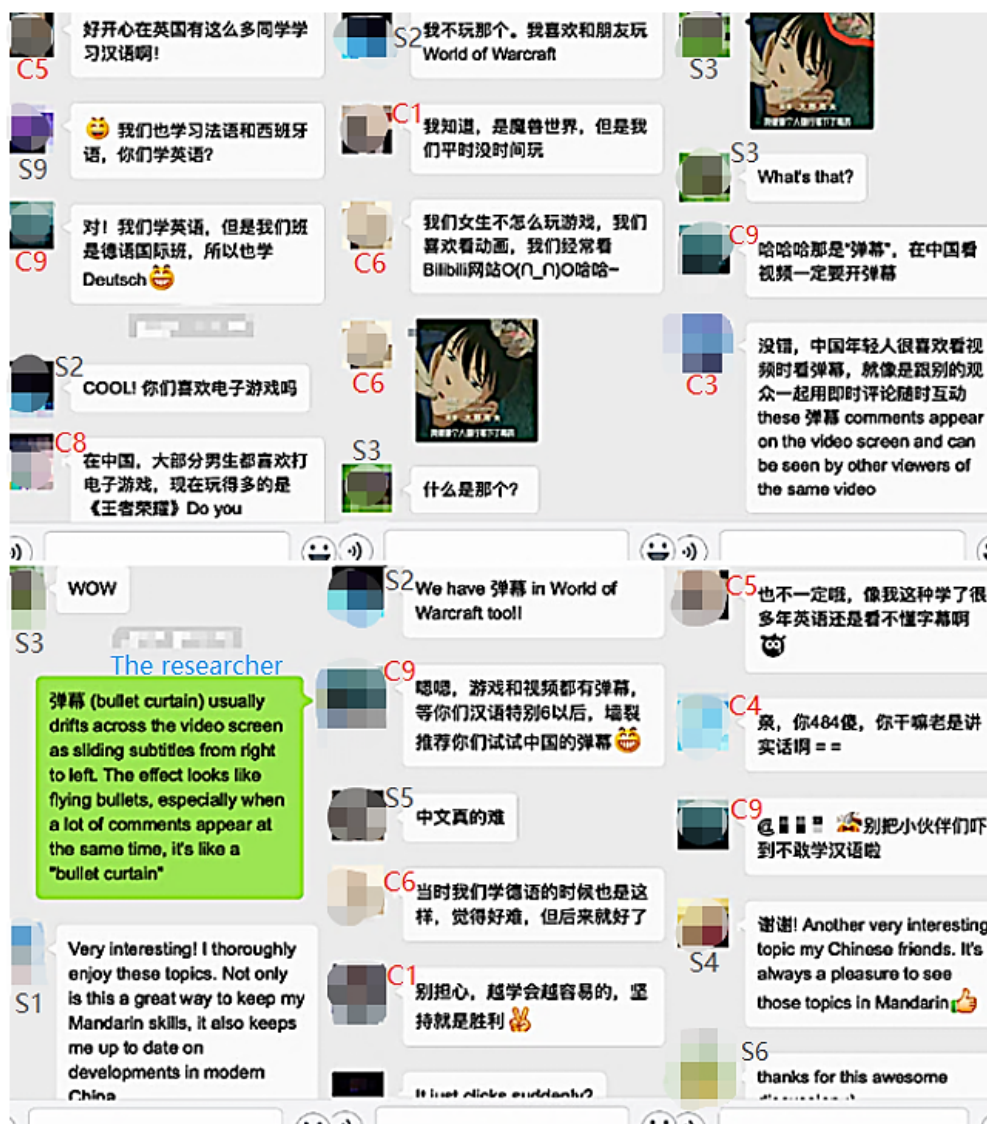
In this exchange project, before answering participants' questions, they were asked to spend some time doing research on the issues they read by themselves and compare their findings during Mandarin laptop lessons. The researcher and the language partners were there to encourage them to think about how to analyse, interpret, and relate issues in the target culture to one's own culture, not to give away any answers directly. The finding of this study also suggested that skills of interpreting and relating should not be taken for granted in CFL beginner learners so support from the teacher was needed. In addition, the researcher used teaching presence to guide and support the group of GCSE Mandarin learners to interpret conflicting information and sensitive issues to help students avoid stereotypes from documents and other recourses online. In the present Community of Inquiry, participants used their social presence (i.e. emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion) and cognitive presence (i.e. triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution) to develop their skills of interpreting and relating for ICC (Byram, 2015).

4.3.2.4 Skills of discovery and interaction

Skills of discovery and interaction refer to language learners' ability to acquire new information about the target culture and the competence to communicate and interact with members of other social groups (Byram, 1997). It was argued that the skills of discovery and interaction include the ability to extract others' cultural values and perspective from an interlocutor (Byram, 1997:52). In this case study, the participants demonstrated their skills of discovery and interaction through interacting with interlocutors to get to know about the target cultural products and practices and recognise their perspectives. For example, as can be seen in Figure 61, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners used WeChat messages to interact with Shanghai students about learning languages and playing video games. They changed the topic to Chinese youth watching videos with 弹幕 (dàn mù: barrage) on online when a Shanghai girl C6 shared a screenshot of a cartoon video she was watching. They started talking about what 弹幕 is, followed by the researcher's reply of an English introduction to the group. Then GCSE students talked about the difficulty of understanding Mandarin 弹幕. The Chinese students encouraged them to keep learning and the partners sent their appreciation of these fun topics. The researcher was amazed and impressed by how well the intercultural communication seemed to flow between participants and their language partners. To conclude, the group of CFL beginners discovered something that was interesting to Chinese youth which would not be discovered in the Edexcel textbook. They used Mandarin as much as possible to interact with their friends about these unplanned topics. The current Community of Inquiry had enabled participants to discover more about the target culture by employing their cognitive presence (i.e. triggering event, exploration, integration) and social presence (i.e. emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion). The researcher's teaching

presence was present by using direct instruction and building understanding.

Figure 61 An example of participants' skills of discovery and interaction



When asked about their opinions on developing skills of discovery and interaction in a Community of Inquiry, Student 3 EE commented that it is important no matter what language they take:

“In our school, we already have French and Spanish and Italian. Spanish is also emphasised a lot more than Mandarin, cause it is the most widely spoken foreignlanguage. No matter what language we chose for GCSE, we are

developing skills of interaction to discover more about other cultures. I did some French when I was in primary school, and it did help with my intercultural understanding as I learnt more about the French culture. Likewise, I have been developing my intercultural skills in Mandarin to interact with my language partners in this Community of Inquiry.” (S3)

Similarly, Student 9 EZ maintained that she developed skills of discovery and interaction to prepare herself to be global citizens for the future work and life:

“I like the fact that our school aims to create global citizens. I want to develop my skills of discovery and interaction alongside my Mandarin skills. So this Community of inquiry was extremely helpful cause they prepare us to be able to interact with people from a different cultural background to discover modern China successfully.” (S9)

Student 8 talked about how the Community of Inquiry helped them to learn how to interact with others even when they did not travel abroad:

“Normally those who did not travel abroad knew less about other cultures or countries. For example, me and my family never tried frogs’ legs until we went to France. But I think it’s amazing that before going to China, we did actually use this Community of Inquiry to learn something about our language partners and China. We discovered more about Chinese youth from what was told by our Shanghai friends and also explored ways to interact with them. For example, in task 2, from the way they talked about school and homework, I learnt that they don’t really have leisure time. Even if they were on holiday, they have to catch up work and attend extra lessons. Their break is either the flag ceremony or

morning excise. That's not exactly a break" (S8)

Another example of discovering more about modern China life is that one Chinese student LZ posted on Edmodo in both English and Chinese about how she liked planting flowers with one picture of the flower she planted, and then English students joined the conversation (see Figure 62). In this case, students became curious about this language partner's post and then discovered the fact that in big cities like Shanghai, many modern Chinese people have to live in small flats and can only plant flowers on the balcony. As a result, some students started to explore more about the difference between British and Chinese modern living environments, in order to prepare themselves and language partners for their future exchange trips. They initiated discussion about the living environment in China and developed an increasing interest in Chinese building and architecture. The group of GCSE Mandarin learners became more curious about the Chinese language partner's post and intended to discover more about Chinese living environments. When doing Task 5 (Where I live), participants were asked to research the differences between the British and Chinese houses, flats, and rooms. They interacted with Shanghai students to build their interpretations and understanding of Confucian ethics 孝 (filiality) in Chinese traditional buildings and ways of living. They also reflected on and compared the differences between the Chinese courtyards and English houses to reflect on the lifestyles of both countries (see Figure 63). They negotiated the possibility of visiting and staying with Chinese language partners, to see the modern buildings in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai and traditional architecture in places like Suzhou. At the end of this project, all participants successfully visited their language partners in China and observed a wide variety of Chinese buildings for real. To conclude, students demonstrated their development of ICC in terms of their skills of discovery and interaction when using social networking tools to discuss the target culture, as well as to reflect upon their own culture (Byram, 1997).

Figure 62 Students discovering about modern Chinese life on Edmodo

I like planting although I am not pretty good at planting. And these flowers look beautiful, don't they? I plant them myself. **C2**
 Chinese (中文版) 我喜欢种植东西，尽管我并不是特别擅长种植物。并且，这些花看起来很漂亮不是吗？我可是自己种的呢～



8 Likes

9 Comments

Share

C2

Hmm.....I think that I am not good at taking photos.
 (Chinese: 我认为我并不擅长拍照。)

Like • Reply • May 14, 2016, 8:42 PM

S3

很美丽! very beautiful! 🌸

Like • Reply • May 15, 2016, 1:13 AM



S9

你自己种植了吗？哇太漂亮了。我只可以种植杂草 哈哈 😊 you planted them yourself? wow so pretty! i can only plant weeds hahah

Like • Reply • May 15, 2016, 3:36 AM



C2

Thank you. Actually it is easy to plant these flowers. You just need to water them on time. And I think that you can plant them by yourself, too.
 (Chinese: 谢谢～。其实种植这些花并不困难。你只需要及时浇水即可。并且我想你也可以做到自己种植它～)

Like • Reply • May 15, 2016, 7:50 AM



C2

Thank you. 谢谢～ (≧▽≦)

Like • Reply • May 15, 2016, 7:59 AM



S2

They're very big

Like • Reply • May 18, 2016, 2:20 AM



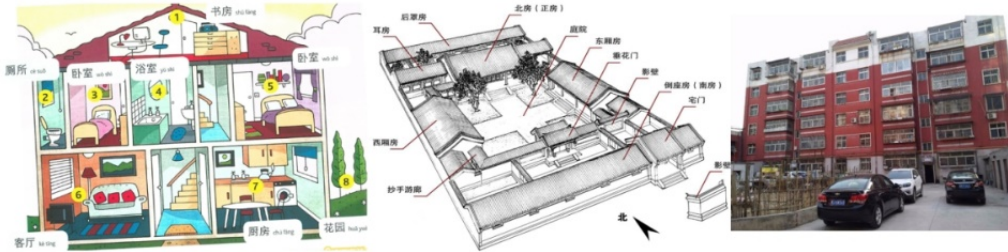
S4

很漂亮
 They're very pretty :-) ♥

Like • Reply • May 18, 2016, 2:37 AM

Figure 63 Students presenting the discovery of Chinese and English living

Comparison: where do people live



The structure of traditional Chinese buildings shows the complexity of a family.
Confucius ethnics: 孝 a virtue of respect to parents and ancestors



a young person carrying an elderly

In the current Community of Inquiry, the group of CFL beginner learners could choose freely to explore and discover topics that they felt comfortable with and interested in to develop their skills of discovery and interaction. Student 3 EE commented about the familiarity of topics and explained that she was less anxious about talking to real Chinese people in a Community of Inquiry because:

“We chose our own topics so we understand what we are listening to or reading. If we know nothing about or are not familiar with the topics, the native materials are going to be very hard. Sometimes, I sort of already knew what my exchange partner is going to post, I just wanted to see how she says it and learn from it to develop my skills of interaction.” (S3)

Also, Student 4 NE commented that familiar topics made it much easier for her to discover more about the target culture because:

“We could easily speak about our hobbies, and sports that we enjoyed, and our local facilities that were around us and our house and pets and family and things

like that. So there are good conversation topics for us to develop our skills of discovery and interaction.” (S4)

Apart from the familiar topics in the Community of Inquiry, the fact that there were fewer error corrections in social networking chats encouraged participants to communicate and interact more often with their peers and language partners, which was believed to have promoted the development of their skills of discovery and interaction. As can be seen in Figure 64 below, Student 9 EZ had a conversation about music in Chinese with her language partner C9YH. The first post of EZ was long with some errors. For example, she used 我不可以好 (literally: I may not good) to say 我弹得也许不好 ‘I may not be good at it’. And she mistakenly used 正常的人 to say 普通人 or 一般人 (ordinary people), and 歌们 to express the plural forms of 歌 (meaning: song). But these mistakes did not affect S9’s communication with C9. And C9 figured out what S9’s first post really means in English. As a result, C9 did not correct S9’s errors and continued the conversation by talking about Jazz music, old songs, and Michael Jackson with S9, which was believed to have encouraged S9’s continuous engagement in the Community of Inquiry. Also, S9 reported in the follow-up interview that she became more motivated and confident to learn and use Mandarin to interact with others and discover more about China because she saw the possibility of herself using the language effectively without being corrected instantly. The researcher normally provided feedback regarding common errors during Mandarin lessons to support participants to improve.

Figure 64 S9's conversation about music with C9 on Edmodo



It can be concluded that the fact there were few error corrections early on in the Community of Inquiry allowed students to feel confident to interact more with the Chinese students. Almost all other students explained in follow up interviews that they would be discouraged and more nervous to continue their discovery and interaction if their language partners pointed out their mistakes too often and too early. In the questionnaires, students mentioned that people pointing out their mistakes made them feel under more pressure, and not many error corrections was a more relaxing experience. For instance, Student 3 EE reported that she used WeChat Moments to share her daily life and discover more about the language partners' daily life (see Appendix 16 for examples of participants' WeChat Moments), and would feel under more pressure if language partners corrected her errors harshly:

“I used WeChat Moments to test my Chinese out, but that's more pressure because you put something out and then people are like “oh you spelled this

wrong”, “oh this character is not right”. I think it’s fine, but again it’s the approach they take. If they understand what it means, then that’s fine. Like the other day, someone put “your Chinese is very good”, and then the next person was like “next time you should write it like this”, but my sentence was written okay. So the way I wrote it, the characters went wrong but the order was okay. She just said I think the type of words can be different. She didn’t write “It’s fine how you’ve written it, maybe next time you can”, it was just like “next time you write this you write that”. I don’t mind, but you feel under more pressure to get it right.” (S3)

Regarding their development of skills of interaction, Student 4 reported that she learnt to understand and respect Chinese ways of life when interacting with Chinese people and read their WeChat Moments pages in that:

“Chinese language partners don’t like to take gifts unless it’s insisted upon and then they take it. They have very different daily routines from us. I also think that China is very split: very modern and advanced in technology but also very traditional and ancient. Many things are made in China: both traditional things and modern technology. Chinese people talk about on their own pages what they are doing and that’s interesting because it’s from a real person and what they are actually doing and it’s very realistic. It’s what they actually like, so that helps you understand more about their culture and life.” (S4)

Also, Student 1 echoed the idea that the present Community of Inquiry helped them to learn how to interact with Chinese people by understanding that:

“Cultural differences are the different attitudes and behaviours of people in

different countries, passed down from the lifestyle of elders, and often they are inevitable. For example, Chinese people eat differently and their communication style is different from us. They are more indirect and tactful. They respect other people's face and try their best not to let others lose any reputation or privilege in public. English people are much more sarcastic than other countries.” (S1)

According to the researcher's field notes, after the interview, S1 reflected that his views of Chinese people being tactful and English people being sarcastic may still be problematic but they were just temporary personal experience. He aimed to keep learning about both cultures and develop his understanding of the Chinese and own people. As CFL beginner learners, it was understandable that participants' responses may inevitably contain unsustainable generalisations and stereotypes about the target and own culture. Nevertheless, when this happened, it was hoped that the Community of Inquiry could provide them a 'third space' to conduct further dialogue and debates around stereotypes, to not only critically evaluate the target culture but also reflect upon their own culture (Kramsch, 1995).

In the questionnaires, six out of nine participants (S3, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9) replied that they loved the WeChat group chat the most because they found it a more fun and easier way to interact with the whole group at the same time and discover more about various topics in a sense of a learning community. As S5 explained, it was a great experience that they could always get replies and feedback from the WeChat group chat as soon as one of the community members read their messages and inquiries. The responses in the community often provided a wide variety of unplanned topics that were of interest to GCSE Mandarin students to further engage in continuous discoveries and interactions. S8 also expressed that “the interactive aspect” of the Community of Inquiry was very engaging which helped them to stay connected with their Chinese friends. She

especially enjoyed typing Mandarin on the phone and found social networking tools made the interactions with language partners much easier and accessible.

To conclude, the researcher argues that the current Community of Inquiry contributed to participants' development of skills of discovery and interaction. The participants used their social presence (i.e. emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion) and cognitive presence (i.e. triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution) to develop their skills of discovery and interaction about the target culture and their home culture, which is an important part of ICC (Byram, 1997). By developing their skills of interpreting and relating, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners realised a greater understanding of other cultural perspectives to avoid misinterpretations and conflicts (Byram, 1997:52).

4.3.2.5 Critical cultural awareness

Byram (1997:53) defined critical cultural awareness as the ability to “evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries”. Language learners need to identify different values in both cultures in order to perform effectively and appropriately in intercultural communications. In the present Community of Inquiry, participants and language partners felt comfortable talking about downsides and sensitive issues about China. For example, when a Shanghai student C1 invited participants to visit China and mentioned that “在中国被欺负了就打 110” (meaning: just call 110 the emergency number when you are in trouble in China). He used “老外能使鬼推磨” to suggest that Chinese police are especially efficient in helping foreign visitors and tourists to solve problems, but they are not as efficient when facing Chinese people. This was followed by a

critical discussion on “有钱能使鬼推磨” and “有权能使鬼推磨” (meaning: with money and power you can invite the devil to grind grain). Examples like this were a type of risk-free discussion and open communication in a Community of Inquiry, which promoted participants to critically evaluate the differences between many aspects of Chinese life and society and their own. To develop the group of GCSE Mandarin learners’ critical cultural awareness, they were asked to find answers to the negative issues and comments about China and Chinese people to build their own understandings and opinions. During Mandarin laptop lessons, the group of CFL beginner learners felt free to research on China and talk about their perspectives. The researcher would often provide her personal meaning to encourage students to further explore more about conflicting facts and views with their language partners with social networking tools.

In this exchange project, students were asked to adopt a comparative method to interpret both cultures. For example, when they talk about stereotypes about China and the Chinese people, they often started from stereotypes of the British that they were familiar with first. Also, when participants were talking about more Chinese people are immigrating to the UK, they were asked to research the issue on the Internet to think about questions like what are the possible reasons behind the phenomenon, do they think immigration is a good thing, how do they perceive the immigrants being younger and younger, whether it is heaven overseas, should immigrants go back to China if they encounter problems and etc. Another example was that participants were totally negative about the one-child and two-child policy. They were asked to research on the history and reasons behind the policies online and developed a more balanced understanding and interpretation of sensitive issues about China when talking with language partners. Gradually, all participants realised the importance of developing critical cultural awareness in a Community of Inquiry.

When asked about their voice on developing critical cultural awareness in this exchange project, Student 3 stressed that it is truly important to develop critical cultural awareness:

“Stereotypes of China were what people see as a conventional idea and representation of Chinese people or culture like Chinese people are extremely clever, very rich, and that everything is made in China. Critical cultural awareness and intercultural understanding are important because you wouldn’t want to offend someone or cause a misunderstanding. It’s about being able to acknowledge and understand cultural differences like Chinese people don’t say thank you to people who are close to them whereas many English people do. As this exchange goes on, I recognised that it is not only about learning a language. We need to broaden our horizons and understand more how other cultures work differently. We are trying our best to use the language and think in the Chinese ways because the community we are living is quite a small one and nobody speaks Mandarin here. My family see it’s a very nice thing to develop critical cultural awareness rather than an important thing. I feel it’s truly important though. The Community of Inquiry and social networking tools helped us to evaluate both cultures more critically. We have learnt to reflect on the stereotypes and changes of both communities.” (S3)

Student 9 EZ also commented about how this Community of Inquiry contributed to their development of critical cultural awareness:

“I feel strongly that critical cultural awareness is a necessary ability. I believe this Community of Inquiry helped us to appreciate other cultures and the World

better. We ask them questions about general things related to the six tasks, like what you do in Christmas, do you have pets, what subject do you like, do you like your school uniform etc. etc. We send them messages and they reply back once they were free. Normally they were available during the weekends. And when we were doing the tasks, we gained new insights into our own culture. We might need to develop critical cultural awareness anyway when going to later stages of our life, so I think it's really good that this Community of Inquiry is getting us there already." (S9)

The current Community of Inquiry allowed students to see more closely how Chinese students could have different sets of beliefs and behaviours from them. Thus, they were given the opportunities to "decentre" themselves and reflect upon both the target culture and their own culture (Byram, 1997). In such a Community of Inquiry, students demonstrated their critical cultural awareness by comparing cultural differences and relating the target culture to their own culture. Student 5 YE said that the intercultural communication between them and Chinese language partners enabled her to understand how Chinese schools and educational system can be different from British ones in that:

"Chinese lessons are shorter - only 45 minutes, and they have 10-minute breaks between lessons, but their school days can finish at 5:40pm. They do morning exercise on the field for 20 minutes. It's a bit like our break after period 2 lesson. The teachers are in the front during lessons and everyone is in rows rather than on tables. Chinese students work until 11 at night. They get much more homework than British students. We don't raise and salute the national flag as they do." (S5)

Also, Student 4 NE critically pointed out that she observed a difference in learning

foreign languages between two cultures - “the Chinese exchange students worked really hard in learning foreign languages like English and German, and they are really good at it.” She stressed that British students at her school did not work as hard as Chinese students and they were not as good at foreign languages. As she argued, to be a global citizen they need to be good at communicating with culturally different people using different languages. Also, she commented that the present Community of Inquiry helped her to become a better intercultural speaker:

“I’m trying my hardest to get there to be an intercultural speaker. I think you have to play a part in the world and you have to work together with people from other countries because that’s the only way the world’s going to be like together and have peace. And I think it’s very important that we increase the way we communicate with other countries because you are less likely to have misunderstandings with them if you speak their language and understand them more. I think that learning the Chinese culture also helps me to understand my own culture better because you get to know them better and then it helps you to know yourself better. They help you with your language and cultural learning, and you can help them with their language and cultural understanding. It helps both ways.” (S4)

Additionally, Student 8 AT commented about cultural differences and suggested to be careful about media-based stereotypes to develop critical cultural awareness in that:

“British people might think that Chinese people are quite reserved and generally shy, they eat weird food like chicken feet and insides of bodies and organs, that everything is grey and polluted, and that everyone works extremely hard and works all hours every day. People get stereotypes generally from media,

however, it depends where you live. They may have never been to China, and are not surrounded by Chinese people but see things on media. The media here often cast a dark picture of China. They like to sensationalise about stuff in China, like crazy news stories from China. It wouldn't be interesting if documentaries and stuff show Chinese people just eating bowls of rice, no one is going to watch that. Stereotypes are good in a sense when something isn't as you thought it was, it's quite refreshing, quite interesting. But we need to be careful of media and learn to see things without a narcissistic point of view.”
(S8)

Student 1 NB reported that they developed critical cultural awareness by abandoning some previous stereotypes about China and Chinese people. For example, he used to think that ‘everyone in China uses chopsticks, they are all smart and enjoy Maths, and Chinese people hate Japanese’, but he now knew these were not necessarily true. He agreed with Student 4 NE and Student 7 EM that the concept of face is particularly important in Chinese culture, and explained that “Face is to do with the reputation within a community and how others see you. It is important as face can allow you to have a better standing within China”. Another aspect of his ICC development, according to NB, was his increased awareness of differences between other culture and his own culture. He explained that “cultural difference is the different attitudes and behaviours of people in different countries, passed down from the lifestyle of elders, and often they are inevitable”. To summarise, the group of GCSE Mandarin students reported that they obtained more openness and curiosity towards Chinese culture, developed their skills of interacting with Chinese people, discovered more about Chinese culture, and learnt how to related it to their own culture critically.

Student 6 YL also talked about her ICC development and critical cultural awareness,

revealing that she used to hold some stereotypes about China like “Chinese people are all very intelligent and all the population work in factories”. She said that after being friends with Chinese students, she started to see the fact that “the two cultures had dissimilar manners of doing things, for example, Chinese people don’t like to confront people when they have conflicts.” She argued that “more consideration and politeness should be taken and people should not make presumptions about other people because of their identity, nationality, gender or age.” Student 4 NE mentioned that she learnt from language partners that “Chinese people extremely value their reputation and face (面子) so it must be respected: if you make someone lose face they will cut off the relationship.” She said that one aspect of her ICC development was that she understood “the cultural differences between China and UK, for example, Chinese people like to talk about good things before bad things, they avoid rather than confront problems, and they are quite shy.” Also, explained that “stereotypes were typically the first thing that pops into your mind when you think of China, but they are not necessarily true like everything is made in China and they all eat animals like dogs and cats.” As observed, the present Community of Inquiry provided a online learning environment for participants to develop their critical cultural awareness to become intercultural speakers, who can “suspend disbelief about other culture and belief about one’s own” (Byram, 2015).

To sum up, in this exchange project, the group of GCSE Mandarin students co-constructed a “third place” with their link school friends to have dialogue about questions such as: how different cultures could be presented, how people are similar and different within and between cultures, how their own culture could influence their perspectives, how culture could remain the same and change over time, and how intercultural communicative competence could make them better global citizens and intercultural speakers. Participants mentioned that they developed critical cultural

awareness to help themselves become intercultural speakers with social networking tools. As Student 8 AT concluded in the focus group interview that the multimodality of social networking tools enabled them to find various information about both cultures to realise that people with and between cultures could associate Chinese words with different images and ideas:

“It was such an amazing experience that these social networking tools let us discover the similarities and differences between two cultures. I really enjoyed the texts and pictures my class and the Shanghai language partners were sending. I remember when we were talking about Christmas and Chinese New Year, someone sent a picture of a Christmas pudding to the big WeChat group. Our partners sent us the word 圣诞布丁, and we realised that 布丁 is a borrowed word from English. They also taught us a new word 黑暗料理, black dish? We get that they were joking about the black Christmas pudding and they think it cannot be tasty. Then they sent us some pictures of Chinese New Year dishes. When we were using the word 蔬菜, it’s fun that most of their pictures were green leafy vegetables but ours are like potatoes, onions, and carrots. We learnt that there are many similarities and differences within and between cultures.”
(S8)

4.4 Summary of findings

In summary, this chapter presented the findings of this research study. The main objectives of this research were to explore how a group of CFL beginner learners could use social networking technology to build a Community of Inquiry and to examine how such a Community of Inquiry could contribute to participants’ ICC development. Evidence from the conversations in the social networking group chat were highlighted

to indicate their intercultural competence, critical cultural thinking, and open to new ideas. The present case study categorised social networking group members' cognitive, social, and teaching presences, and explored how a Community of Inquiry contributed to participants' communicative competence (i.e. linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences) and intercultural competence (i.e. knowledge, attitudes, skills of discovery and relating, skills of interpreting and interaction, critical cultural awareness) in a GCSE Mandarin teaching and learning context (Byram, 1997).

In short, this case study found the following key results: 1) the language exchange and collaborative learning using social networking tools bore all the three features of a Community of Inquiry, with the social presence being the strongest; 2) the data clearly indicated the benefits of authentic and purposeful communication about given tasks and unplanned topics on real-life events for sustained motivation; 3) the multimodal affordances of social networking tools created extra opportunities for intercultural communicative learning, which in turn engaged GCSE Mandarin learners; and 4) the data from this research also seemed to demonstrate strong evidence for collaborative translanguaging, sense-making, and using non-linguistic features in a "third space" with features like safe place, levelling, and accessibility. These key results will be further discussed relating to relevant literature in chapter five in more detail.

To conclude, the GCSE Mandarin students in this study were using social networking technology to add something very special to their language learning experience - intercultural communication and interaction around their genuine functional use of Chinese with their language partners. It was found that participants' Cognitive Presence and Social Presence in the Community of Inquiry contributed to their development of ICC, including using strategies like Triggering event, Exploration, Integration, Resolution, Emotional expression, Open communication, and Group cohesion. The

researcher's and more capable learners' Teaching Presence was also helpful in terms of Instructional management, Building understanding, and Direction instruction and feedback to the group of CFL beginner learners. The group of participants demonstrated their development of intercultural communicative competence in terms of their knowledge, skills of discovery and interaction, and skills of interpreting and relating in activities like reading and replying language partners' posts and messages; their attitudes, openness, curiosity, and critical cultural awareness in activities like asking and answering questions about the target culture and societies, as well as relating them to their own culture in a Community of Inquiry (Byram, 1997).

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research employed a qualitative case study of a GCSE Mandarin class of nine CFL learners to explore how they can use social networking technology to develop their ICC. This chapter aims to consider the results of this case study and relate them to existing literature and research. This chapter will further discuss the key findings and the possible implications and limitations of using social networking technology. The format of this chapter is a summary of key findings, followed by the discussion about key issues around developing ICC in a Community of Inquiry.

5.2 Summary of key findings

The main objectives of this study were to explore how social networking tools were used by a group of CFL beginner learners to build a Community of Inquiry, and how such a present Community of Inquiry could contribute to the students' ICC development. The key findings of this case study were as follows:

- The group of GCSE Mandarin learners enjoyed the multimodal features of social networking technology to learn Mandarin and they felt the social networking technology facilitated their development of intercultural communicative competence in the present Community of Inquiry.
- Regarding ICC development, the purposeful communication prompted unplanned topics and real-life events which contributed to the group of CFL beginner learners' motivation and continuous engagement. They had developed their linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences, as well as intercultural competence. This case study revealed that participants were in need of guidance and support in

developing their attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness which are vital to ICC.

- Based on the Community of Inquiry analysis framework, social presence was the element most often identified in this study, followed by cognitive presence, and then teaching presence which was found to be shared among the researcher and more capable CFL learners.
- The informality of the conversation (e.g. the use of non-linguistic features and translanguaging) was in line with the “third place” concept, which promoted the group of GCSE Mandarin learners’ academic skills and ICC development.

The results of this study revealed that purposeful communication about given tasks, unplanned topics, and real-life events contributed to students’ motivation to use the target language to explore more about both cultures. It was found participants were more engaged with using social networking tools to develop their positive attitudes and knowledge of self and other’s language and cultural perspectives, products, practices (Page and Benander, 2016). The informal conversations and multimodal features of social networking tool promoted the group of GCSE Mandarin students’ skills of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction in a Community of Inquiry. Participant had developed communicative skills to interact, relate and compare the target culture with their own appropriately. Students also developed their critical cultural awareness by reflecting on their intercultural learning to be intercultural speakers in a “third space” with distant language partners. The present Community of Inquiry helped a group of GCSE Mandarin students to develop their openness and curiosity towards Chinese culture and allowed them to abandon many previously held stereotypes of China, Chinese people, and culture. They obtained intercultural knowledge and skills to see cultural differences more critically and relate to their own cultural characteristics and manners. They realised that critical cultural awareness and

intercultural understanding are crucial to addressing cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes.

5.3 Important findings and discussions

This research was primarily related to intercultural communicative competences of a group of CFL beginner learners in the UK secondary context. The researcher argues that, with increasing international mobility and intercultural exchange in an era of globalization, intercultural skills and competences should be gradually developed by the learners themselves with the teacher's support, in and outside of school. Unfortunately, the British MFL curriculum and examination boards have not given an adequate answer to how to develop and assess intercultural communicative competence effectively.

5.3.1 The purposeful communication and unplanned topics in the Community of Inquiry were motivating

5.3.1.1 Purposeful communication prompted unplanned topics that were of interest to participants

On the question of developing a group of CFL beginner learners' ICC, this study found that the purposeful communication, unplanned topics, and real-life events promoted sustained motivation in learners toward exploring more about Chinese language and culture. Regarding language learning, Mowrer (1950) proposed a framework of integrative and instrumental motivation (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). In terms of second language learning, students with integrative motivation are those who wish to connect to the target social groups, and those with instrumental motivation are more interested in external purposes, such as future career, social status, and academic needs.

In this case study, the group of CFL beginners' desire to speak more Mandarin than their mother tongue English was evident. Also, participants expected their Shanghai friends to speak more Mandarin in the Community of Inquiry too.

According to the researcher's field notes, some participants' increasing motivation to learn more about Mandarin and Chinese culture was found to be related to their needs for future success (Oxford and Shearin, 1994). For example, previous chapters have presented various examples and evidence of Student 9 EZ's CoI presences and ICC development. She mentioned in the interview that she hoped to become an interpreter when growing up. To achieve this goal, she was making the most of the purposeful communication about given tasks and unplanned topics in the present Community of Inquiry. EZ mentioned in the interview that unplanned topics challenged her intellectually which made her learning experience more enriching and rewarding as it is beyond the learning of Chinese radicals or characters. She explained that she was using social networking tools to develop ICC not because she needed to do the given tasks but because she wanted to explore more about the unplanned topics. Her level of satisfaction and feeling of accomplishment were so positive that she decided to keep learning Chinese language and culture in the university to become a translator who can use Mandarin effectively and appropriately for a wider Chinese community in the future. Other participants reported that they see themselves doing small business with the Chinese or using Mandarin for other jobs in the future. This was also in line with Dörnyei's (2009) more recent L2 motivational self-system theory in that they identified an ideal L2 self (e.g. a Mandarin-English translator or businessman dealing with the Chinese) and made efforts towards developing themselves to be an intercultural speaker for the future. This finding echoed Xie's (2014) conclusion when she investigated the motivation of CFL beginner learners. It was found that it is crucial to help non-heritage Mandarin learners to build L2 self-motivation through their personal interaction with

the target culture. It was also argued that modern technology can be used to sustain learners' L2 motivation by enabling them to connect with distant L2 communities. However, there were many factors that may contribute to language learners' motivation. Taking S3 EE and S9 EZ as examples, their academic Mandarin skills was the top level in the group of CFL beginner learners in this study. It was pointed out that their motivation might be affected by their language proficiency (Strong, 1984) in that increasing motivation could be the result of successful language learning itself. Therefore, it might also be possible that top students achieved more success in Mandarin learning so it was easier for them to become more motivated and encouraged to engage continuously in this exchange project.

The group of CFL beginner learners suggested that their Chinese language partners, as native speakers of Mandarin, collaborated with them to produce purposeful communication about given tasks based on Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook. Participants accessed standard and authentic Mandarin use in modern Chinese societies that was beyond the learning content in textbooks. The purposeful communication also prompted various unplanned topics and real-life events, which were of interest to all participants in this case study. They were more motivated to develop their ICC to be 'intercultural speakers' who could use the target language effectively and appropriately for real-life communication and relationship maintaining. The term "intercultural speaker" refers to people who could use the target language and intercultural knowledge and skills effectively and appropriately in both cultures (Byram, 1997). As a result, the unplanned topics allowed participants to see and discuss stereotypes and learnt how to suspend misunderstandings and disbeliefs which a crucial objective for ICC education (Byram, 2015).

To conclude, the findings indicated that purposeful communication prompted

unplanned topics and real-life events, which helped participants to become intercultural speakers. This was in accord with prior studies indicating that: 1) intercultural speakers are able to interact with speakers of other languages and to appreciate differences and other perspectives of the world (Byram et al., 2001); 2) intercultural speakers are able to turn exchange and encounters into intercultural relationships (Guilherme, 2000); 3) intercultural speakers are able to perform appropriately in both cultures (House, 2008); 4) intercultural speakers are able to identify similarities and differences between cultures and know how to address misunderstandings (Skopinskaja, 2009). Therefore, the image of “intercultural speaker” served as an ideal L2 self to keep learners become engaged and motivated in a longer term. An intercultural speaker was also a more realistic and suitable alternative goal to the previous native speaker standard. This is closely related to the findings in this study. All the GCSE Mandarin students used social networking technology to communicate with their language partners, and they developed friendship and decided to visit each other. As effective intercultural speakers, all students performed appropriately during online chats through social networking tools and real-life encounters and exchange visits. They were critically aware of cultural differences and stereotypes (Keller, 1991), and they prepared themselves well enough to embrace intercultural communicative difficulties before the trip, and all their previous ICC development made the final trip extremely successful.

5.3.1.2 Real-life events and unplanned topics were motivating

Risager (1990) pointed out that in foreign language education, textbooks are normally carriers of cultural attitudes of the authors from home countries. Therefore, learners need to be presented with real-life emotions, values, problems, and difficulties of people from other cultures in natural contexts. In this exchange project, the group of GCSE Mandarin learners were asked to communicate with real Chinese people around six

given topics from textbooks. As a result, participants' creation of a Community of Inquiry helped solve real-life difficulties and problems (i.e. exchange visits). The case school (School S) in this study has been hosting French and Spanish link school teachers and students for past decades but never hosted any Chinese ones due to various reasons. This was a real-life problem for both the school and its CFL students before this exchange project. The exchange itself and the potential visits were extremely motivational to all participants.

According to the researcher's field notes, all participants appreciated the visit of Chinese language partners in January 2017 because the visit allowed them to maintain their friendship when the Chinese stayed at their homes for a week. The group of GCSE Mandarin learners showed the Shanghai students places to discover the British ways of life, and Shanghai students taught the GCSE students how to use all kinds of features of WeChat to keep in touch. It was reported that they communicated in both English and Mandarin with gestures and drawings. The group of CFL beginner learners emphasised that it was the first time that their distant Chinese partners came to visit their school, and their exchange experience was personal and extremely positive. This study found that all participants become more motivated towards exploring the target culture based on given tasks, and most of them engaged in unplanned topics more often to develop ICC in this exchange project. It was consistent with literature arguing that young language learners' attitudes are not fully developed yet, which affects their motivation and the acquisition of foreign languages (Gardner, 2001). It was further suggested that social contexts play a key role in the development and acquisition of second languages (Gardner, 2007). Therefore, the satisfaction of learning a foreign language could create positive attitudes towards the target language (Hermann, 1980). In this exchange project, the real-life visit, arrival, and homestay of the language partners allowed the group of GCSE Mandarin students to practise real-time genuine communication

as intercultural speakers and develop a positive attitude towards the target culture and social groups, which were crucial aspects of ICC development (Byram, 1997).

In the current case study, all the participants reported that they were motivated to use the target language to interact with people from a different culture with social networking tools. Some of them enjoyed sending postcards to language partners through WeChat, some used WeChat Moments to share daily school life, and some others loved reading Chinese students' posts and messages to understand more about modern China. The group of GCSE Mandarin students reported that they learnt a lot about Chinese culture and Chinese people from the purposeful communication and interactions in the Community of Inquiry. They mentioned that they have gained knowledge about Chinese people being tightly intertwined and close (e.g. businessman, family, and friends are all together, maintaining connections). They have developed their intercultural understanding and learnt about the Doctrine of Mean (中庸) from the Chinese language partners that "Chinese people are trying to be in the middle of the two extremes by controlling their emotions and behaviours". This finding was in line with McPake et al. (1999) revealing that learners' motivation may increase if learning a foreign language could be an opportunity to communicate with foreigners and a chance to experience other cultures. Fisher et al. (2004) reported similar results regarding language learners' interest in cultural topics in that students like to discover the target culture and the speakers of other languages. Therefore, the data and literature indicated that a focus on the intercultural dimension in foreign language teaching and learning could motivate students.

It was found the group of GCSE Mandarin students had experienced Dörnyei's (2001) three phase motivation model: 1) choice motivation (willingness to get started); 2) executive motivation (efforts to carry out necessary tasks); 3) motivation retrospection

(appraisal of their performance). Firstly, they had ‘choice motivation’ because they were extremely excited about talking to real Chinese people of similar ages and getting to know more about youth culture in China. Secondly, they experienced ‘executive motivation’ in the process of using the target language to communicate and interact with language partners about real-life topics and events. The real-life events contributed to participants’ continuous engagement and efforts to develop their ICC in terms of Linguistic Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, Discourse Competence, and Intercultural Competence (Byram, 1997). Thirdly, the group of participants were evaluating and reflecting on their own intercultural performance in the Mandarin lessons when discussing their exchange experience with peers and the researcher. It was believed that they experienced the phase of motivation retrospection because they were reflecting on their own cognitive and social presences in a Community of Inquiry. In this case study, all participants had used social networking tools to talk with Chinese language partners based on their communicative needs and developed a positive attitude towards Chinese culture and people, and a strong wish to visit the Chinese community.

To conclude, the intercultural dimension of this exchange project has made the GCSE Mandarin lessons more interesting by offering real-life topics and events to students. It was most evident that students show more motivation and enthusiasm when they were using social networking tools to discuss possible visits and homestays. According to the researcher’s field notes, students with lower academic levels (e.g. S1 NB and S2 LD) were still very interested in the exchange and visits language. Even though they regarded Mandarin learning as difficult, they were motivated and engaged with the intercultural exchange and real-life events. This is consistent with the notion that motivation is closely related to the socio-cultural status of the target language and culture in that an attractive culture would be more accessible for students (Peiser and Jones, 2013). The group of CFL beginner learners’ engagement and motivation were

so sustained that they developed a greater interest in visiting China. At the end of this exchange project, they were successful in gaining parents' support and governors' permission after several attempts of visit proposal and they planned the whole trip with language partners using social networking technology. It is also in line with Garden (1960) and Larsen-Freeman and Long (2016) that parents' attitudes to the target community and culture would affect language learners' attitudes motivation. The group of GCSE Mandarin learners kept their positive attitudes and finally visited China to look at authentic Chinese culture more closely and stay at their language partners' homesto experience real Chinese family lifeat the end of the project. It was an encouraging finding that the real-life events in this case study contributed to participants' motivation and engagement in intercultural communication which was believed to be beneficial to ICC development.

5.3.2 Multimodal features of social networking tools contributed to participants' continuous participation

5.3.2.1 Participants displayed positive attitudes and the desire to impress others in a Community of Inquiry

One of the key findings of this case study was that all the GCSE Mandarin learnersreported enjoyingthe full access to multimodal features of social networking tools. It was found that the group of CFL beginner learners developed positive attitudes (i.e. curiosity and openness) towards the target culture and social groups, which included:favourable attitudes towards the Chinese communities, a desire to impress and understand their language partners, a general appreciation of the Chinese culture, and an increasing interest in further Mandarin learning and future exchanges (Gardner et al., 1987:199). The group of GCSE Mandarin learners were provided with regular

opportunities and multimodal social networking tools to use Mandarin to communicate with members of the Chinese community. Participants reported that they enjoyed the quality and the nature of intercultural communication and interaction, which was crucial to the development of positive attitudes (Gardner et al., 1987:88).

It was evident from the findings chapter that the group of CFL beginner learners were eager to explore the multimodality of Edmodo and WeChat to send Mandarin posts and messages related to given tasks to gain “Likes”, “Comments”, and “Sharing”. Some learners (e.g. students S9 EZ, S4 NE, S8 AT, and S3 EE) benefited more than others depending on their active participation in the Community of Inquiry. Moreover, students reported that they became more confident to talk in Mandarin to impress their language partners in the present Community of Inquiry when Chinese people just continued the conversation flow without correcting the errors. For example, Student 2 LD commented that: “I really enjoy the feeling of impressing Chinese language partners, and surprising them with some new words I learnt.” Student 9 EZ’s comment was a good explanation of how they became more positive and confident through impressing others and getting immediate positive feedback from target language language partners: “Talking to Chinese people for real can be quite challenging but it boosts your confidence sometimes. For starters, if it’s your first time talking Chinese to a Chinese person, you’d be nervous right? But if you get to know them, or impress them or understand it better, you feel more confident. So it does boost your confidence!”

It can be concluded that the group of CFL beginner learners in this case study have displayed positive attitudes (i.e. curiosity and openness) and a desire to impress their peers and language partners. All participants had benefited from “self-evidently good” positive attitudes and were more motivated to explore the multimodal feature of social networking tools to keep in touch with language partners (Byram et al., 1994:35). Their positive

attitudes and desire to impress others in a Community of Inquiry were found to contribute to their effective intercultural communication and interaction and ICC development in this exchange project. This was in line with Byram's (1997:34) argument and Ortega's (2011) notion that students' curiosity and openness could lead to intercultural understanding in that positive attitudes are the pre-condition for successful intercultural interaction. This is also consistent with Clément et al. (1980) that language learners' positive attitudes to the target culture could affect their motivation to learn and their language proficiency.

5.3.2.2 Multimodality of social networking tools promoted students' continuous participation and ICC development

In this case study, the multimodal features of social networking tools contributed to the group of CFL beginner learners' continuous participation and telecollaboration (Lamy and Hampel, 2007). Participants had shown an increasing interest in using different features of social networking tools to learn about Mandarin and Chinese culture. They reported that social networking tools were something that they were really interested in and they felt comfortable and motivated to use the multimodal features to get to know more about both cultures and interact with native language partners. This is consistent with Kress (2003) in that the multimodal affordances of new technologies could be transformative in terms of presentation and communication for users' "interactivity". It was found that the multimodal features of social networking tools helped participants to bridge the gap between their vocabulary level and the meaning level in the target texts in a Community of Inquiry (August et al., 2005). This was also in line with language learning theories which focused on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Coleman and McNeese, 2009) in that the multimodality provided extrinsic motivation to participants and their interest in exploring cultures and communities was a part of their intrinsic motivation. The group of participants appeared

to be engaged when using the multimodal features of social networking tools and they reported enjoying practising their Mandarin skills extensively with the multiple modes of communication on social networking tools.

It was found that all participants used the text-based Edmodo and WeChat communication to collaborate with language partners for intercultural tasks, and some of them also explored the “Hold-to-Talk” voice input and voice messaging features of WeChat to develop Mandarin spoken proficiency. Four students (S3, S4, S8, and S9) were highly motivated throughout the two academic years and they reflected that they typed and understood more Mandarin sentences in WeChat with the help of its “Hold-to-Translate” and “Convert-to-Text” features. However, they also pointed out that other classmates could have used the multimedia features of WeChat more often to achieve greater success in this exchange project. This was in line with the researcher’s field notes that all the participants used more Mandarin with WeChat texting feature but some participants (S1, S2, S5, and S6) were reluctant to use voice messages.

Despite their dislike of using voice messages, all participants reported that they enjoyed the multimodality of WeChat official accounts that the teacher and their language partners sent to the big group. They felt it was very helpful that most of the articles were in both Mandarin and English. As the findings chapter explained, the present Community of Inquiry was highly relevant to UK GCSE Mandarin curriculum and textbook that the group of CFL beginner learners were working on. As a result, the multimodal features of social networking tools significantly enriched participants’ textbook-based learning with authentic topics and meaningful tasks. In this exchange project, all participants explored the combination of multiple modes of communication with Chinese language partners, including real-time videoconferences and asynchronous WeChat text chats and Edmodo posts. The multimodality of social

networking tools in this study had enabled the group of CFL beginner learners to access various sources of intercultural communication. They have learnt how to collaborate with Tandem partners to conduct effective interactions during synchronous communication mode, as well as stepping back to take more time to appropriately interact with others and wait for their replies during asynchronous communication mode. As Warschauer (2000:64) argued, future learners will need to conduct “collaborative long-distance inquiry and problem-solving” as a part of foreign language learning and community activities. The researcher wanted all participants to have equal opportunities and full access to multimodal intercultural communication in this digital era. It was found that the multimodality of social networking tools fitted the group of participants’ different needs. Therefore, this research held high relevance for preparing young CFL beginner learners with extra opportunities to develop their ICC for future studying and living in this global world. This also echoed the notion of “multiliteracy” because participants developed different modes of language literacy from page-based text to screen-based messages with the help of multimodal social networking tools (Kress, 2003). The multimodality-assisted multiliteracy practice displayed in this Community of Inquiry was consistent with Beauvois’s (1998) notion of “conversation in slow motion” – a combined mode of communication of both written and spoken Mandarin.

It can be concluded that the multimodality of social networking tools in this study was a significant contribution to the development of participants’ intercultural communication competence. Not only did students experience how to interact with real Chinese people under the limitation of real-time conversations, but they also developed their skills of discovering more about China and Chinese youth by taking time to process more detailed intercultural information. All participants reported that they have significantly developed positive attitudes of curiosity and openness towards other

cultural perspectives and social groups (Byram, 1997:52). Their linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse competences were developed through a large number of Internet-based communication practices (Kramsch and Thorne, 2002). In addition, they developed their critical cultural awareness by reflecting on both cultures and evaluating their performance based on the chat history with social networking tools (Byram, 1997). In this case study, the group of CFL beginner learners demonstrated various types of motivation (e.g. the desire to impress others; the curiosity in Chinese culture; pursuing academic success; developing friendship; exchange visits). However, the researcher argues that it was the strength of their motivation not what type of motivation that significantly contributed to their ongoing participation and ICC development in this two-year exchange project. It was believed that the multimodality of social networking tools added to the strength of participants' motivation.

5.3.3 Informality of the intercultural conversation enhanced sociocultural construction of the “third place”

5.3.3.1 Informal conversations promoted critical cultural awareness in the “third place”

Another important finding of this case study was that the informality of the intercultural conversation was in line with the “third place” concept with key features such as safe place, levelling, and accessibility (Kramsch, 1993). Language learning should not always be restrained to formal educational settings, rather there could be a wide range of informal and voluntary learning contexts (Jin and Cortazzi, 2012). The informality of students' communication with social networking tools was observed both linguistically and at the discourse level, which was believed to have contributed to their sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence (e.g.

skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness) of ICC (Byram, 1997). The group of CFL beginner learners managed to create an informal online learning community integrated into the GCSE Mandarin course and lessons. The informal learning experience in the present Community of Inquiry was found to have motivated participants to further explore and discuss both cultures. The social networking tools seemed to offer a major benefit in providing the CFL beginner learners with extra access to informal communication and dialogue with language partners in this exchange project. It was argued that content and contextual factors were crucial to motivating foreign language learners (Genesee et al., 1983). The present Community of Inquiry, therefore, provided informal and authentic contexts for real-life topics and events in the target language that motivated participants. These informal conversations were appealing to the GCSE Mandarin students because it presented opportunities for authentic and intercultural dialogue of both cultures in the real world rather than chunks of conversation only seen in traditional Mandarin classrooms.

As presented in the findings chapter, the group of participants concluded that critical cultural awareness is about obtaining more understanding of both cultures and decentring oneself to relate the target culture to their own. They realised that there are many stereotypes in the ongoing intercultural learning process, but there are more answers to those puzzles. They developed an understanding that neither the Chinese perspective nor the English way should be assumed to be the naturally correct one. This implied that participants were able to “distance” themselves from their own values and perspectives to compare reflect on both cultures (Bredella, 2002:39). It was believed that participants’ development of critical cultural awareness were not acquired at once but rather achieved gradually through substantial informal conversations in the Community of Inquiry. This is in line with Kramsch’s (1993) argument that developing

students' competence to see their own country and culture from other perspectives would be a slow and long journey. It was suggested that language learners should develop their own cultural criticism, awareness, and reflection on alternative worldviews without necessarily accepting the target culture. The presented Community of Inquiry in this case study provided a "third place" (Kramsch, 1995) where the group of CFL beginner learners could develop their critical cultural awareness, criticism, and reflection gradually in an informal and ongoing process. The use of social networking technology was found to have provided informal and real-life dialogue, which allowed participants to relate how real Chinese people could have different sets of beliefs and behaviours from British people. Thus, they were given the opportunities to "decentre" themselves to reflect upon both the target culture and their own culture to understand that language and behaviours would have very different cultural references and meanings in different contexts (Byram, 1997).

The informal conversations in the present Community of Inquiry generated substantial negotiated interaction between participants and their language partners which contributed to their linguistic competence, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness. According to the researcher's field notes, when talking about hobbies, Shanghai student C9 talked about swimming in a Mandarin message "游泳池里人很多，就像下饺子一样" which contained a new vocabulary "下饺子" (literately: boiling dumplings) that the group of CFL beginner learners did not understand. They asked what the meaning of the phrase is in the particulate context about swimming. C9 then paraphrased her original text and explained it partly in English to help participants to understand the meaning "I mean 游泳池里人很多 there are too many people in the swimming pool, just like dumplings in the pot". The group of GCSE Mandarin students found the analogy very interesting and

Chinese, related this to the English saying “canned sardines” and replied their Shanghai friends they would describe that as “罐头沙丁鱼”. Participants were able to learn from the informal conversations to realise that differences in the languages might be related to the cultures. Even though sometimes Chinese friends’ posts were not comprehensible to the CFL learners, they were pushed to negotiate the meanings to understand the messages and produce some extra output to reply to language partners in the current Community of Inquiry. As observed, these opportunities pushed participants to produce more challenging output to gain more intercultural knowledge and skills with the help of the teacher or more able peers (Vygotsky, 1978; Swain, 1985). More importantly, the informal conversations enabled both the Chinese and British students to explore more about both cultures critically to realise that people’s perspectives of the outside world are socially constructed and culturally determined (O’Dowd, 2006; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). This is consistent with the principles of Tandem learning exchanges: autonomy and reciprocity because students from both countries used the social networking tools freely and autonomously in the exchange project, developed their intercultural understanding, and solved practical problems (Brammerts, 1996; 2001; Cziko, 2004; Hurd, 2005; Benson, 2013).

It was found that the “third place” (Kramsch, 1993) allowed participants to have above informal dialogue with the Shanghai language partners and reflect on the differences between both cultures (Bryant et al., 2014). This was in line with Bakhtin’s (1986) notion of “dialogism”, Bhabha’s (1990) notion of “third domain”, and Byram’s (1997) “critical cultural awareness” in the ICC model. In the present Community of Inquiry, the informal conversations and unplanned topics have created extra opportunities for the group of GCSE Mandarin learners to see intercultural differences critically and the gap between the place of the target culture and the place of own culture (Kramsch, 1993:236). The informal conversations were found to be a much more interactive and

dialogic process for participants and their language partners in that intercultural understanding was not an outcome of passively accepting everything about the target culture. For example, the group of GCSE Mandarin students had an informal open discussion about the one-child policy and disagreed with language partners that the recent two-child policy was an improvement (they maintained that it was still a “violation of human rights”). After some research on Chinese history of poverty and the issues of overpopulation, participants built their own interpretation and reached a third place where they could understand both their own and the language partners’ perspectives more critically. It was found that similar exposure of the target culture from informal conversations may bring the expected intercultural outcomes of online exchanges and abandon stereotypes about the target culture generated from formal language learning (Belz, 2002). This is also in line with Bredella (2002:39) in that participants had learnt how to put themselves in the language partners’ position, which made them intercultural but not “identical” with the Shanghai students. In this exchange project, participants’ informal conversations with other group members in a third place also captured some essences of the notion of “mediation” in sociocultural theory (Lamy and Hampel, 2007; Mercer et al., 2009). A third place with social networking tools was mediational for students to make sense of the real world through sociocultural tasks and informal communications (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). It was found that the group of CFL beginner learners have obtained more intercultural information and developed a balanced cultural perspective and a “dialectical relationship” with others in the mediational third place and the zone of proximal development (Kinging, 2002:247; O’Dowd, 2006; Lamy and Hampel, 2007).

In the present Community of Inquiry, participants’ cognitive presence (i.e. triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution) and social presence (i.e. emotional expression, open communication, and group cohesion) allowed them to conduct

informal conversations with other group members in times of need. Culture was regarded as a negotiated concept (Durán et al., 2016). In this case study, participants' knowledge of both cultures and critical cultural awareness had been developed when they used social networking tools to conduct open communication and informal conversations on topics that were of interest to both classes in a third place. They discussed and negotiated about various aspects of culture informally to explore more about "the beliefs and ways of thinking" of the Chinese communities (Kramsch, 1996:2). This was an important finding the group of participants have developed their ICC because they felt safe and comfortable with informal conversations where they negotiated in open communication about both cultures critically through continuous engagement and endeavour, rather than passively accepting the target culture (Kramsch, 1995; Czura, 2016). However, some participants would regard informal conversations as incomprehensible and they needed more support (i.e. teaching presence) when developing critical cultural awareness. This was in line with Young's (2011) argument that it is quite challenging to develop the ability to decentre oneself from one's own perspective and cultural context in order to take the perspective of culturally different others in the third space. In this case study, the transmission of the meaning of words and sentences depended not only on structural and linguistic knowledge but also on different contexts and many other intercultural factors. Also, as Mey (2001) pointed out, language learner would be able to overcome apparent ambiguity if they developed their knowledge of language and contexts. Therefore, the researcher agreed strongly that language teachers need to help learners to discover potential meanings of words through different contexts of informal discourse (Kramsch, 1995;2003).

5.3.3.2 Translanguaging and using non-linguistic features in intercultural communication to develop ICC

Concepts such as “translanguaging” and “third space” were very useful to illustrate the features of student interaction and exchange in this case study. According to the researcher’s field notes, participants’ Mandarin learning and communication behaviour in a Community of Inquiry differed with when they communicated in normal face-to-face settings in traditional classrooms. The present Community of Inquiry helped the group of CFL beginner learners to bridge the gap between textbook Chinese and real-world Chinese. It was found that translanguaging and using non-linguistic features of social networking tools contributed to the group of GCSE Mandarin learners’ writing skills, linguistic competence, and sociolinguistic competence significantly (Byram, 1997). The purpose of translanguaging approach was to acknowledge the dynamic and flexible use of language to leverage the meaning-making opportunities and engage all beginner learners at all times (García and Li, 2014). This was in line with the researcher’s field notes that Mandarin students’ typing of Chinese text messages, posting of timeline moments, short sentence writing and long story co-writing improved gradually after using social networking tools for genuine intercultural communication for almost two years. They practised how to achieve multiple modes of communication efficiently and developed their own system of meaning-making in Mandarin and English. After sending their translanguaging work and messages to the Shanghai students, they were often replied with a wide range of authentic phrases and sentence structures from language partners’ writing which otherwise would not appear in GCSE textbooks. In addition, participants mentioned that using pinyin in social networking tools to type Chinese was much easier than handwriting Chinese characters and connecting strokes properly from memory. This finding was consistent with Kubler’s (2002) argument that computer-assisted Mandarin writing approaches could allow learners to focus more than composing flow rather than being distracted by producing individual characters on paper. This case study found that although the posting and messages consisted of short sentences based writing practice, the group of GCSE

Mandarin students used postcards exchange and story writing sharing to acquire the skill of building ideas and the writing of longer Chinese text. Students may make mistakes in their sentences (some were caused by technology-based typing), but their communication flow with Chinese language partners was seldom hindered and the overall interactions were generally effective and efficient. As Weissberg (2006) argued, language learners could acquire L2 writing skills most effectively when the writing tasks were integrated into social dialogue and interaction. This is also in line with the Vygotskian sociocultural perspective suggesting that language learners often demonstrate interlanguage and translanguaging because they tend to use their own language as a “mediator between the world of objects and the new language” (Ohta, 2005; Swain and Lapkin, 2013).

By providing non-linguistic contexts of language uses and real-world communication, the subject matter and target language become more accessible to the group of GCSE Mandarin students. In this case study, when most of the social communication and interactions in the present Community of Inquiry were conducted in the target language, they provided the group of CFL beginner learners with more situational and cultural contexts to apply what had been learnt in the classrooms. As discussed earlier in the findings chapter, participants reported that the non-linguistic contexts and real-life conversations helped them to explore more about youth cultures (e.g. sending Emojis and Chinese memes) in China. Some students commented that they were able to stay engaged and motivated in this study because many non-linguistic social activities were digging deep into the Chinese culture and stories behind the language. This finding is also in line with prior research on the change of quality of L2 writing with technology-facilitated peer collaboration and contribution (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005). Warschauer (2004) also argued that L2 writing is not limited to essay writing and it now contains emailing and modern communication such as online chatting and posting.

In the present case study, CFL learners used social networking tools to share their own school life experiences and language learning ideas through online chatting and posting which is actually a form of electronic writing practice. Also, the present Community of Inquiry provided a collaborative space for peers and language partners to comment and reflect on the writing products in times of need. This result echoed Godwin-Jones's (2008) and Yancey's (2009) suggestion that to meet the needs of digital native L2 learners, informal online writing and translanguaging, as an extension of formal classroom writing, should be introduced into L2 education in the 21st century. Therefore, the researcher agreed strongly that opportunities like translanguaging and non-linguistic practices in the current case study should be offered to language learners in today's digital era (Weissberg, 2006; Pennington, 2017). However, participants also pointed out that they disliked using voice messages as much as typing texts in Mandarin. This is unexpected but consistent with research that raised the awareness of the possible constraints of using social media in education (Kennewell, 2001; Zhao, 2013; Mao, 2014).

In this case study, participants' experience of using translanguaging and non-linguistic features of social networking tools made their intercultural exchange more "social" and "informal". Participants demonstrated various levels of interlanguage (e.g. combinations of Chinese characters, pinyin, English and Emojis/Internet Memes). This finding is consistent with the interlanguage hypothesis that interlanguage happens to all L2 learners in the process of learning, which is a linguistic system in its own right (Lakshmanan and Selinker, 2001). The researcher argues that "translanguaging" was a unique and crucial practice for the group of GCSE Mandarin learners to develop themselves towards the goal of "intercultural speakers" in the present social networking technology based Community of Inquiry. Byram (1997) defined ICC as the complex set of knowledge and skills to interact and communicate with culturally different people

effectively and appropriately in the target language. However, for CFL beginner learners at secondary schools, it would not be possible for them to perform in full Mandarin all the time when interacting with language partners in social contexts. The researcher believes that “translanguaging” could be a practical and useful approach to allow CFL learners to become comfortable using the target language step by step while exploring the intercultural aspects of the target language and community.

Also, as discussed earlier, one interesting finding of this case study was that the GCSE Mandarin students demonstrated more social presence (engagement with participants) than cognitive presence (engagement with content), which was not consistent with the prior research on adult learners. Earlier studies, such as Yang (2016) and Garrison (2017) suggested cognitive presence is the most crucial aspect of presences to students’ deep learning and therefore would be the factor most often identified in a Community of Inquiry. It was pointed out that learners’ social presence, such as emotional involvement and communication skills during the process of creating group cohesion, may contribute to their cognitive ability to construct meanings through sustained communication (Garrison, 2017). In this research, students reported that they enjoyed the multimodal and non-linguistic features of social networking tools. Participants knew that they would possibly create opportunities for exchange visits with the language partners so that they spent a lot of time in social interactions with them to build a close relationship and friendship. Their desire and motivation to build and maintain friendships to solve real-life problems were so strong that they demonstrated more social presences. They were using social networking technology to add something really special to their exchange experience - genuine communication around Chinese and real-life visits and homestays. This rather contradictory result may be due to that the previous research had mainly investigated adult learners’ online learning in tertiary levels where they did not necessarily have a physical classroom and Mandarin lessons in which

cognitive learning could take place regularly already. Whereas in this study, the group of CFL students were learning about Chinese language and culture in a secondary school classroom setting and their cognitive presence tended to be their practices of learnt knowledge for social communication purposes. To sum up, more social presence created more opportunities for them to get to know each other better, in order to be better hosts and guests in potential exchange visits. The social setting of the present Community of Inquiry contributed significantly to participants' ICC development.

The group of CFL beginner learners enjoyed the translanguaging experience in a way that sounded very like speech. They were even better with non-linguistic features like Emojis and Stickers, where little writing was involved but feelings and views were shared. This matches the observations in earlier studies. For example, Herring (2012) pointed out that the style of texts or messages is enjoyable because people can express themselves creatively. In this study, although the translanguaging output contained English and some of the messages were not correct, the mistakes or errors did not break down the conversation flow. This would be very hard to achieve in other conversational settings - written or spoken. It was also found that non-linguistic features like Emojis or Internet memes were an important feature of students' social interactions too. Participants reported that they used non-linguistic features because they thought most Chinese people inside China did not understand that with English they like to joke quite often. And the Chinese language partners could not see their real expressions so they have to put an Emoji to make sure the Chinese students knew it was a joke. According to their feedback, non-linguistic features could add an extra level of definition to what they were trying to say, and using Emojis and Internet Memes could help to avoid some confusion and misinterpretation in text-based conversations. Crystal (2006; 2011) has written about a similar issue and suggested that Emoticons are popular and useful because of the limitations of ICT-based communication (e.g. no facial expressions,

gestures, and feedback). The non-linguistic practices supported the written conversations to be even more like spoken conversations. Also, participants suggested that using translanguaging and non-linguistic practices are very practical and should become a very necessary part of all the future Mandarin curriculum. To conclude, the present Community of Inquiry was built based on social networking tools, and the social nature of these tools allowed participants to demonstrate extra social presence with translanguaging and non-linguistic practices. This finding is in line with Qiao et al. (2018) that non-academic topics and casual talks were motivating to language learners with the help of the social nature of mobile tools. It was believed that these social presences and translanguaging practices helped students to develop their ICC in terms of Linguistic Competence, Discourse Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, and Intercultural Competence (Byram, 1997). This echoed the main principles of Tandem projects: autonomy and reciprocity, because multimodal features of social networking tools and the translanguaging presences enabled students from both sides to benefit from the exchange project to develop their digital literacy and intercultural competence (Brammerts, 1996; Byram, 1997; Cziko, 2004; Benson, 2013).

5.4 Summary of discussion

This chapter first presented a brief summary of the key results of this case study and then discussed the important findings in relation to relevant literature. This qualitative case study was designed to address significant gaps in the research on secondary CFL beginner learners' use of social networking technology to develop intercultural communicative competence. Byram's (1997) ICC framework and Garrison et al.'s (2000) Community of Inquiry model was used to analyse the group of GCSE Mandarin students' online exchange and intercultural communication with language partners. This could be the first time that Byram's (1997) ICC model has been adopted in the CFL

secondary education context in the UK. It is worth noting that the group of GCSE Mandarin learners online interactions and exchange reflected overlaps of CoI and ICC categories suggesting that there were various types of participants' intercultural skills and social-cognitive presences in a Community of Inquiry. This was consistent with earlier research into CFL beginner learners' intercultural learning supported by online forum at university level (Álvarez and Qian, 2013).

The key findings of the present study were based on exploring a group of nine GCSE Mandarin students' use of social networking tools (i.e. Edmodo, Skype, and WeChat) to develop ICC. The researcher argues that in this case study social networking tools served as a mediational approach that participants employed to interact with other group members to develop their intercultural communicative competence. The main solution observed was their creation of a Community of Inquiry (CoI) to allow purposeful intercultural communications and unplanned informal conversations to take place throughout two academic years. The findings of this study did not align with previous research (Yang, 2016) and (Garrison, 2017) that found that cognitive presence was the factor most often identified in a Community of Inquiry. However, as discussed earlier, the different research settings (e.g. university distance learning versus a secondary level exchange project) and the nature of social networking tools may be the possible reasons. Therefore, the researcher argues that for younger CFL learners and users of social networking technology, a Community of Inquiry could promote greater social presence, rather than cognitive presence. Furthermore, the researcher argues that teaching presence could be a shared function among teachers and more capable students.

Additionally, the researcher argues that, in the present Community of Inquiry, the multimodal features of social networking tools contributed to participants' sustained motivation and continuous engagement. In this case study, it was found that the group

of CFL beginner learners enjoyed using the informal translanguaging and non-linguistic features to develop their intercultural communicative competence to become successful global citizens and intercultural speakers. This echoes previous literature suggesting that the functional use of the target language in meaningful communication contexts could create opportunities for more successful language learning to happen (Swain, 1985; Long, 1990; Chapelle, 2006; Mackey and Goo, 2007). This was also in line with OECD's (2018) goal to prepare the youth to become a globally competent citizens for an inclusive and sustainable world. This case study agrees with OECD (2018) in that digital technologies could facilitate new types of learning to shape our youth's views of the global world and interactions with others and their perception of themselves. With the help of a Community of Inquiry, language learners could connect with others easily and develop greater autonomy in terms of what, when, where, and in what ways to learn.

To conclude, the researcher argues that in this case study social networking technology increased participants' motivation to use the target language Mandarin for real-world communication and improved their intercultural communicative competence that was believed to matter to their future success. The group of GCSE Mandarin learners used social networking tools to create an environment where they could use the target language to interact with language partners. It was found that it was easier for students to stay motivated and have continuous engagement when they could make friends and communicate with people from the target culture. It was believed that language proficiency and intercultural communicative competence are closely linked with participants' meaningful use of the target language. The goal of this research was to use social networking technology to support a group of CFL beginner learners to use Mandarin meaningfully through social and intercultural communication and collaboration with language partners. The development of participants' intercultural

communicative competence was evident in this case study. However, it would be problematic to call the participants “digital natives” as they were not necessarily experts in using social networking technology. The group of GCSE Mandarin learners were in need of support and guidance from the teachers when necessary even though they were familiar with some of the affordances of social networking tools. This case study was not simply advocating sweeping technology but to show the potential of social networking technology as a vehicle for teaching, support, and interaction- not exclusion of the teacher.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to summarise the key findings of the present case study, to discuss the contributions to knowledge and research in the field, to consider limitations of this research, and also to make recommendations for future research. This research employed a single exploratory case study to investigate a group of CFL beginner learners' use of social networking technology to develop their intercultural communicative competence. The first section is an overview of this research, followed by a summary of key findings to the central research questions around how GCSE Mandarin learners used social networking technology to develop their ICC in this case study, and then some possible implications of this study. Finally, considerations of the significance and limitations of this study, as well as recommendations for future research will be discussed.

6.2 Overview of this study

This research intended to present a detailed description and interpretation of a single case of a GCSE Mandarin class's use of social networking technology to connect with their language partners and to develop their ICC, by attempting to answer the following two sub-research questions:

- **Sub Question 1:** In what ways did a group of CFL beginner learners use social networking technology to build a Community of Inquiry in this case study?
- **Sub Question 2:** How did a Community of Inquiry lead to a group of CFL beginner learners' ICC development in this case study?

The present research is a single longitudinal exploratory case study researching into the particular phenomenon of CFL learners' use of social networking technology to develop ICC in its natural setting over two academic years (2015-2017) - a GCSE Mandarin class at a comprehensive secondary school in the UK. This thesis aims to present a trustworthy account of this case by providing a transparent description and interpretation of the methods and analysis. In this case study, direct data was recorded and derived primarily from asynchronous Edmodo forum posts and WeChat text/voice chats, and notes of synchronous Skype video conferences, where a group of CFL beginner learners practised their Mandarin skills to develop ICC. The researcher, as the Mandarin teacher, observed students' communication and interactions with language partners as a participant in the social networking groups directly. Meanwhile, direct data was supported by indirect data. This involved keeping a researcher diary to note down participants' critical incidents online, their informal feedback and questions, language partners' and parents' informal comments, and the researcher's thoughts upon them, which all contributed to the follow-up questionnaires and interviews. The main methods employed in this case study include:

- Longitudinal participant observation of the process of nine CFL Mandarin students' creation of a Community of Inquiry using social networking technology, their social and intercultural communication and interactions with peers and language partners, and a record of all online chat history (see section 3.6.2.1);
- Field notes to capture unexpected activities and critical incidents taking place in the present Community of Inquiry, informal feedback from participants and language partners, and the researcher's reflections upon them (see section 3.6.2.2);
- Three sets of questionnaires with GCSE Mandarin students on their views and experience of using social networking tools to develop their ICC (see section 3.6.2.3);

- Two rounds of semi-structured interviews with two most active and two least active social networking users, and a final focus group interview with all the nine GCSE Mandarin students (see section 3.6.2.4).

6.3 Major findings of this study

This research dealt with the teaching of a strategically important but difficult language to the UK (Mandarin) at GCSE level. It was an account of a two-year long case study in using social networking tools (i.e. Edmodo, WeChat, and Skype), to develop both L2 Chinese language proficiency and intercultural communicative competence, in a group of nine young CFL beginner learners at a comprehensive school in the Midlands of UK. There are several key findings in the present case study. One significant finding is that the group of CFL learners did create a Community of Inquiry that provided more exposure to discipline-specific concepts in the target language using social networking technology. Within this Community of Inquiry, the group of GCSE Mandarin students' intercultural interaction and social communication, authentic interpersonal relationship-building, and real-life problem-solving, developed their intercultural competence of the skills of interaction, discovery, relating, interpreting, as well as their openness and curiosity. Based on the CoI analysis framework, social presence was the category of presence that was most often identified in the current case study, followed by cognitive presence, and then teaching presence.

Secondly, all participants enjoyed full access to the multimodal features of social networking tools, which was believed to have contributed to their sustained motivation and continues engagement in the exchange project. Some learners benefited more than others depending on their degree of participation and autonomy. These results were

consistent with Fisher et al. (2004) in that computer-mediated communication could promote learner autonomy and intercultural understanding at secondary level. The present Community of Inquiry provided substantial purposeful communication which prompted various unplanned topics and informal conversations that were of interest to the group of GCSE Mandarin students. It can be concluded that participants' sociocultural communication and translanguaging in the social networking technology in this case study supported the group of GCSE Mandarin students to develop their Mandarin skills which promoted their linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse competences of ICC. It was believed that the real-life topics and events significantly contributed to participants' increasing motivation and development of their attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness of ICC (Byram, 1997).

To conclude, this study found that social networking technology was not simply a way of covering up the cracks or offsetting the limitations of CFL challenges in the UK. It has a wide range of positive advantages and potentials which may enhance CFL beginner learners' Mandarin learning and intercultural exchange, and therefore bring more possibilities for their ICC development. It was believed that good teaching and effective pedagogy around ICC involve not only lots of planning and preparation from the teacher side but also sustained engagement and participation from the students. It was found that successful teaching in ICC can always create more opportunities for students, and can be resourceful and able to make learning relevant, inspiring and enjoyable to learners. Social networking technology in this research helped to connect all GCSE Mandarin learners with real Chinese young people of similar ages and created more authentic learning resources that were needed to reach CFL learners' full potential. The researcher argues that the benefits of using social networking tools in this case study were based on its social

and multimodal nature and how similar the social networking interfaces were and appeared to the much more familiar social media that were used by young people from both China and UK every day in this digital age. Under these circumstances, social networking technology has the potential to make CFL learning more interactive, communicative, intellectual, intercultural, and most importantly, relevant and inspiring to motivate young learners to become more effective intercultural speakers. The researcher argues that ICC could be one of the central goals of foreign language education, and this goal could be achieved through a variety of methods including the sociocultural and intercultural approaches with the help of social networking technology. It was believed that “translanguaging” and collaborative learning in a Community of Inquiry could be a practical and useful approach to enable CFL beginner learners to become comfortable using the target language gradually while developing intercultural competence. Nevertheless, this research was only one possible exploration of teaching ICC in Chinese using social networking tools, and therefore welcomes alternative designs on supporting CFL beginner learners to become globally competent intercultural speakers.

6.4 Implications of this study

There are some possible implications of this research as an increasing number of schools in the UK are now teaching Mandarin Chinese. As a British Council Language Trends Survey (Tinsley and Board, 2014) pointed out, almost as many primary schools now teach Chinese as German, which makes Mandarin as one of the four languages most taught, and the increases in primary Mandarin provision are possibly in line with government funding (Tinsley and Board, 2017). Research reports indicated that Mandarin is the strongest of the lesser taught languages with an increase from only 7-8% of state secondary schools offering Chinese in 2005 to 13% in 2016, plus 46% of independent schools (CfBT, 2016). According to a British Council (BC) Language Trends survey, in the “other languages”

category, in 2016, Chinese accounted for the largest number of entries (Tinsley and Board, 2017). Also, there were increases in sixth form Mandarin provision, although this is related to the increasing number of Chinese native speaker pupils in the independent sector schools (Tinsley and Board, 2017). This means there will be more CFL beginner learners at schools in the UK who may need to develop intercultural communicative competence to become globally competent intercultural speakers (OECD, 2018).

There have been 29 Confucius Institutes located in different universities in the UK to promote Mandarin Chinese and many aspects of Chinese culture, and there is also a growing network of 143 school-based Confucius Classrooms by the end of 2017 (Hanban, 2017). Meanwhile, in 2016, the UK government committed 10 million pounds to a project to promote and grow the Chinese teaching and learning in schools (Tinsley and Board, 2017). This four-year Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) is a government scheme to increase the uptake of Mandarin in English schools (DfE, 2016). The aim of this scheme is to have at least 5,000 young people speaking Mandarin by 2020 and at least 100 newly qualified Chinese teachers by the end of the programme (DfE, 2016). Participating schools will receive support from UCL Institute of Education (IOE) and the BC across England. Pupils undertaking the programme study eight hours of Mandarin Chinese a week starting from Year 7, consisting of four hours of classroom taught lessons and a further four hours of self-study, homework and intensive learning. This £10 million money was dedicated to the language known as Putonghua or Mandarin (literally, the Common Language - this will be discussed more in section 2.2.1), which was declared as the official language of mainland China in 1956 (Higgins and Sheldon, 2001). Mandarin Chinese has official status in China, Taiwan, and Singapore, is the most spoken language in the world with nearly 900 million speakers, and is the second biggest online language after English (BC, 2017). The British Council Language Trends Report also pointed out that Mandarin was identified

as one of the five most important foreign languages for the future of the UK (BC, 2017). Under these circumstances, several implications can be drawn from the present empirical and exploratory case study.

Firstly, findings of this case study revealed that a group of GCSE Mandarin students used the social and multimodal features of social networking technology to demonstrate both synchronous and asynchronous communication in authentic real-world contexts, which contribute to their linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences (Byram, 2015). Moreover, this finding confirms the importance of creating more opportunities for CFL learners to actually perform purposeful communication and informal conversation in different cultural contexts in a Community of Inquiry. The researcher argues that the use of modern technologies, despite its affordances and constraints, could create an online community to move students from decontextualized classroom performance to contextualised real-world proficiency in the 21st century (Garrison and Anderson, 2003). The relevant implication for CFL education is that if CFL learning could be facilitated with social networking technologies and led with real-world inquiries and interactions around target language and culture, language skills and intercultural communicative competence might follow more effectively.

Secondly, this present case study also found that the group of GCSE Mandarin learners enjoyed the informal and multimodal features of social networking tools, which was believed to have contributed to their social presence in a Community of Inquiry. All participants preferred using text messages, translanguaging, and non-linguistic features to cognitively negotiate around Chinese language and culture, and socially interact with language partners who were of similar ages. The present Tandem style exchange project provided the group of CFL beginner learners with sufficient opportunities to participate in

authentic conversations and informal interactions (Mackey and Goo, 2007) which allowed them to conduct open communication to explore triggering events and resolve intercultural misunderstandings freely. Therefore, the researcher argues that another implication of this research is that, the social nature of social networking approach, no matter which specific social networking tool is adapted or used, might have the potential to develop CFL students' ICC, by allowing them to socially explore the target communities and identities, to actively engage with the real-world issues, and to understand both cultures better. The immediate positive feedback from target language partners were believed to encourage and motivate CFL beginner learners, which will have pedagogical implications on designing effective activities using social networking tools and feed into eTandem learning guidelines and activities.

Thirdly, the results from this case study indicated that the group of GCSE Mandarin learners benefited from typing Mandarin posts and messages and writing more Chinese characters, which contributed to the improvement of their GCSE Mandarin writing and reading skills the most. The researcher argues that this was closely related to their development of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence of ICC (Byram, 2015). In the present research, the translanguaging texting activity helped participants to train and test their Mandarin writing skills, and the story co-writing and WeChat postcard exchanging activity translated into their increased Mandarin compositionability. This finding echoed previous research on the 21st century literacy suggesting that writing practices in the digital age consist of non-traditional activities like using online communication tools to send instant messages, which are socially mediated and situationally specific (Greenhow and Gleason, 2012). The interconnection of culture and learning could be incredibly multifaceted and consistently mediated by language (Jin and Cortazzi, 2012). Therefore, the researcher argues that the third implication of this study

is that CFL students' relationship with handwriting is changing in the 21st century, and young people like GCSE Mandarin learners rely much more on texting and typing to improve their language skills. Hence, social networking technology could be used to promote CFL students' L2 literacy development in this digital globalised world.

Furthermore, it needs to be stressed that the group of GCSE Mandarin learners enjoyed using their own mobile devices to connect with language partners at any time anywhere and the implication on the ban of 'bring your own device' (BYOD) school policy was evident. An important issue raised by this research was the school policy with regard to students' personal mobile phones or devices, which may have substantially hindered the impact of technology in this study. The restriction on students using their own devices is a widespread policy in UK secondary schools and may be an evolving situation. In this case study, the most active participants reported that they used their own devices to check language partners' messages after school everyday and even the least active ones used their own devices once a week during the weekends. All the GCSE Mandarin students used social networking tools to communicate with their language partners at least once every two weeks at school using laptops and more often through their own mobile devices after school or during weekends based on their own needs. Students used their own mobile devices to communicate with link school language partners for two academic years: 1) in one big Edmodo group with nine small pairs of language buddies; 2) via two Skype video call activities for all the nine pupils; and 3) one big WeChat group with several small private chat groups. Teachers who are keen for schools to be at the forefront of technology use can see the possibilities BYOD offers for learning and for students who are equipped with sophisticated smartphones. They are cautious about the possible safeguarding, cyber-bullying, security and inequity issues that accompany the use of smartphones in schools. Teachers may find the distraction potential of smartphones to be threatening to perceptions

of orderly of smartphones, despite the huge potential they offer for learning and engagement. However, the researcher argues that using their own digital devices could help to connect with distant language partners and develop students' multiliteracy and ICC more efficiently in today's world. If there were sufficient funding, schools and future researchers could provide mobile data plans and Wi-Fi to allow language learners to BYOD and use their own mobile devices for intercultural exchanges safely and freely. It was believed that every student should have the same opportunities in today's digital world to reach their full potential. In the field of eTandem and CALL for intercultural learning, research on BYOD of CFL beginner learners at school has been under-represented therefore this case study could be a contribution.

6.5 Originality and contributions of this study

The present case study on using social networking technology to develop secondary CFL beginner learners' ICC was original. Existing studies in the area of intercultural communicative competence mainly concern English as a foreign language and other European languages. This research has addressed the scarcity of empirical findings in social networking technology enhanced Mandarin learning at secondary level. Although there was increasing number of research on developing ICC in higher education, little research has been devoted to how to develop a group of GCSE Mandarin students' ICC in a secondary context. Therefore, the topic of this explorative case study could be of high relevance to the areas of Chinese as a foreign language education and applying social networking technologies to develop and assess intercultural communicative competence of CFL beginner learners in the UK secondary context. The originality of this research is that it involved a two-year empirical case study to examine how and why social networking tools could promote the creation of a Community of Inquiry and provide more

opportunities for ICC development.

The researcher agreed strongly that it is necessary to support learners “who have no realistic prospect of visiting” the target country and culture with access and opportunities of Internet-based exchange opportunities (Roberts, 1994:51). In this case study, all the participants were from deprived areas who, due to economic reasons, did not have any experience of learning or using Mandarin in China or other countries where Mandarin is spoken. The intercultural approach in this research offered a possible alternative to traditional classroom-based Mandarin learning and created potential ways to help a group of CFL beginner learners to communicate directly with native members of Chinese culture. In the present Community of Inquiry, the group of GCSE Mandarin students often demonstrated their openness, curiosity, knowledge of cultural differences, skills of discovery and interaction, skills of interpreting and relating, and critical cultural awareness by critically evaluating cultural differences, relating the target culture to their own culture, and solving practical problems which are key aspects of ICC development (Byram, 1997). As S8 concluded, although the present Community of Inquiry helped them to develop ICC from exchange related to the particular Chinese language and culture, their intercultural competence will be useful when interacting with speakers of other languages and cultures as well in a general sense.

This case study was a part of a bigger literature into intercultural communicative competence, social networking technology, interactionist second language acquisition theories, an online community of inquiry, communicative language teaching and learning, and technology-enhanced language pedagogy in general. The originality of this research bridges the gaps in and contributes to the intersection of these areas by extending knowledge of theories in the Chinese as foreign/second language context. This exploratory

case study indicated that social networking technology could contribute to CFL learners' ICC development, by creating a Community of Inquiry where genuine social and intercultural communication around Chinese language and culture could take place. This may have lowered GCSE Mandarin learners' Affective Filters and generated more opportunities for Comprehensible Input and Pushed Output to happen. These original findings shed further insights on the understanding of teaching and developing ICC in Chinese.

In addition to the confirmation of some findings from the prior literature, this study also nuanced the understanding of using social networking technology to develop CFL learners' ICC at English secondary schools. This research echoed several findings in the previous literature. For example, in the present study, the multimodal features of social networking tools made the intercultural exchange, purposeful communication, informal conversation, and instant feedback much easier for all the group members. This research also echoed Swain's (1985) argument that when pushed to produce output, L2 learners could benefit from more self-reflection and metalinguistic reflection, and develop syntactic and semantic processing, as well as L2 autonomy. Therefore, this case study suggested that to develop ICC in Chinese, input alone may not be sufficient and output is highly necessary for helping learners to really develop their language competences and to respond to incomplete understandings. In the present Community of Inquiry, participants identified the gap between what they wanted to say and what their current language competence allowed them to produce, and most importantly to reflect on their Mandarin learning and ICC development continuously.

Moreover, the findings of this study reinforced the notion that using the target language meaningfully and pragmatically in social situations is one of the most effective ways to

make progress (Kessler et al., 2012). In this Community of Inquiry, GCSE Mandarin students reported that their translanguaging practices and purposeful communication with native language partners contributed to their Mandarin academic skills and ICC development. For instance, when using the target language and translanguaging, they sometimes attempted to express meanings in the forms of Mandarin, but partly using their knowledge, habits, and logics of mother tongue - English, therefore producing all sorts of interlanguage in a Community of Inquiry. The present research extends our understanding of the practical approaches of employing relevant CoI and ICC theories in the CFL context. The findings in this research further revealed that ICC could be developed gradually in a Community of Inquiry in that GCSE Mandarin learners' social communication and intercultural interaction with peers and language partners contributed to the development of their ICC. The intercultural communications in the social networking tools successfully helped the group of CFL beginner learners to develop their Communicative Competence (Linguistic Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, and Discourse Competence) and Intercultural Competence (Knowledge, Attitudes, Skill of Discovery and Interaction, Skill of Relating and Interpreting, and Critical Cultural Awareness) based on Byram's (1997) ICC model. Possible pedagogical implications with the CoI framework and ICC model can be drawn from the present case study which may enrich practitioners' and policy-makers' understanding of developing ICC in Chinese.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to bear in mind that this research was never a blind promotion of using ICT in language teaching and learning. Instead, this case study of a GCSE Mandarin class was designed to be an exploration of the potential of using social networking technology for a group of CFL beginner learners to develop ICC. The innovation of this exploratory case study was that this project enabled students to use a range of social networking tools and devices to expand their classroom learning of Chinese

into their daily lives and the real world. In this case study, GCSE Mandarin learners were not learning GCSE Mandarin and developing ICC in a class but in a community. They demonstrated the ability to sustain intercultural contacts and maintain spontaneous work outside of school, which is a fundamental contribution of technology use to language teaching and learning. What determined the students' development of particular macro-skills was the nature and affordances of social networking tools used in the present Community of Inquiry. Throughout this thesis, hopefully, the readers could notice that this was a particular case in which the findings were based on careful preparation of an intercultural exchange project and actual practices within and beyond Mandarin classes. Therefore, it was hoped that this thesis could enrich a better observation and understanding of how the potential of social networking technology would be realised in the UK secondary education context for CFL beginner learners.

6.6 Limitations of this study

Looking back, there were several key limitations in this case study. For example, as discussed earlier, the real-life visit from Chinese language partners must have impacted on participants' online behaviours. Although the activity was featured as a voluntary exchange activity and it was designed to be authentic, the fact that the researcher was the teacher is likely to have impacted student engagement- although this could result in more or less engagement with activities. The given tasks were based on the Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook and used partially for pedagogical purposes in the natural teaching and learning settings. In other words, the researcher's participation might have triggered some CFL students to write more posts or messages at certain times. Also, the researcher's posts and messages on Edmodo and WeChat provided a lot of target language input to the students but this study mainly focused on the learner's use of social networking technology

so did not analyse the researcher's involvement in more details. In future studies, more analysis of the teachers' participation may provide a more balanced perspective to the bigger picture of using social networking tools to develop ICC in Chinese.

Also, there were limitations of methodology in this case study. For example, there were flawed questions like asking participants to assess their own ICC competence in the survey. It was designed that the questionnaires could be one of the various methods to observe and collect more information and data regarding participants' intercultural communicative competences in a Community of Inquiry. After serious consideration, the survey data has been deleted. Given that the sample in this study was such a small number of respondents (a single class of nine GCSE Mandarin students), the findings of this research cannot be generalised statistically. Although this case study may be able to offer some reliability to other researchers and practitioners, it might be wiser to interpret the qualitative findings of this study with caution. This study could not investigate students' private chats as they did not include the teacher in their free communication small groups. Although participants reported these experiences in the questionnaires and interviews, the researcher did not have the opportunity to observe directly the unique characteristics of intercultural communication that may have happened in small chat groups. Also, the researcher did not interview all the nine participants but chose four in the first two rounds. These aspects of limitations could be remedied or avoided in future studies.

6.7 Recommendations for future study

Looking forward, there are several possible recommendations for future study. Firstly, it is worth conducting further relevant research into CFL learners' use of social networking technology in different cases or scenarios, in order to test the results and findings emerging

from the current case study. As the picture of Mandarin provision in the UK is developing, there are more opportunities to investigate CFL learners' ICC development. For example, the school in this study did not get any support from the Confucius Institute, but it could be interesting to see how Confucius Classroom Mandarin learners or the Mandarin Excellence Programme learners use social networking technology to use the target language to talk to real Chinese people. Also, the school where the researcher conducted the research did not allow students under 16 to use their own mobile devices at school so that the participants had to use school-based laptops to use Edmodo and their own mobile phones after school. However, it could be really interesting to see how students can develop their ICC in Chinese if allowed to bring their own devices (BYOD) to school. Therefore, future studies could explore the situation of BYOD in a CFL setting, to examine how Mandarin learners' use of social networking tools can contribute to their Mandarin learning and ICC development. The researcher believes that it would be better for CFL learners to use their own phones, if they all have them, which is the way forward in technology.

Additionally, in this study, participants reported that they talked much more frequently in smaller private groups which the researcher had no direct access to. Therefore, it is unknown how GCSE Mandarin students interacted with their language partners in those smaller private social networking groups, and to what extent these contributed to their ICC development. It may be a very different set of data to look into for future studies. This thesis did not report the researcher's teaching activities in more detail as it was not the focus of the current study. However, for future researchers, it might be worth studying teachers or instructors' perspectives on and experience of using social networking technology to develop ICC in different CFL contexts.

One additional recommendation is that other research designs and methods could be used to explore this topic, such as a bigger sample of GCSE Mandarin students using social networking technology to learn Chinese language and culture in the UK, or an experimental design using two or more groups of CFL learners developing intercultural communicative competence (e.g. at least one study group using social networking technology and one comparison group without using these tools). These two possible methods were too difficult to carry out by one researcher in a limited time and space. However, future researchers could pay more attention to different methods and methodologies into the same area, given sufficient time and funding. It would also be helpful for policymakers (e.g. Department for Education in the UK, or Hanban in China) to provide relevant teacher training or professional development programmes to help CFL teachers in terms of developing students' intercultural communicative competence.

Related publication

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet



University of
Nottingham
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

School of Education The University of Nottingham Participant Information Sheet

Dear students,

I am writing to ask for your permission to participate in some work I am doing for a research degree (Ph.D.) at the University of Nottingham. The research I am doing is based on my teaching and your use of social networking sites/apps to learn and practise Mandarin. Below is some important information about this research:

Project Title

How can Social Networking Contribute to CFL Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence

Researcher

Jingjing Ruan, School of Education, the University of Nottingham

Introduction

You are invited to consider participating in this research project. This study is a part of a Doctoral study undertaken by Jingjing Ruan (Student No. 4230574) at School of Education, the University of Nottingham. The purpose of this project is to examine how social networking technology can enable you to develop intercultural communicative competence (ICC). This information sheet describes the nature of this study and your rights as a participant. You can decide whether you participate or not. If you decide to participate, please sign your name on the Consent Form.

Explanation of the Study

As part of the study, you will be invited to use some social networking tools for educational purposes. At the beginning of the study, you will need to join an Edmodo private group on school-owned computers in Mandarin lessons. This is not a mandatory part of your lessons and will not affect your assessment in any way. Edmodo is an educational technology company

offering communication, collaboration, and coaching tools to K-12 schools and teachers. The Edmodo network enables teachers to share content, distribute quizzes, assignments, and manage communication with students, colleagues, and parents. You will need to use Edmodo to communicate with your peers and interact with your language partners who are native speakers of Mandarin. Your use of Edmodo will be strictly monitored by the researcher within the private group. The researcher has a DBS clearance and will monitor your use of Edmodo according to school E-safety and Safe-guarding rules. Your language output will be recorded and collected as research data to analyse the development of your language competence and intercultural understanding. This project will take place at the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. During these two years, you will be provided with other private and safe social networking opportunities via Skype and WeChat. Your participation is totally voluntary.↵

The research would like to invite you to take part in some questionnaires and follow up interviews about your opinions of using social networking technology to develop your intercultural communicative competence. I am interested in your views of learning Mandarin on Edmodo, what you like/dislike about using it, and whether/how it has helped you with your Mandarin learning and ICC development etc. The questionnaire will be distributed to you at the end of academic year about your experience and opinions of using Edmodo to learn Mandarin. The interview will take you no more than 30 minutes during lunch time at our school. Your conversation with the researcher in the interview will be audio-recorded. If you agree to take the questionnaires and interviews to give the researcher more in-depth information, please tick the box and sign your name on the Consent Form.↵

↵

Anonymity and Confidentiality↵

The anonymity of your information is respected. All data collected in this study will be treated with strict confidentiality and will only be used for academic purposes. The data will be stored securely for seven years in the university hard drive. Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to it. Your response and answers are completely confidential.↵

↵

Your Participation↵

Your participation in this study is totally voluntary, free from any coercion. Any harm to you will be avoided and you may withdraw at any time. Your participation will not affect your assessment in any way. If you have any questions about this research, you can contact the researcher Jingjing Ruan (ttxjr38@nottingham.ac.uk) and her supervisors Dr. Jane Medwell (Jane.Medwell@nottingham.ac.uk) and Mr. Tony Fisher (Tony.Fisher@nottingham.ac.uk). If you wish to complain about your participation of this study, please contact the Research Ethics Committee (educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk). Thank you very much for your kind help!↵

↵

Appendix 2: Consent form for students



University of
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School of Education,
The University of Nottingham,
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM.

Project title: How can Social Networking Contribute to CFL Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence.

Researcher's name: Jingjing Ruan.

Supervisors' names: Dr. Jane Medwell; Mr. Tony Fisher.

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand the purpose of the research and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any time and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that my use of Edmodo will be monitored and recorded throughout the study. My language output on Edmodo will be collected and stored as data. I will be audio-recorded during the interview, and the audio will be transcribed and used as data. The data will be stored safely, and only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to it.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher Jingjing Ruan (ttxjr38@nottingham.ac.uk) or her supervisors Dr Jane Medwell (Jane.Medwell@nottingham.ac.uk) and Mr Tony Fisher (Tony.Fisher@nottingham.ac.uk), if I require further information about the research.
- I understand that I may contact Research Ethics Committee (educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk), if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.
- I agree to take part in the questionnaires and interviews.

Signed (research participant).

Print name **Date**

Appendix 3: Consent form from Parents/Carers or Guardians

Dear Parents/Carers or Guardians,

I am writing to ask for your permission to include your child in some work I am doing for a research degree (Ph.D.) at the University of Nottingham. The research will be based on your child's use of some social networking tools to learn and practise Mandarin skills and to develop their intercultural communicative competence. For example, Edmodo is an educational technology company offering communication, collaboration, and coaching tools to K-12 schools and teachers. The Edmodo network enables teachers to share content, distribute quizzes, assignments, and manage communication with students, colleagues, and parents. Your child's use of social network will be monitored and recorded in order to analyse their intercultural communicative development. I am very interested in what your child thinks about using social network and therefore would like to invite your child to take part in some questionnaires and interviews. The interviews will be about their views on the use of social network to develop intercultural communicative competence, and they will be audio-recorded. Your child's participation is totally voluntary and whether they participate or not will not affect their assessment in any way. They can withdraw at any time. If you would like your child to participate in this case study, please sign your name on the consent form. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Consent Form for Parents/Carers or Guardians Permission for Research with Children under 16

I have read the information sheet concerning the research project entitled How can social networking contribute to CFL learners' intercultural communicative competence, conducted by Jingjing Ruan from the School of Education, University of Nottingham. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive any additional details I wanted about the study.

I acknowledge that all information gathered on this project will be used for research purposes only and will be considered confidential. I am aware that permission may be withdrawn within 30 days of giving consent without penalty by advising the researchers.

I realize that this project has been reviewed by and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at University of Nottingham, and that I may contact this office if I have any comments or concerns about my child's participation or involvement in the study.

If I have any questions about the study, I can feel free to contact the researcher via email jingjing.ruan@nottingham.ac.uk.

Yes – I would like my child to participate in this study.
No – I would not like my child to participate in this study.

Child's Name (print) _____
Parent or Guardian Signature _____ Date _____
Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix 4: A letter to the gatekeeper of the school

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

Dear Mr. X,

My name is Jingjing Ruan, and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Nottingham. I have been observing Mrs M's Mandarin lessons since December 2014 and started working in your school as a Mandarin teacher at the MFL department since September 2015. My DBS clearance form has been submitted to the HR in our school.

The case study I wish to conduct for my Doctoral research involves the exploration of how to use social networking sites/apps to support GCSE Mandarin students to develop intercultural communicative competence in English secondary schools. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Jane Medwell and Mr Tony Fisher at the School of Education, University of Nottingham.

I am hereby seeking your consent to invite some of my GCSE Mandarin students to be participants for this case study. Their participation will be totally voluntary and they can withdraw at any time. The research will be based on their use of safe social networking technology (e.g. Edmodo, Skype and WeChat) to learn and practise Mandarin skills and to develop intercultural communicative competence, which will be strictly monitored according to school Safe-guarding policy and E-safety regulations. Whether students participate or not will not affect their assessment in any way.

I have provided you with a copy of information sheet about my research and a copy of the approval letters which I received from the Research Ethics Committee, University of Nottingham. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via jingjing.ruan@nottingham.ac.uk. I would be grateful for your permission and I will also seek the participants' and their parents'/carers' permission. Thank you very much for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Jingjing Ruan

School of Education

University of Nottingham

Appendix 5: Research ethics approval forms

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form



The University of
Nottingham

2015/45 /MO

Name: Jinhjing Ruan
Main Supervisor: Jane Medwell and Tony Fisher
Course of Study: PhD
Title of Research Project: Using WeChat to learn Chinese as a foreign language

Is this a resubmission? Yes

Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office: 16/04/15

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

Thank you for addressing the issues we raised earlier. We wish you good luck with your research.

I consider this research to be above minimum risk

☐

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee. <http://www.educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx> <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines> If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Outcome:

Approved ☒

Revise and Resubmit ☐

Signed: *Mary Oliver*

Name: Dr Mary Oliver
(Research Ethics Coordinator)

Date: 27/04/2015

School of Education – Research Ethics Approval Form



The University of
Nottingham

2015/62/MBi

Name: Jingjing Ruan
Main Supervisor: Jane Medwell and Tony Fisher
Course of Study: PhD
Title of Research Project: How can social networking contribute to CFL learners' intercultural communicative competence?
Is this a resubmission? Yes
Date statement of research ethics received by PGR Office: 16/11/15

Research Ethics Coordinator Comments:

I now approve this. Good luck with your research.

I consider this research to be above minimum risk

☐

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you and your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the University Research Ethics Committee. <http://www.educationstudentintranet/researchethics/index.aspx> <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Ethical%20Guidelines> If you have any concerns during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice and refer again to the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee.

Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Outcome:

Approved ☒

Revise and Resubmit ☐

Signed: *Mary Biddulph*

Name: Mary Biddulph
(Research Ethics Coordinator)

Date: 23/11/15

Appendix 6: Exemplar answered questionnaires

Using educational social networking tools to learn Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language

Dear students, we have been using private and safe educational social networking tools (e.g. Edmodo, Skype, WeChat etc.) to learn and practise Mandarin skills during this academic year. Your feedback are very important for my PhD study and will be considered to form future teaching. Please feel free to answer as truly as possible. Thank you very much for your kind help! :)

1. Which social networking tools have you used to learn/practise Mandarin?

- ☒ Edmodo
☒ Skype
☒ WeChat
☐ Youtube
☐ Other (please specify)

* 2. What do you think of the statements below about using Edmodo?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Sure/Not Applicable |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I enjoy communicating with my language partner in the small group. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy communicating with many people in the big group. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer to use Edmodo at school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer to use Edmodo at home. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy reading the posts sent by teacher (e.g. Today's Chinese). | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy choosing what we learnt to make my own sentences. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy making sentences based on pictures that teacher sent. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Sure/Not Applicable |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I enjoy using Edmodo to do paperless homework. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think teacher's quick feedback helps with my Mandarin learning. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think teacher should correct my language mistakes directly and immediately. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my interaction with Chinese students on Edmodo helps with my Mandarin learning. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy sending posts/messages/images to Edmodo. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer to view others' posts than sending my own ones. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy replying/commenting to others' posts. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy others replying/commenting to my posts. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy sharing my learning progress (e.g. Quizlet Test Score) with others on Edmodo. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin reading skill has improved by using Edmodo. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin writing skill has improved by using Edmodo. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin speaking skill has improved by using Edmodo. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin listening skill has improved by using Edmodo. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my communicative competence has improved by using Edmodo. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Sure/Not Applicable |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I think Edmodo helps with my Mandarin vocabulary building. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think Edmodo helps with my intercultural understanding. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Using Edmodo makes me more confident when communicating in Chinese. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel a sense of learning community by using Edmodo. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would like to continue using Edmodo more often next year. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other (please specify) | | | | | | |
| - Carry on using wechat as well. | | | | | | |

* 3. What do you think of the statements below about using Skype?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Sure/Not Applicable |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I enjoy using Skype video conferences to talk with Chinese students. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy asking questions in Chinese. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy answering question in Chinese. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer British students speak Chinese and Chinese students speak English for the whole time. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer all the people speak Chinese for half time and speak English for half time. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Sure/Not Applicable |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I think my real time interaction with Chinese students via Skype helps with my Mandarin learning. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin reading skill has improved by using Skype. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin writing skill has improved by using Skype. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin speaking skill has improved by using Skype. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin listening skill has improved by using Skype. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my communicative competence has improved by using Skype. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think Skype helps with my Mandarin vocabulary building. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think Skype helps with my intercultural understanding. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Using Skype makes me more confident when communicating in Chinese. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think I can make better preparation and talk more. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer live real time communication like Skype video conferences. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel a sense of learning community when having Skype conferences. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would like to continue using Skype next year. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other (please specify)

- Get a better communication to talk easier of skype connection

* 4. What do you think of the statements below about using WeChat?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Sure/Not Applicable |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I enjoy using WeChat to communicate with Chinese students. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer to talk in the big WeChat group. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prefer to talk with Chinese students individually via WeChat. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy sending text messages. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy sending voice messages. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy sending images/pictures/emojis. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I enjoy using WeChat moments timeline. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my interaction with Chinese students via WeChat helps with my Mandarin learning. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin reading skill has improved by using WeChat. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin writing skill has improved by using WeChat. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin speaking skill has improved by using WeChat. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think my Mandarin listening skill has improved by using WeChat. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Not Sure/Not Applicable |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I think my communicative competence has improved by using WeChat. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think WeChat helps with my Mandarin vocabulary building. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I think WeChat helps with my intercultural understanding. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Using WeChat makes me more confident when communicating in Chinese. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel a sense of learning community in the WeChat group. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would like to continue using WeChat more often next year. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other (please specify) | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| * 5. What do you particularly like about using Edmodo/Skype/WeChat? Why? | | | | | | |
| I like being able to get to know the students because their lines are different to ours. | | | | | | |
| * 6. What do you particularly dislike about using Edmodo/Skype/WeChat? Why? | | | | | | |
| - Sometimes they don't reply or the connection is bad | | | | | | |

* 7. What intercultural community learning competences have you developed by using Edmodo/Skype/WeChat?

- ☒ Attitudes/curiosity towards Chinese and my own culture
- ☒ Knowledge of intercultural group communication
- ☒ Skills of relating and understanding cultural events
- ☒ Skills of discovery and interacting intercultural
- ☒ Critical cultural awareness
- ☒ Cognitive skills (information exchange; applying and connecting ideas)
- ☒ Social skills (emotional expression; open communication; encouraging collaboration)
- ☐ Teaching skills (as a helper of the teacher; initiating topics; building understanding)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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* 8. What difficulties/issues have you encountered when using Edmodo/Skype/WeChat?

Sometimes you can't send things because of the connection.

* 9. What suggestions/advice do you have for future use of Edmodo/Skype/WeChat?

Speak more individually to students.

10. I am interested in your individual experience and views of using social network to learn Chinese language and culture. Please leave your name here if you are willing to do an interview via phone or WeChat with me next week. It would be a huge favour to me. Thank you so much for your kind help and time! :)

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Appendix 7: Exemplar interview transcript extract

Date: 24/03/2016; Place: School S

Interviewer: R

Interviewee: E

<Transcript begins>

R: Thank you for being willing to take part in this interview. Let me first of all assure you that you will remain completely anonymous and no records of this interview will be kept in your name.

E: Yes, I am aware of that.

R: OK, Let's begin. Allow me to start with a general question. Why do you learn Chinese?

E: I think it's a really interesting subject, and it'll be helpful in the future when I want to get a job and it's also very creative cause you think of ways to remember the characters yourself.

R: So you think it's helpful for your future career and then you find it interesting.

E: Yes.

R: How did you feel when you knew that you can talk to real Chinese people?

E: I'm excited because you get to learn about the culture as well as the language, like, how they live, what is like to live in a different country. So it was very interesting.

R: What kinds of culture did you learn from the Chinese students?

E: They have very different manners to us. And the way like conduct themselves is different. And they are all very polite and they tell us about what they like to do and they actually have similar interests to us.

R: What do you think of your communication with them?

E: I think it's nice that we get to speak to them on messages but we also get to see them face to face. Because it means that we can get to know each other over words but then also like interact with them face to face. And being able to actually see them and have them as exchange was really helpful.

R: What do you think of the role of interaction in a language learning experience?

E: I think it improves your speaking and listening a lot because you learn to remember what you need to, you listen to the main points and like you don't have to remember all of it and then your speaking because you can respond and you can use things that they've said to you to apply.

R: How would you like to interact with them in the future?

E: I think I'd like to keep seeing them because we all get along really nicely and we all had a lot of fun while they were here so I'd carry on speaking to them on WeChat. And video calling them when we can. And hopefully go over there and see them in October.

R: Have you tried the video calling in WeChat?

E: No I haven't but I think some of the other students have.

R: How do you think this kind of social networking tools helped language learning?

E: It's improved my reading of Mandarin and my writing as well. Because I can speak to them in either language and it means that I learn more words that are actually used genuinely by Chinese people.

R: When talking to Chinese students, how do you know that they can understand you?

E: They usually tell me if they don't understand. So if they don't understand something they say could you say that again. If I've said a voice message or they ask me to rephrase it or say it in Mandarin if I sent it in English.

R: Does it happen to you when you don't understand their messages?

E: Yeah but usually I use the translate option on the app so that helps me understand them.

R: So if they sent text messages you can press them to translate. What about other kinds of messages?

E: If I don't understand the voice message, I'll listen to it again. But then if I really don't understand it then I'll ask them to rephrase it or say it in English if I didn't understand any Chinese of it.

R: What went really well in terms of your communication with them?

E: I think we got to know each other very well. We found out that we have a lot of mutual interests. We both like the same things. And also we could both practise the languages that we are learning like I could message her in Chinese and she could message me in English. And it helped my writing skills and that was really useful.

R: What do you think can be even better?

E: I think I'd like to get to know more Mandarin students because they are nice. The group we got at the moment we get to know them and we've seen them and we spent a lot of time with them but it would also be nice to like find out about people from other parts of China where the culture is even more different from here. And maybe video call them more often cause we've not seen them in quite a while. So it'll be nice to see them more.

R: Have you noticed any difference about the communication with Zhuhai students and Shanghai students?

E: I think they are different cultures. But I haven't noticed that much differences cause we are only messaging using like words and voices, but i suppose when we go over there we'll notice a very big difference between their manners that they have.

R: How do you feel about the activity of postcards?

E: Emm. It definitely helped my reading and I learnt a lot more words from it. and it was also a bit more personal than the message because it was longer and it was written by hand. And it helped me find out a lot about the person so that was good.

R: About the shorter messages on WeChat you mentioned, are they more difficult or easier?

E: I think it depends because if they message me in Chinese and it was very long and it has a lot of structures that I didn't understand, I would most likely have to use the translate button. And when it was a short sentence, it was easy to understand because you could use your knowledge of radicals to guess the characters.

R: Before talking to Chinese students, do you make any preparations?

E: Not usually. I just kind of let the conversation flow because you are more likely to find out more about each other than... because you can talk more freely and open you know about whatever it is in conversation we can make itself.

R: Any communication experience that made you feel disappointed about?

E: Not really. My partner didn't speak to me for a very long time, however I tried to have a conversation. So that was a bit awkward. But we got there eventually. They were just very quiet and shy. It was hard trying to start a conversation because they weren't replying or it was one word answers.

R: How often do you use the social networking tools?

E: Recently I haven't spent a very long time on it cause I have been revising and stuff. But when they were coming over, I was trying to go on it as much as I could so that I could get to know them before they came to England. And when we first got it on I was going on it quite regularly and checking the group chat and speaking to my partner. So it is very useful.

R: Do you feel more confident after using these tools for the exchange?

E: Yeah, because if I hadn't known them before they came over there, it would have been really difficult and probably more scary for them as well. Cause they wouldn't know who they are staying with and it would be like meeting a stranger for the first time. Because we already knew what we were interested in, we could talk about things that we had topics we wanted to speak about.

R: You mentioned in the earlier questionnaire that you think the exchange was really helpful for you to learn the culture of China. Can you give me an example please?↵

E: Like we could find out about how they have different manners to us. So they don't like to take things unless it's insisted upon and they take it. They have very different...like daily routines to us. Like they don't often take a shower at certain time or they are very different to us in that way. ↵

R: So you noticed many differences between them and us. Any examples that your partner offended you in terms of the manners?↵

E: No.↵

R: Do you think you have offended your Chinese friends accidentally?↵

E: No I don't think so. I'm pretty sure they didn't anyway. ↵

R: What do you think of the impact of things learnt in the classroom on the real-world communication?↵

E: It's useful because we could speak about our hobbies, and sports that we enjoyed, and our local facilities that were around us and our house and pets and family and things like that. So good conversation topics.↵

R: Anything you think are not useful?↵

E: A few words I'm unlikely to use in the real-world but they will be useful if I want to like take it further and learn like the whole language and be able to eventually maybe become fluent in it. So it would be useful just to know words that will not be necessarily be used in every day conversation but might have to be used in an emergency or things like that. ↵

R: What do you think is the impact of the real-world conversation on your classroom learning?↵

E: Yeah, my reading and my learning and my speaking and my writing have all been improved by speaking to them because messaging you learn to write Chinese more words especially better with the postcards and with listening you can listen to their speaking while they were here with the Chinese exchange; and the reading was reading the postcards and reading the messages and things like that. It really helped me improve my skills. ↵

R: I can see that you got both A*s in Mock Reading and Listening after this exchange and these learning activities. ↵

E: Thank you. ↵

R: That's really impressive. Do you think you are an intercultural speaker?↵

E: I think I'm not quite there yet, but I'm trying my hardest to get there. I think when I go to China, it would be really really different and it will be difficult at first but my friends have been on other exchanges and said that your listening improves so much and your reading as well because you are surrounded by the language. So I'm hoping that I'll improve a bit more.↵

R: What's the image of intercultural speaker on your mind?↵

E: The ability to kind of be able to speak in whichever language and understand whichever culture and fit in to any country you kind of need to. And you don't necessarily tie yourself down to be in a certain culture, you can fit yourself to different ones.↵

R: What do you think of the concept of global citizen?↵

E: Hmm I think you have to play a part in the world and you have to work together with people from other countries because that's the only way the world's going to be like together and have peace. And I think it's very important that we increase the way we communicate with other countries because you are less likely to have misunderstandings with them if you speak their language and understand them more. ↵

R: Do you think learning Chinese helped you to be a global citizen?↵

E: I think so because it's a good language to learn if you want to improve your language learning skills. And also it'll help me understand people from other cultures more especially China. ↵

- R: In previous interview, you mentioned that your language partner always wanted to speak in English. Can you talk more about that?↵
- E: I think I'm just going have to turn the tables when we go back to China and I'll speak in Chinese more. Because I wanted to try practise my Chinese while they were here but they didn't want me to speak Chinese at all. They wanted only to practise their English, which is a bit disappointing because I was hoping to practise my Chinese speaking, but I think it was easy for them to just be able to practise their English while they were here. And I just think when I go to China, I'll just have to try to speak Chinese a lot.↵
- R: Have you ever noticed any mistakes during your conversations?↵
- E: It's been a few grammar mistakes that I just simple...but you can still understand the messages like it's nothing the wrong word, or sometimes they struggle to find the right word and you have to tell them what they were trying to say. So no nothing like big mistakes, just small grammars. ↵
- R: Do you check your messages before sending them?↵
- E: Usually yes. If it's a short message, then not usually. But if it's a very long message, I tend to check them before, I just want to make sure they make sense. I'm not going to confuse them. ↵
- R: How do you check them?↵
- E: I read through it myself. And then looks in my book if I've used the word that I've not necessarily got perfectly in my mind yet. Whereas if it's a new word that I don't know and I need to look up, I'll use that app that we used that begins with P.↵
- R: Pleco?↵
- E: Yeah that one. Or Google translate or Yellow Bridge usually. ↵
- R: Do you evaluate other students' posts or messages sometimes?↵
- E: Not usually. If it's in a big group, then I have a lot of messages to catch upon sometimes I just use the translate button cause it's quicker. Or if I don't understand it, I'll just use the translate button. Generally I just read through the messages quickly. ↵
- R: About the big group conversations in Edmodo and WeChat, have you spotted any changes of how people use them? ↵
- E: Not really. I think we all got on very well. I think we all just got on normally really. There's not really much change.↵
- R: Are you aware of any challenges that other students encountered in intercultural conversations?↵
- E: Emm I think other students may struggle with certain aspects of it. Like I know I find Listening quite difficult and Speaking quite difficult. And other students find reading and writing more difficult. But yeah we have a very supportive teacher who helps us so it's fine.↵
- R: Haha thank you. Now looking at your previous questionnaire answers, you have stongly agreed with some points. And I need to know more about it. Right, you think that social networking tools helps with your intercultural understanding, why?↵
- E: Well, we have links to websites about Chinese culture or festivals which I read about and find out more about celebrations that they have in the country. And then also people talk about on their own pages what they are doing and that's interesting because it's from a real person and what they are actually doing and it's very realistic. It's what they actually like, so that helps you understand more about the culture. ↵
- R: Do you think intercultural understanding is important or not for language learning?↵
- E: Yes, because if you don't understand the culture, then the language doesn't really mean anything. ↵
- R: You strongly agree that you enjoyed using video conferences.↵
- E: Yes.↵
- R: How do you think that can help with your language learning?↵

E: I think it definitely improves speaking and listening because you are directly speaking to each other. And you can see each other. And it also improves the knowledge of the culture and their schools and because you can see what they are like.↵

R: You strongly agreed that social networking tools created a sense of learning community.↵

E: Yes.↵

R: Why?↵

E: Because we can get to know them like they are like real friends who are actually here. When they came over, we are already really good friends with each other because we've spoken to each other on these social media. I mean if we haven't had the social media, we would've... it would've been quite awkward if we wouldn't have known each other. And it would've taken longer than we had here to get to know them when we could've been having a lot of fun if we'd already been friends with them. And it makes us know more about them as well as them know more about us. So we have conversation topics that we can use.↵

R: Have you got any advice for future students who want to use the social networking tools to communicate with Chinese students?↵

E: I think you should just make the most of it while you got it don't be shy about who or what you are saying or what they are saying. Because the more like yourself you are, the more likely you are going to find someone who is similar to you. And then you'll become much better friends because you can't really become friends with someone who don't know much about you.↵

R: Do you think being friends with them is important?↵

E: I do I think because you get to know them better and then it helps you to know yourself better. They help you with your language and you can help them with their language learning. And that helps.↵

R: What do you think are the key characteristic of Chinese culture?↵

E: I know Mianzi means someone's reputation is very important and must be respected: if you make someone lose face they will cut off the relationship. And hmm Guanxi is like you should return favours for people, like you scratch my back I'll scratch yours. Also, Zhongyong means living in the middle and between the two extremes: like don't be too ambitious or too lazy.↵

R: Have you noticed any stereotypes of Chinese culture?↵

E: Yes. I think a stereotype is an idea that everyone believes they should or should be conformed to, but isn't necessarily true. It is typically the first thing that pops into your mind when you think of someone. For example, people think everything is made in China, all Chinese people are clever, they eat animals like dogs and cats, everyone is rich, China is very political, they are all very quiet etc.↵

R: Okay. What do you think are cultural differences?↵

E: Cultural differences are how different countries and cultures live differently, including manners and relationships between people. There are some cultural differences between China and UK, for example, Chinese people don't say thank you to close people, they always talk about good things before bad things, they avoid rather than confront problems, and they are quite shy.↵

R: Right. What do you think of intercultural understanding?↵

E: Intercultural understanding is about understanding cultures and that others cultures are different from ours.↵

R: Thank you very much for your time.↵

E: You are welcome.↵

↵

<Transcript ends>↵

Appendix 8: Exemplar feedback from Chinese partners and English parents

Chinese language partners' feedback:

Format: WeChat messages in Chinese with [English translation]

S3 EE's language partner C3 YN:

我最开始加入 Edmodo 小组和英国学生聊天的时候，希望可以找到一个比较开朗乐观外向的好朋友。我已经找到了她叫 EE！嗯哈哈，EE 特别好，我很喜欢她，她很外向很热情，跟我交流一会我们就成为好朋友了，我很喜欢她的性格。微信上面的沟通是我想中的，嗯，很好，气氛也很棒，一点都不会尴尬，因为我们在 Edmodo 上面已经聊过一段时间了。我们沟通的时候，EE 主要是用英语，有时候也会说一些中文，毕竟她只学了 3 年中文，这样已经很不错了！她们一起写的故事很有脑洞啊！我有给她看过中国菜的照片，也简单介绍了一下中国和上海，她很希望可以来到中国。我很希望明年 EE 可以来到上海，我也会热情地招待她。☺

[translation: I hope to find a relatively optimistic and outgoing friend when joined the Edmodo group to chat with English students. I have found her. She is EE! Ah ha-ha, EE is so nice, and I really like her. She is very outgoing and enthusiastic. It didn't take long before we communicated with each other and became good friends. I really like her characteristics. The communication in WeChat is as good as I expected. The atmosphere is awesome, and there is no awkwardness at all, because we have chatted for a while on Edmodo. When we communicate, EE mainly uses English, and sometimes she also uses Chinese. This is not bad at all, as she only learnt Chinese for 3 years after all. The stories that they wrote are quite creative. I have showed her pictures of Chinese dishes, and introduced China and Shanghai to her. She really hopes to visit China. I hope that next year EE can come to Shanghai so that I can welcome and treat her as my guest. ☺]

S9 ZE's language partner C9 YH:

在加 Edmodo 的时候我想看到一些学校的照片啊什么的然后可以聊聊天互动互动，发现上面图片发的还是少，然后微信这发的多。我平时主要用微信跟英国学生沟通，英文，中文都会用，而且我主要是和我的语伴 EZ 私下聊天，其他小伙伴也经常和 EZ 聊天，还说她是万能的 EZ！哈哈，因为她可以和大家用纯中文聊天，还经常在英国下午放学后和大家说 sweet dreams。她发言很多，她抱怨说自己的中文名发音像“作业”哈哈！我发言也很多，我喜欢在微信上面跟英国学生互动，Skype 也很好，就是视屏通话的时候有点卡可能是网络的问题。我觉得微信比较强大，微信也可以像 Skype 那样

语音，视频，就是没办法在电脑上很方便的使用，那个微信网页版很垃圾，就是放大版的手机，更繁琐了。但是比 Edmodo 好一点，Edmodo 没有打电话和视频这一项功能。对了，微信有个翻译功能 ZE 说很好用，但准确度不太好；扫一扫也有一个扫单词这个类似的。她还学会了发朋友圈！^O^ 我们从他们发的照片，文字，可以了解他们的一些想法啊或者爱好什么的。他们一发，我就去给她们点赞，但是我觉得最理想的就是可以视频通话，能够更好的直接问来了解对方的爱好啊或者是那边的一些习俗文化这种。↵

↵
[translation: When I joined Edmodo, I wanted to see some photos of the school and chat with them. I found that they didn't send as many pictures as I expected, but they did much more in WeChat. I mainly use WeChat to communicate with English students in both English and Chinese. And I mainly talk to my language partner EZ in private in small group. Other Chinese students talk to her too, and they said EZ is very versatile. Ha-ha, because she can use Chinese to communicate and she often say good night 'sweet dreams' to us when it's after school in England. She talks a lot and she complained that her Chinese name sounds like 'homework' in Mandarin. I talk a lot too and I prefer to use WeChat to talk. Skype is good but sometimes the internet is not working when we are Skyping. I think WeChat is very powerful because you can use it to make voice or video calls just like when you use Skype, although its web version is rubbish – like an oversized phone screen but not that convenient any more. However, it's still better than Edmodo, because you cannot make calls with Edmodo. BTW, ZE said the translation function in WeChat is very handy, although the accuracy is not that good; you can also scan the words to translate. Also, she learnt how to send WeChat moments! ^O^ We can learn about some of their ideas and hobbies from their photos and posts. Whenever they post anything, I'll click the like button. But I still think the best communication way is to make video calls so that we can ask directly about what they like and their customs and cultures and things like that.]↵

↵
English parents' feedback:↵

↵
S3's parent: ↵

↵
WeChat and Skype really helped this time, otherwise they would still be complete strangers to each other. They talked with language partners and knew who to host and made good preparation early on, which made things a lot easier. I think the WeChat app really helped with their communication and exchange. She is using it every day. They became so close that she immediately hugged her partner when she arrived to stay with us in January. She was so sad to see her leave but they can still use WeChat to keep in touch with each other. So that's good.↵

Appendix 9: A list of chapters and topics in Edexcel GCSE Mandarin textbook

Carruthers, K. (2009). Edexcel GCSE Chinese Textbook. Publisher: Edexcel.

| 1 我的生活 wǒ de shēng huó MY LIFE | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---|----|
| 复习 fù xī 1 | Review 1 | Revising basic Chinese | 6 |
| 复习 fù xī 2 | Review 2 | Understanding basic introductions | 8 |
| 1 我喜欢 wǒ xǐ huan | 1 I like | Likes and dislikes | 10 |
| 2 我的父母 wǒ de fù mǔ | 2 My parents | Jobs and daily routines | 12 |
| 3 我的朋友 wǒ de péng you | 3 My friends | Describing people | 14 |
| 4 爱好 ài hào | 4 Hobbies | Asking yes/no questions | 16 |
| 5 国籍 guó jí | 5 Nationalities | Talking about places you have visited | 18 |
| 口语 kǒu yǔ | Speaking assessment | Preparing for a speaking task (open interaction) | 20 |
| 写作 xiě zuò | Writing assessment | Preparing for an extended writing task about a famous personality | 22 |
| 重要语言点 zhòng yào yǔ yán diǎn | Key language | Key words and phrases in Chapter 1 | 24 |

| 2 学校 xué xiào SCHOOL | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|----|
| 复习 fù xī | Review | Talking about school subjects | 26 |
| 1 我的学校 wǒ de xué xiào | 1 My school | Saying where things are | 28 |
| 2 学校的一天 xué xiào de yī tiān | 2 My school day | Expressing opinions | 30 |
| 3 学校比较 xué xiào bǐ jiào | 3 Comparing schools | Making comparisons | 32 |
| 4 校服 xiào fú | 4 School uniform | Talking about school uniforms | 34 |
| 5 学校生活 xué xiào shēng huó | 5 School life | Talking about school in more depth | 36 |
| 听力和阅读 tīng lì hé yuè dú | Exam – Listening and Reading | Preparing for the Listening and Reading exam | 38 |
| 口语 kǒu yǔ | Speaking assessment | Preparing for a speaking task (presentation) | 40 |
| 写作 xiě zuò | Writing assessment | Preparing for an extended writing task about school | 42 |
| 重要语言点 zhòng yào yǔ yán diǎn | Key language | Key words and phrases in Chapter 2 | 44 |

| 3 空闲时间 kòng xián shí jiān LEISURE | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|--|----|
| 复习 fù xī | Review | Sports and hobbies | 46 |
| 1 运动中心 yùn dòng zhōng xīn | 1 The sports centre | Talking about sports facilities | 48 |
| 2 课外活动 kè wài huó dòng | 2 Activities outside school | Frequency and duration of activities | 50 |
| 3 爱好和兴趣 ài hào hé xìng qù | 3 Hobbies and interests | Talking about hobbies and interests | 52 |
| 4 锻炼身体 duàn liàn shēn tǐ | 4 Exercise | Talking about keeping fit | 54 |
| 5 奥运会 ào yùn huì | 5 The Olympic Games | Talking about sports in more detail | 56 |
| 口语 kǒu yǔ | Speaking assessment | Preparing for a speaking task (picture-based discussion) | 58 |
| 写作 xiě zuò | Writing assessment | Preparing for an extended writing task about hobbies | 60 |
| 重要语言点 zhòng yào yǔ yán diǎn | Key language | Key words and phrases in Chapter 3 | 62 |

4 媒体 MEDIA

| | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|----|
| 复习 fù xī | Review | Understanding basic information about media | 64 |
| 1 BBC 和 CCTV BBC hé CCTV | 1 BBC and CCTV | Giving opinions about the media | 66 |
| 2 电视 diàn shì | 2 Television | Giving opinions about programmes | 68 |
| 3 上网 shàng wǎng | 3 Surfing the net | Talking about preferences | 70 |
| 4 电影和音乐 diàn yǐng hé yīn yuè | 4 Film and music | Talking about films and music | 72 |
| 5 名人 míng rén | 5 Celebrities | Talking about people's lives | 74 |
| 6 不同的生活 bù tóng de shēng huó | 6 Different lives | Making comparisons | 76 |
| 听力和阅读 tīng lì hé yuè dú | Exam – Listening and Reading | Preparing for the Listening and Reading exam | 78 |
| 口语 kǒu yǔ | Speaking assessment | Preparing for a speaking task (open interaction) | 80 |
| 写作 xiě zuò | Writing assessment | Preparing for an extended writing task about films | 82 |
| 重要语言点 zhòng yào yǔ yán diǎn | Key language | Key words and phrases in Chapter 4 | 84 |

5 我住的地方 wǒ zhù de dì fang WHERE I LIVE

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---|-----|
| 复习 fù xī | Review | Talking about the home and where things are | 86 |
| 1 我的家 wǒ de jiā | 1 My house | Describing people's homes | 88 |
| 2 我的城市 wǒ de chéng shì | 2 My town | Talking about where places are | 90 |
| 3 我住的地方 wǒ zhù de dì fang | 3 My local area | Using adjectives to give opinions | 92 |
| 4 方位 fāng wèi | 4 Where things are | Using 在 and place words to describe locations | 94 |
| 5 问路 wèn lù | 5 Finding the way | Asking for directions | 96 |
| 6 留学体会 liú xué tǐ huì | 6 Exchange visits | Making comparisons | 98 |
| 口语 kǒu yǔ | Speaking assessment | Preparing for a speaking task (presentation) | 100 |
| 写作 xiě zuò | Writing assessment | Preparing for an extended writing task to advertise your house and area | 102 |
| 重要语言点 zhòng yào yǔ yán diǎn | Key language | Key words and phrases in Chapter 5 | 104 |

6 度假 dù jià HOLIDAYS

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|-----|
| 复习 fù xī | Review | Revising weather and transport | 106 |
| 1 天气 tiān qì | 1 The weather | Talking about the weather | 108 |
| 2 交通 jiāo tōng | 2 Transport | Talking about different means of transport | 110 |
| 3 度假经历 dù jià jīng lì | 3 Holiday experiences | Talking about a past holiday | 112 |
| 4 假期计划 jià qī jì huà | 4 Holiday plans | Talking about the future | 114 |
| 5 订旅馆 dìng lǚ guǎn | 5 Booking a hotel | Asking and answering questions | 116 |
| 6 旅行安排 lǚ xíng ān pái | 6 Making travel arrangements | Talking about sequences of activities | 118 |
| 听力和阅读 tīng lì hé yuè dú | Exam – Listening and Reading | Preparing for the Listening and Reading exam | 120 |
| 口语 kǒu yǔ | Speaking assessment | Preparing for a speaking task (picture-based discussion) | 122 |
| 写作 xiě zuò | Writing assessment | Preparing for an extended writing task about a past holiday | 124 |
| 重要语言点 zhòng yào yǔ yán diǎn | Key language | Key words and phrases in Chapter 6 | 126 |

Appendix 10: Examples of Edmodo posts and WeChat chats

Note: Examples of Edmodo dialogue in Group 9 (S9 and C9)



to Group 09 and

wow how nice dont you have classes today? ☺

[Translate](#)

Unlike (1) • 26 Replies • Share • Following Oct 27, 2015, 2:01 PM

S9

没有 no hah in england we have 1 week off of holiday ☺

Like • Reply • Oct 27, 2015, 2:07 PM



☺in china we must have classes every day , we can only at 5 pm leave school in addition to the weekend I am busy but happy at weekend because i join a pop band and a chrus ☺ on sunday i always go [More...](#)

[Translate](#)

Like • Reply • Oct 27, 2015, 2:24 PM



oh! Its time to go to bed! good night ~*(^o^)* I will talk to you tomorrow! ~

现在我该睡觉了! 晚安: 明天跟你聊天哦 ^_^

[Translate](#)

Like • Reply • Oct 27, 2015, 2:27 PM



Wow, a pop band! That's amazing! (☆_☆) 太好了! 我爱篮球但是我不会好打篮球 哈哈 明天聊! ♥ 晚安

Like • Reply • Oct 27, 2015, 2:44 PM



我今天作业好多☹☹I have to do much homework

[Translate](#)

Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 11:58 AM



什么科目? ☺ what subjects?

Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 12:05 PM



Translate

Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 12:22 PM



Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 12:32 PM



Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 12:33 PM



Translate

Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 12:36 PM



Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 12:41 PM



Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 12:42 PM



Translate

Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 12:59 PM



Translate

Like • Reply • Oct 28, 2015, 1:01 PM

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>to Group 09 and</p> <p>明天是万圣节！ Its halloween tomorrow! I am so unprepared! Haha</p> |
| | <p>Unlike (2) • 9 Replies • Share • Following Oct 30, 2015, 3:54 PM</p> |
|  | <p>oh! my god! i didnt online at that time . i didnt hear from you~ sorry! 😊😊</p> <p>Translate</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 6, 2015, 1:02 PM</p> |
|  | <p>its okay! hahah you are more busy than me~ 😊 halloween was really fun, i went to a party</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 7, 2015, 11:17 AM</p> |
|  | <p>wow! it is intersting isnt it ? I went to have the violin lesson on that day😊派对是不是很有趣？那一天我去上小提琴课了😊😊😊😊</p> <p>Translate</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 7, 2015, 11:55 AM</p> |
|  | <p>小提琴课 violin lessons, that is so awesome. i am starting guitar lessons!~ 😊</p> <p>Yes halloween is really fun😊今天我觉得恶心😊但我有很多作业~ 🐼</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 8, 2015, 12:14 PM</p> |
|  | <p>嘿嘿😊 we will have a mid-term exam about chinese and physics 🐼and the exam will keep 3 days I am not ready for the exam😊😊</p> <p>我们明天要进行一次期中考试 关于语文和物理 考试会持续3天 但是我还没有准备好😊</p> <p>Translate</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 8, 2015, 12:22 PM</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>the exam will go on for 3 days / the exam will be 3 days long-* 🐼 omg that is so long!!! 加油 🐼💖 我不太喜欢科学 哈哈 我也有科学考试，化学考试🐼 我也还没有准备好 aaahh~ 😊 我们两个人都太不好 🐼 哈哈</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 8, 2015, 1:11 PM</p> |
|  | <p>wowok! 哈哈yes🐼🐼 科学 is very complex I think🐼 We must remember many knowledge point! 😊😊</p> <p>Translate</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 8, 2015, 1:23 PM</p> |
|  | <p>i agree 😊 i had my test today and it wasnt bad! i am so relieved hahaha how was your first test?! i bet you are really busy~</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 9, 2015, 6:41 PM</p> |
|  | <p> 我们考试结束了！但是我的数学不理想🐼🐼🐼</p> <p>Translate</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 12, 2015, 9:53 AM</p> |
|  | <p>考试结束了？ woaw 压力了吗？ you finished all of your tests? was it stressful? 🐼 我一点都不喜欢数学🐼🐼 我现在生痛了~ 星期二 i left school 中饭时候因为我觉得很不好，星期三，星期四也不去了学校🐼 你怎么样(^_^)</p> |
| <p>Unlike (2) • 4 Replies • Share • Following Nov 12, 2015, 2:48 PM</p> | |
|  | <p> 生病了？ not痛 It is 生病了。 🐼🐼 你现在病好了吗？</p> <p>Translate</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 16, 2015, 12:01 PM</p> |
|  | <p> oh yes sorry hahah~ i am feeling okay now! 🐼 i am back at school hah</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 17, 2015, 7:02 AM</p> |
|  | <p>i have so much work to catch up on now 🐼🐼</p> <p>Like • Reply • Nov 17, 2015, 7:02 AM</p> |
|  | <p> oh god 🐼🐼 we have extra lessons every day 🐼 busy🐼🐼 哦我的天 我们现在初二了必须每天放学都补课 很忙！</p> <p>Translate</p> <p>Like • Reply • Dec 7, 2015, 10:51 AM</p> |

Note: Examples of Mandarin chats in WeChat Big Group



Appendix 11: Examples of postcards exchanged via WeChat

From English students to Chinese students:





POST CARD

* English Translation:
Fire emblem fares.

你好! 我叫 ■■■, 我十四岁。我的生日是七月十二号, 我属蛇。你属什么? 我十一岁开始学中文。你喜欢英文课吗? 我爱玩儿电子游戏, 我最喜欢的电游戏叫《火焰之纹章》。你喜欢玩儿电子游戏吗?



居庸关是万里长城著名的古关城。关城设在一条长达20多公里的沟谷当中, 是古代北京西北的重要屏障。明代在此构筑关城并设水、陆两道关门派重兵镇守。

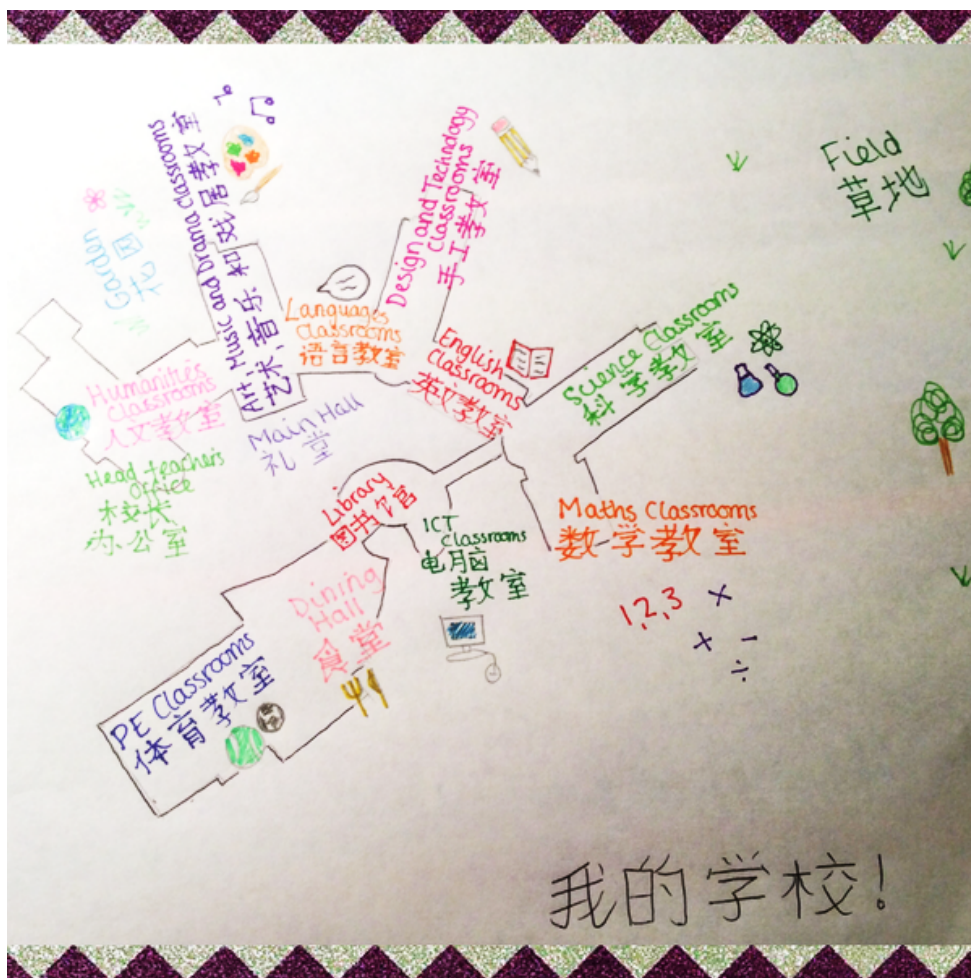
The Juyong Pass, a renowned ancient pass of the Great Wall, serves as an important natural barrier on the northwest of Beijing in ancient times because of its location in a 20-meter-long valley. The Ming Dynasty ordered two passes to be built over-seeing waterways and roads and guarded by military forces.

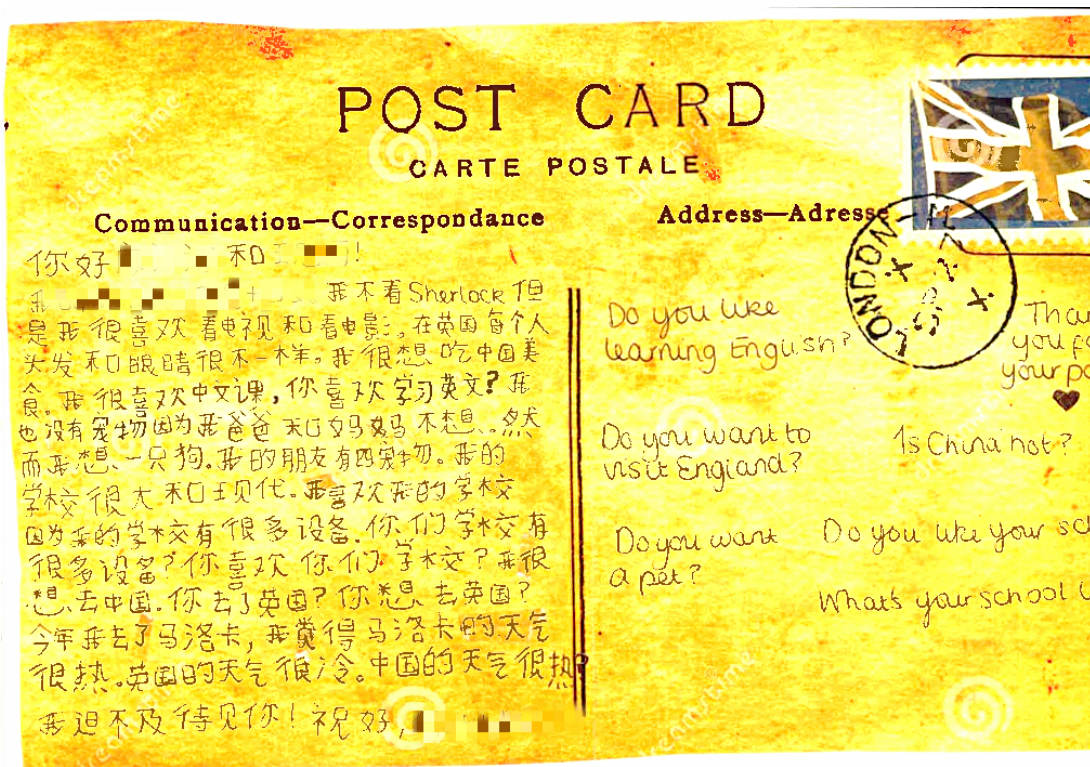
北京名胜 Best Scenery and Sights in of Beijing 摄影: 尚君义 Photo by Shang Junyi

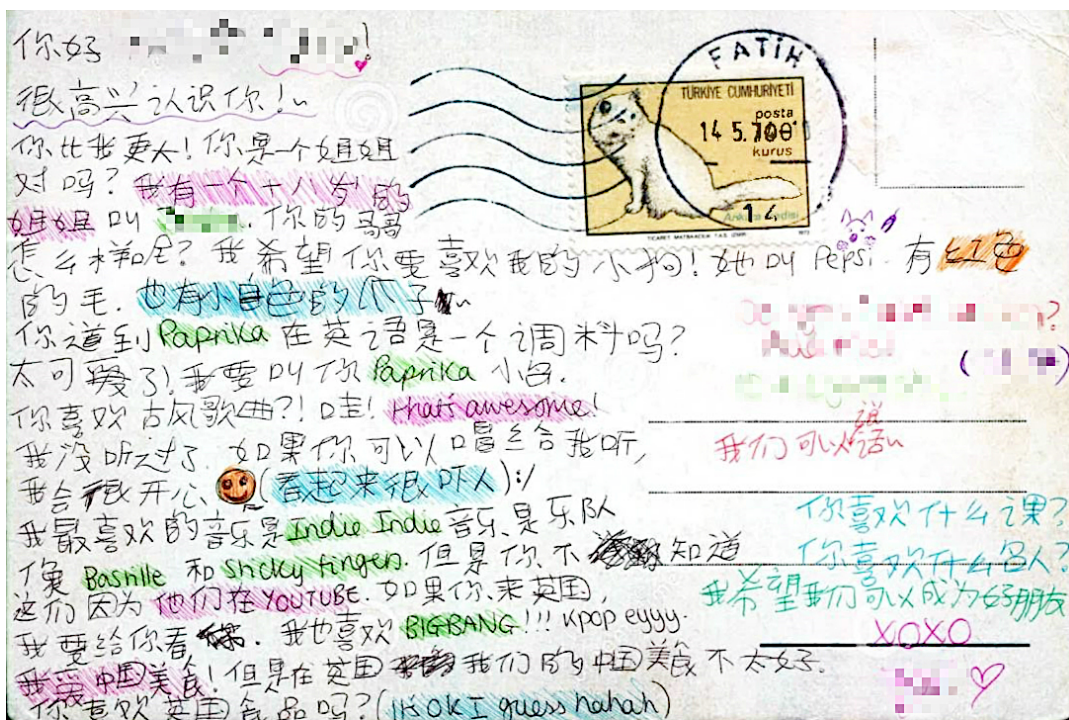


邮政编码:

WUJI...CI-20-4 / 162mm x 118mm Printed in China 紫禁城出版社

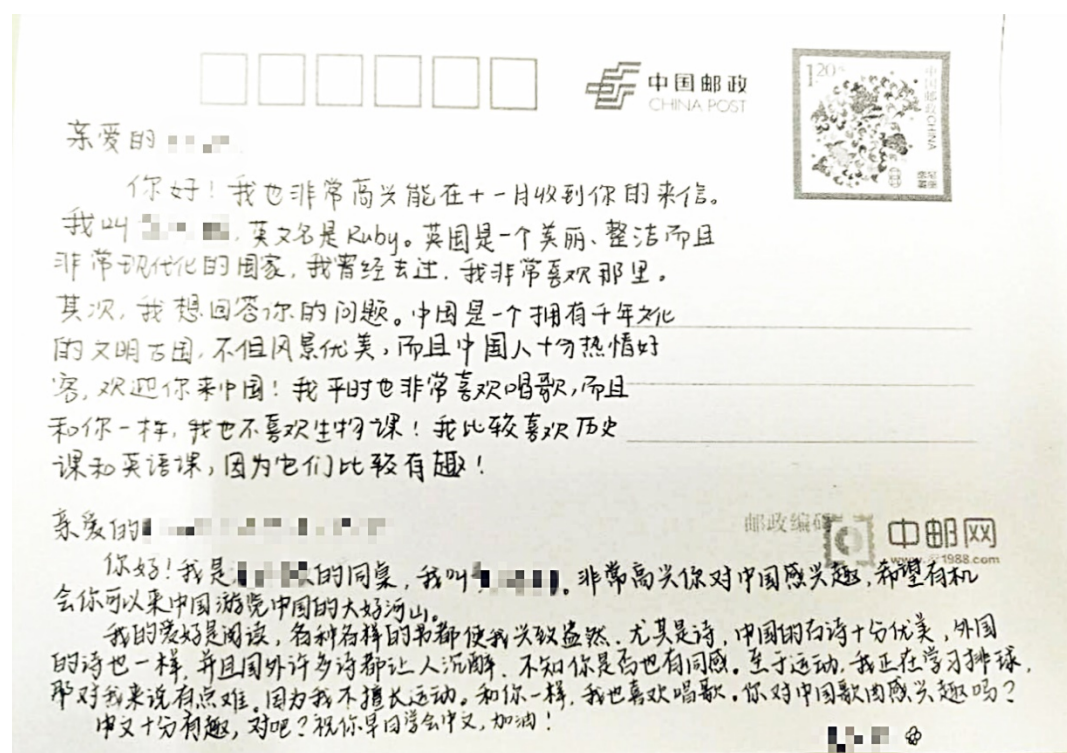
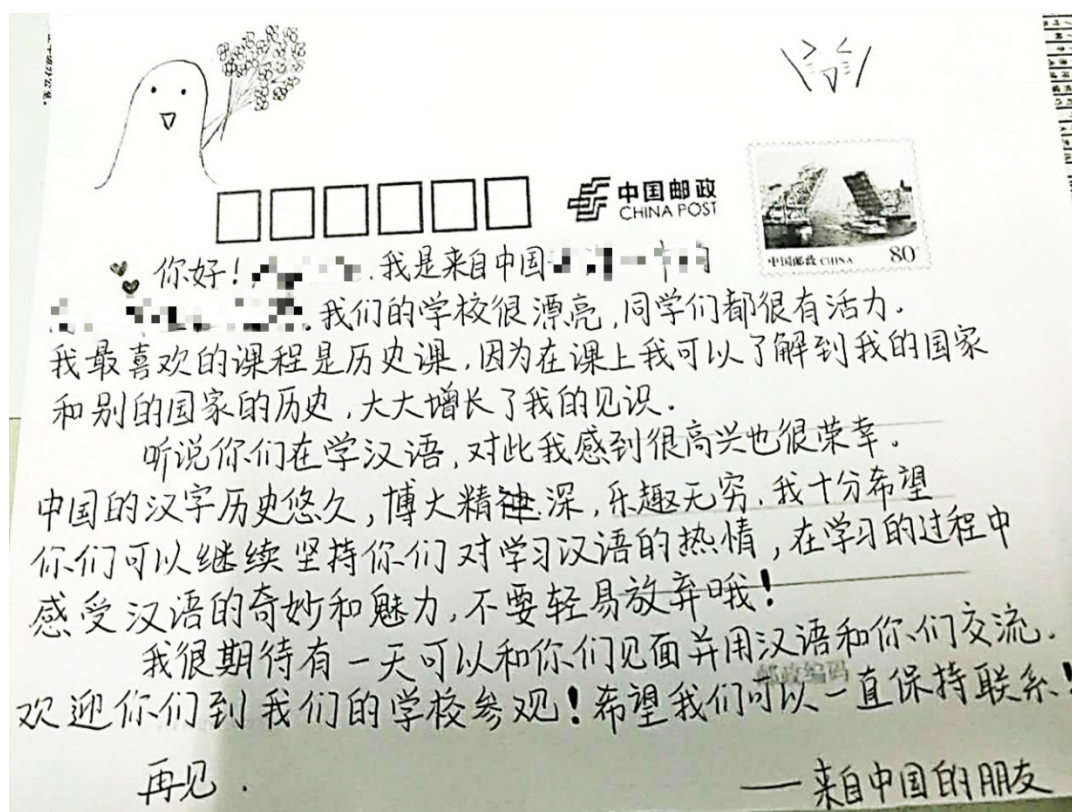








From Chinese students to English students:



亲爱的，：

你好！我叫，，我的生日在5月28日。
我也很喜欢听音乐。你画的画很好看。

你喜欢中国吗？我们也有英文课，也要学英语。

我生活在，这里是一个很美丽的地方，

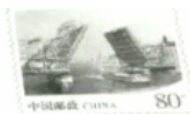
我们的学校有很多树木，空气清新。

我想送一句诗给你和你的朋友：

海内存知己，天涯若比邻。

好好学汉字，加油！

See you.



可爱的，你好！

我叫，你可以叫我 Paprika. 我，呢。（真期待见到
十四岁的，呢~）

你有一个姐姐吗？我有一个哥哥，但是我没有小狗呢。

你的小狗是怎样的呢？

我也喜欢音乐！我喜欢 Bigbang. 我最喜欢古风 Paprika

歌曲——就是有改变的中国传统音乐，我希望
可以唱古风歌曲给你听，你也可以带我去玩~

你喜欢中国美食吗？我以后可以介绍给你，我喜

欢吃的美食（流口水~）

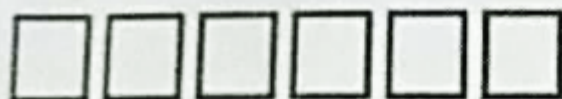
你的汉语表达真的很棒！不过还有三个小错误喔。

很高兴认识你，Zoe!

sister 姐姐（这“一”要更长）

singer 歌手（不是手歌，哈哈~）

音乐很好听（sun-sounds great）



██████, 很高兴能收到你的回信。
感谢有这么个机会能交到你这个朋友。
在回信中, 你介绍了你们的 ██████ 中学
学生很多, 但我们学校有3000多人, 应该比
你们少吧? 我觉得我们学校其实挺好的。
学校活动很多。最近这几天有校运会, 这是
我们一个学期中最开心的, 有游戏摊位,
社团摊位, 还有颁奖晚会。 All the student

China Post logo and stamps (including a 80-cent stamp and a 'bedminton' stamp).

中国
China

你好, 十三岁的 ██████
我是来自中国的 ██████
我也喜欢地理 ☺ 我也喜欢旅行世界 ☺
我家有三个人, 爸爸 (father) 妈妈 (mother)
和我。我家有两只小乌龟 (turtle)
期待你下次能用中文回信呦 ☺
(I wish) 加油学中文哦!
我也在努力地学英语 (ง•̀•̀)ง
一帆风顺 Wishing you every success

我们
都是黑
白
的

羽毛球
bedm
bedminton

你的
头发和眼睛
是什么颜色的
呢?

Appendix 12: Examples of collaborative translanguaging story writing

Carlos现在在哭，因为他没有工作。他想当科学家，但是他不很hardworking。他很穷。他一个人，没有朋友。他很累，因为他没有工作。今天他去了LIDL药店，ask for帮助。他想找工作在那里，但是LIDL的manager说没有工作，因为Carlos没有experience。

然后，他去了Derby医院找工作，他想当牙医。他见面一个护士，叫Lucy，她觉得他很可怜。Lucy送了Carlos去医生那里，因为她想帮助他找工作。Carlos没找了工作，可是他很开心，因为他觉得Lucy很漂亮。他们become了好朋友。

你好，我叫Brenda。我住在南京东路。我爱Bob，但是他不爱我。我想Bob become 我的男朋友，可是Bob有女朋友了！Bob的女朋友是我的姐姐，她叫Margaret。我们聊天了两个月多在手机。It turns out that Bob不知道她是我姐姐。我很伤心。我恨Margaret，因为Bob爱她，不是我。现在我一点恨Bob，我不想要Bob become 我的男朋友，因为Bob不是好的人。

Ben十五岁，有十六个姐姐。有一天，他的大姐问他，你想去公园吗？Ben说，我不想去，因为公园有大风。他的三姐说，我们可以遛狗。那只狗是黑白两色，叫Lemon，很可爱。他的七姐，八姐，九姐，十姐，十一姐是quintuplets。她们长得一样，Lemon不知道她们who's who。

他的爱好是踢足球，打篮球和唱歌。他也喜欢参加吃热狗比赛。昨天，他去了足球场看比赛，但是那个比赛很无聊。比赛的score是零比零。在将来，Ben希望当篮球运动员。因为他很高，他有3.05米高。可是十年后，他篮球打得不好。所以，一个strange球迷用刀cut了他腿。

现在，他打wheelchair篮球。他的篮球比normal 篮球打得好。后来，Ben的十六个姐姐都结婚了，他有八十个侄子和侄女一共。但是他们都很矮，都只有十六厘米高。不幸，他accidently step了他的十侄女。她死了，所以她的soul去了heaven。她每天看Ben的篮球比赛在heaven。

我叫**Pedro**，今年二十一岁。我常常去海边度假，但是去年我去了山区度假。我妈妈爸爸开车去山区。我在车里一边看电影一边看风景。我开心极了。我觉得山区又美丽又安静。有一天，那里有一个**accident**。妈妈爸爸**die**了。那里的天气是了暴雪。

但是我没**die**了。我看了很多动物。他们帮助我回了家。一年后，我想了滑雪和买纪念品，所以我回山区。那一晚，我看了妈妈爸爸在我的**dream**。我哭了很长时间。三天后，我回家。什么时候我再去滑雪，我想看我的妈妈爸爸。

Appendix 13: Examples of field notes in this case study

Sep 8, 2015↵

Today I introduced Edmodo to my Year 9 GCSE students. I plan to use this platform to share useful resources with my students and they can do paperless homework and ask me questions on it so that I can offer them instant feedback. More importantly, I expect them to use it to communicate with each other and with our link school language partners. Somehow I believe one of the best ways to motivate students and to help them acquire a second language is to use it to talk with real people in a natural L2 context. And apart from linguistic skills, students need to develop their intercultural competence at the same time. Edmodo could be a good platform to start with where students can discover cultural differences and hopefully can develop their intercultural understanding. ↵

↵

Sep 10, 2015↵

I shared a website link (www.gotCharacters.com) to Edmodo. This one is very handy for students to check the radicals of Chinese characters. Radicals tell the stories of characters and often bring a cultural background to students' learning. I uploaded some video examples and screenshots of that website to help students understand how to use this resource. Students can access this website out of Mandarin classroom with their own devices so their learning time and space would be extended. ↵

↵

Sep 11, 2015↵

I shared a website to Edmodo (Chinese Grammar Wiki). This one can help children to check Chinese grammar with clear explanations and example sentences. So if they encountered any communication breakdowns from peers or me in L2, they can use this website to check for the structures that they don't understand. ↵

↵

Sep 22, 2015↵

I asked students to post a paragraph in Chinese to introduce themselves as homework. For one thing, they can practise their typing for writing. For another, I can know them better to adjust my teaching to cater for their learning levels and needs. I had a look of their homework and I immediately knew they are still at very beginner stages. Next lesson I need to explain their common mistakes. For example, some use 和 to link two sentences on Edmodo. ↵

↵

Sep 24, 2015↵

I introduced Mrs Z from our link school in Shanghai China to our big Edmodo group. I shared the private group code to her and expected that she would arrange some language partners for our GCSE Mandarin learners to use the target language with. Edmodo can also become an intercultural learning space for students from both countries. LD sent a post to say hi “你好” to Mrs Z and Z said hello back. ↵

↵

Sep 26, 2015↵

Today our link school language partner students joined Edmodo. I invited Shanghai students to introduce themselves like what British students did. Now students from both countries can get to know each other and they can choose to post in English/Chinese/pinyin. EE sent a post greeting Shanghai students (你好学生从上海! Hello students from Shang Hai!). She knew that “from” is 从 and she was trying to use it, though it is error here. LD greeted Shanghai students with a post (你好 尚熹生 Hello Shanghai students). I'm not sure what translation

tool he is using but definitely he is relying on one. I need to remind him of this without demotivating him using Edmodo to talk. EZ is a very clever learner and she was learning by observing my feedback to LD. She posted “你好 上海的同学们！我是！” . NB did the same and sent out his greeting as well (你好上海的同学们). ↵

↵

Sep 27, 2015↵

X from Shanghai sent a post in Chinese and English introducing herself. EM then commented that she likes dancing as well and asked whether they can be language buddies (你愿意做我的语伴吗？我也喜欢跳舞 :) :) :)). X replied “Of course”, which witnessed the first pair of language partners on Edmodo. As promised to students, I created a small group for these two so that they can interact with each other when they don't want to talk in the big group. ↵

I also shared a video about China's Mid-Autumn Festival and talked about Chinese families getting together and eating moon cakes. LD commented “Awesome” and students discussed the differences and similarities between festivals. ↵

↵

Sep 28, 2015↵

T from Shanghai introduced herself in both languages and EE asked to be her language buddy. When T replied “Of course! owo”, EE expressed gratitude with “谢谢！❤”. EE is a hard working girl and is using the target language very actively. A small group is then created for them to communicate with each other. I'm in the small groups as well according to school E-safety policy to prevent any online bullying or similar dangerous behaviours. Mrs Z and I explained to students from both countries again regarding school policies when using social networking tools.↵

↵

Oct 8, 2015↵

I shared a very website (www.mdbg.net) to help students check word pronunciation and meanings to assist their communication with language buddies. Also, I sent Quizlet links of flashcards I created for them so they can revise and use what they learnt to talk to Chinese students. Edmodo is the platform of handy resources and nice talks with Chinese people whenever GCSE students have access to Internet. ↵

↵

J from Shanghai posted about Chinese homework and asked a question about British homework. EZ replied that “你好！～ 有时我没有作业，但是有时我们有很多的作业！我党的我比你没有很多的作业。你们学习非常好！👍😊”. Here she used Chinese to answer a native Chinese speaker's question. A little mistake happened when she used strokes to input 我觉得 (wrongly into 我党的). Then J said Chinese students will normally spent 5 to 6 hours on homework every day. EZ commented again “omg 😊 thats crazy! such a long time, you guys must be tired 很久, 你们一定很累了”. J replied as a result some students would sleep during lessons. Another Chinese student D somehow disagreed with J saying that actually few students sleep in lesson time in China. EZ then posted “Really?! 😊 Awe! In England that would never work, the classrooms are too small haha 真的吗?! 在英国这个不会, 教室太小 哈哈 😊”. LD ended the conversation with a line of laughing Emojis. As an observer, I strongly felt that students are interacting with each other quite well in both languages around the topic homework initiated by a Chinese girl. They are developing social and intercultural communication via Edmodo and they learnt about using words and structures that they learnt. They got to understand the different target culture, and more importantly some of them asked me questions in lesson regarding similarities to relate to

which means that they are reflecting upon their own culture as well.↵

↵

Oct 28, 2015↵

LD sent a post (请描述你的学校😊 Please describe your school😊) to Z in the small group. We haven't learnt the word 描述. Z didn't reply. From my observation, this post is not a natural conversation initiative but is more like an order. Z didn't reply because in Chinese culture that is just not polite especially when two people don't know each other that well. In a platform where you cannot see or hear the speaker, the text post represents the speaker. As the speaker here LD only typed an order like sentence without much friendly small talk or polite explanations, the Chinese girl might think she was not respected well. I am sure LD didn't mean that, but there was a communication breakdown here. I need to explain to LD that he needs to learn from EZ to use the target language more appropriately in a nice and natural manner without offending others from a different culture.↵

↵

Jan 21, 2016↵

J from Shanghai posted in both languages about a modern social communication culture – the use of ‘picture-based text’ in China and then asked GCSE Mandarin students whether it is the case in UK (中国人在聊天时常带文字的搞笑图片来表达心情，中国人叫他们“表情包”，在英国呢？Chinese people often used with text chat funny pictures to express feelings, Chinese people called them "face pack", in the UK it?). She attached two pictures with Chinese characters on to demonstrate what she meant. EZ replied that she didn't see that a lot in UK and she preferred to use Emojis (真的可爱！我不我不知道这些，我经常用 emojis = 😊😍😘😙 但是那只是我~). She is posting in Chinese only and her use of words in quite accurate. Hope her way of communication can serve as good examples for peers.↵

↵

Jun 20, 2016↵

AT posted something about Euro 2016 saying that she is a fan of England team (我是英国兰队的球迷。I am England's team fan). EE said the same and added some more details in both languages (上个星期英格兰 2 比 1 赢了威尔士。Last week England won 2:1 against Wales). LD replied that he doesn't like Russia team because they foul (我不喜欢俄罗斯足球观众因为他们犯规。). EM replied that she thinks Germany will win (我觉得法国，德国，英国兰和匈牙利会进四强。我觉得德国会得冠军。). EZ replied many lines in Chinese saying that she doesn't like football but she likes music and how she thinks of music etc. (我不太知道足球~ 可是，我觉得德国要赢欧洲杯！他们踢足球特别好 🎵 我爱音乐，我喜欢声音可以让你感觉。我想做音乐！我弹吉他的时候我觉得快乐（我不可以好的但是很有趣！）有一个网站叫 bandmate. 正常的人做音乐，在那里他们上传他自己的音乐。有一些真的好听的乐队。我常常用 bandmate 听音乐。你们最喜欢的音乐是什么？). As I observed, EZ really likes using Edmodo to talk in Chinese and she is making so much progress! Although she made mistakes occasionally, her posts are not like post writing but like someone trying to chat very causally. LD posted “RIP 英国” which means “Rest in peace England”. Chinese language partners fed me back informally that they like to talk to EZ and think that EZ's intercultural social communicative competence is very strong. Chinese language partners also appreciated LD's humour as they later found out that England was knocked out by Iceland in Euro 2016.↵

↵

Jan 28, 2017↵

After the exchange visit from our link school, I talked with the host family parents about their

experience. Their feedback are really positive. Parents mentioned that the Shanghai students were quite shy at first, but after several days, they asked hosts more questions and talked more about themselves. Some parents think that the social networking tools are very helpful in terms of helping children to build friendship, so they suggest that we keep using them. Also, they think the new technologies helped children to become friends sooner. Some parents said WeChat and Skype really helped, otherwise they will be complete strangers to each other. Their children talked with language partners and knew who to host and made very good preparation, which made things a lot easier. ↵

↵
All parents wanted their children to visit back to China as they felt that the trust has been built with the help of social networking tools and the Chinese students' visit. In particular, one parent said their another son will come to our school and will do Mandarin in Year 7, so she hopes that her two sons can go to China together with school trips in the future. Also, she mentioned that she works in a local primary school, so she wants to go with all the students if possible to help. Another mum said she wants to go too. Her husband who was there to offer me feedback said, "No, you are not going! Because I am going!" It's a shame that students cannot receive any funding from the Confucius Institute because we are not a Confucius classroom. Anyways, students and parents are enjoying the intercultural communication and exchange by far. Although it is this school's first time to organise such an exchange, the outcomes and feedback have been pleasant and positive. ↵

Appendix 14: Screenshots of NVivo Pro codingsurface

The screenshot displays the NVivo Pro software interface. The top menu bar includes File, Home, Import, Create, Explore, and Share. The main workspace shows a chat conversation titled 'WeChat Big Group'. The chat messages are as follows:

- 21:34 总结 [ThumbsUp]
- 22:27 你们有没有周末的打算?
- 06:32 星期天下午，我骑自行车，你呢
- 06:35 你们都星期天了!?
- 06:36 上海还是星期六呢
- 06:40 为什么? 不知道 [Sticker]
- 06:45 你说星期天下午
- 06:45 星期天 sunday
- 06:50 对，星期天是明天
- 06:52 哦明白了
- 06:52 你说明天下午去骑车 [Sticker]
- 06:56 哦是的，明天下午去骑自行车。给我非常好天气
- 06:57 上海今天雾霾
- 06:58 上海天天雾霾吗
- 06:58 不是每天
- 06:58 [Sob][Sob][Sob]

The right sidebar shows a list of codes applied to the chat messages, including:

- Showing gratitude
- Chinese Culture
- 2.1.1 Solutions
- Resilience
- 1.1.2 Negotiation of meaning
- 2.1.2 Giving praise
- 1.1.1 Sense of puzzlement

The bottom status bar indicates the current code is '1.1.1.Sense of puzzlement (Nodes\Col\Community of Inquiry\1.Cognitive Prese'.

The screenshot displays the NVivo Pro software interface. The top menu bar includes File, Home, Import, Create, Explore, Share, and Document. The main workspace shows a chat conversation titled 'WeChat Big Group'. The chat messages are as follows:

- 10:50 [Image]
- 11:08 好漂亮，她们穿着旗袍呢 [Joyful]
- They are wearing QiPao?
- 11:13 我喝天
- 11:13 对不起 Sorry, wrong keyboard! What is qipao?
- 11:15 旗袍
- 11:15 A traditional Chinese one piece
- 11:16 哈哈，大概这么解释吧
- 11:17 [Image]
- 11:17 Maggie Zhang wears 旗袍

The right sidebar shows a list of codes applied to the chat messages, including:

- 2.1.2 Giving praise
- 2.1.1 Using Emotions
- Skills of Discovery and Interaction
- Critical Cultural Awareness
- Attitudes (openness/curiosity)
- Knowledge

The bottom status bar indicates the current code is 'Knowledge (Nodes\ICO\Intercultural Competence)\Intercultural Competen'.

File Home Import Create Explore Share Document

Memo Link See Also Links Quick Coding Annotations See Also Links Coding Highlight Code Code In Vivo Range Code Auto Code New Annotation Annotations Word Cloud Compare With Explore Diagram Query This Document Find Edit

Quick Access Files Memos Nodes

Files Data Phase 1 Phase 2 S1.NB-C1.TY S2.LD-C2.LZ S3.EE-C3.YN S4.NE-C4.H S5.YE-C5.YC S6.YL-C6.JL S7.EM-C7.JY S8.AT-C8.LN S9.EZ-C9.YH Literature CFL ICC Methods SLA Technology File Classifications Reference Externals Nodes

S3.EE interview transcript

12:51 Well if she replies to me. If they doesn't reply, then I just might put it in a different way.
 13:09 So if she doesn't understand, you are going to rephrase your Mandarin?
 13:09 Yeah.
 13:14 What do you think of these social networking tools?
 13:20 I think these tools made it much easier. And now we can keep in contact with them all. I really hope that we can go and visit China. I really want to experience their country and culture. I hope we can all meet them and be together again! So yeah, these tools helped us to communicate with each other. They helped me to talk to all of them and will do so for a long time.
 14:01 Have you tried any voice messages?
 14:06 Yeah. Sometime she'll send me voice messages and I'll practise my listening and she'll practise her English and see if I can understand her. In voice messages, I might say something wrong I don't know. And sometimes it'll crackle a little. But overall I think it's good cause we can practise speaking, as well as writing and reading when we need to send some texts to double check words and pronunciations.
 14:14 Have you ever had any conversational break downs?
 14:49 Not yet. There're not many times that people write to me and I don't understand it completely, but there are quite a lot of times where I understand 70% or 80%. One language partner was saying that her younger brother was being naughty because he's hidden the air conditioning control, and she was very hot. I knew what she was saying, but I didn't know the word for "hidden". So to double check that what I thought it was, I pressed translate and I was like "ah it's 藏起来 hidden". If the WeChat translate button wasn't there, I'd assume it was correct and just carried on. So I think it's a good way, and also when you don't understand something, sometimes I just copy and paste into translate website and do it there, but I think checking stuff immediately on WeChat is quite handy.
 15:58 What about Skype?
 16:03 It's different. I think Skype is good in terms of that you can see them all together. It's nice to see them and know that they can see us with that connection. WeChat can't facilitate that sometimes so Skype has this advantage. Yeah. But with Skype, it's difficult because the time difference between China and UK.
 16:51 Right, generally what part of Chinese learning is your best experience?
 16:59 The exchange I think. cause we can actually put it into practice and meet people. we became good friends after that. Yeah.
 17:19 Any part of Chinese learning that is difficult for you?
 17:37 I would say I still struggle a bit with listening but I couldn't think of anything else.

Coding Density

Multimodality Solving practical problems Affordances WeChat translate button

1.3.2 Comparing perspectives
 1.4.1 Applying new ideas
 Critical Cultural Awareness
 1.1.2 Negotiation of meaning
 Attitudes (openness/curiosity)
 Knowledge

Home Import Create Explore Share

Cut Copy Merge Properties Open Memo Link Item Add To Set Create As Code Create As Cases Query Visualize Code Auto Code Range Code Uncode Case Classification File Classification Detail View Sort By Undock Navigation View List View Find Workspace

Quick Access Files Memos Nodes

Data Phase 1 Phase 2 S1.NB-C1.T S2.LD-C2.L S3.EE-C3.Y S4.NE-C4. S5.YE-C5.Y S6.YL-C6.JL S7.EM-C7.J S8.AT-C8.L S9.EZ-C9.Y Literature CFL ICC Methods SLA Technology File Classifications Reference Externals Codes Nodes CFL ICC Col Discourse Co Intercultural C Linguistic Co Sociolinguistic

WeChat Big Group

14:06 你们学校大吗?
 14:07 你好! 我的学校大, 有一千三百人。我可以在学校踢足球 [Chuckle]
 14:19 我觉得学校不很大。但是我爱学校, 因为它非常好。
 14:32 我们学校是大。我们学校的校服很好看。学生穿白色的长衬衣和深蓝色毛衣。@
 14:38 你们的中文很好啊! [Smile]
 14:41 我们学校很大也现代。我们穿校服。但是我们校服不好看。女学生穿蓝色毛衣和白色衬衣, 也她们穿黑色裤子。中国的国立学校校服吗?
 14:46 你们中文真得很厉害! 但是是公立学校哦, 我们每天都是要穿校服的
 14:53 但是我们的校服真的很丑, 像运动服吧, 适合做早操和运动。我很喜欢你们英国的西服校服, 很帅
 15:04
 16:11 谢谢, 但是我们没有早操, 也没有 flag ceremony
 16:48 Sorry 我不可以说中文太多 [Awkward] but I like your school uniform 好看

Coding Density

Attitudes (openness/curiosity) Skills of Interpreting and Finding Skills of Discovery and Interaction

1.2.1 Information exchange
 1.1.1 Sense of puzzlement
 2.1.2 Giving praise
 2.1.1 Emotion

Appendix 15: A brief list of codes and examples in this case study

| Codes [↗] | Examples [↗] |
|--|--|
| Cognitive presence- Triggering event- Sense of puzzlement/Negotiation of meaning [↗] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 我非常喜欢穿帽子[↗] 你是说“戴帽子”？在中文里：帽子、眼睛、首饰，用“戴”衣服、裤子、鞋子，用“穿”[↗] Could you explain me that in English please?[↗] For sure For "wear hat/glasses/necklace", we use this verb "戴":戴帽子/戴眼镜/戴项链 For "wear clothes/trousers/shoes", we use this verb "穿":穿衣服/穿裤子/穿裙子/穿鞋子[↗] 我明白了！谢谢你！[↗] 又用错动词了[↗] 今天我哥哥开始工作第一次。哈哈[↗] “我哥哥第一次开始工作”这样比较通顺呢[↗] 为什么第一次开始[↗] 第一次我们放在人后面呢[↗] 谢谢[↗] |
| Cognitive presence- Exploration- Information exchange/Resource sharing [↗] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [postcard picture][↗] 我写了 postcard, 所以你知道我和家人[↗] 你的字写得不错👍[↗] 谢谢你😊你有几口家人[↗] 哇，你中文写得太好了！[↗] [postcard picture][↗] 谢谢！因为我每天学习中文[↗] 好好学习，天天向上[↗] 很棒，加油👍(^ω^)/[↗] 这星期日夏时制结束了。今天晚上你们2点会是1点[↗] 汉字难，我看不懂哈哈，需要用 WeChat 翻译[↗] 不好意思！不清楚夏时制是什么[↗] 没关系，推荐你用 Pleco，很好用[↗] 没关系！[↗] |
| Cognitive presence- Integration- Connecting ideas/Comparing perspectives [↗] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 这是我们今天的黑板板，好看吧[↗] 很好看！[↗] 你们的教室与我们的教室有很多不同[↗] 英国没有黑板报，是白板[↗] 教室用白板，学生们用彩 marker 写字[↗] 这是我们的课程表 our school timetable[↗] Your English lessons are much more than Chinese lessons and Maths! 你的英语课比中文课和数学课多很多。[↗] 而且你们还有做饭的课吗？[↗] 我们有 cooking classroom, 你们没有吗[↗] 我们没有，只有普通教室和电脑教室[↗] 对哦，我们没有你们上次做饺子那种厨房教室，很羡慕呢，你们饺子做的很漂亮[↗] 谢谢 Thanks♪(·ω·)/[↗] 你们经常睡午觉吗？[↗] 我是学生啊，中午不休息的话，下午会没有精神的，所以有午睡的习惯[↗] 英国学生不睡午觉，如果我睡午觉，晚上会失眠[↗] 睡午觉后，我还真不舒服[↗] 想睡，但是没时间睡😴[↗] 怎么说呢，我是午睡派[↗] 有时间就睡，夏天一般都睡 现在很少睡了，一般十多分钟[↗] 要睡吧 不然下午没精神呢[↗] |

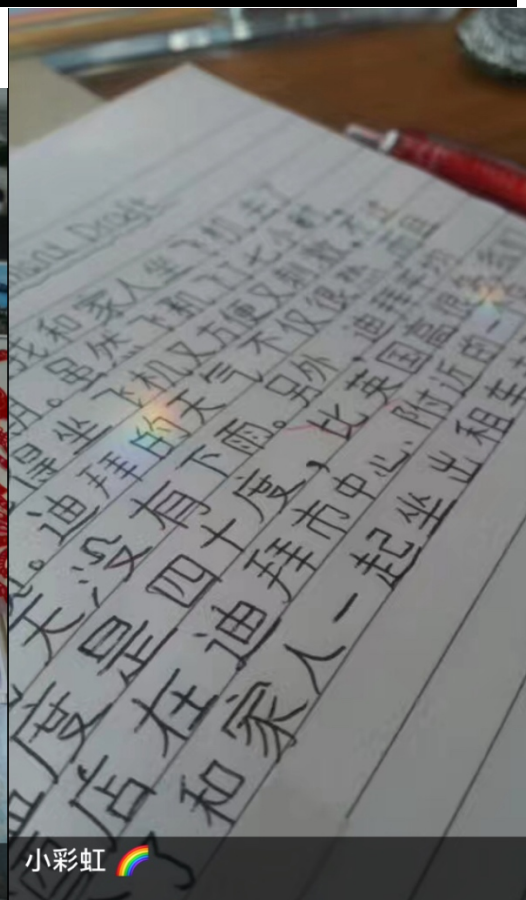
| | |
|---|--|
| Cognitive presence-Resolution-Applying new ideas/Creating solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 开始放寒假了，很开心吧 [Joyful] • 英国学校的假期也是寒假和暑假吗？ • 这个寒假我们假期作业既有中文作业，也有英文作业。 • 请问英国的同学，在你们的假期，老师会留假期作业吗？ • 春节快乐！我们没有很多作业 • 英国假期没有作业，因为它是 break 休息:) • 真好，哈哈我们中国的假期很苦逼，发六个这样的作业本子和很多试卷！ • 我们就是换个地方写作业 [Sticker] • 字有点丑 [Sticker] • [捂脸]真好，用来休息的假期 • 没有假期作业，你们会利用假期做些什么呢？ • 我们庆祝圣诞节， stay with family • 我们可以 WeChat 多和你们！ • 你们可以 visit us next winter! • 好的啊，我们带作业过去找你们玩` (▽)` • Hi everybody, I have just found out that we are not able to PM each other on Edmodo, as this is a safety feature of Edmodo. Miss will create small groups for us, where only you and your partner can see your messages. • Exam Week... I am very stressed! 考试星期，我是很紧张。 • 你可以提前多复习哦，准备充分了就不怕了 • Ok 可以你帮我吗 • 好的我们多联系 NEVER stop study |
| Cognitive presence-Resolution-Applying new ideas/Creating solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 开始放寒假了，很开心吧 [Joyful] • 英国学校的假期也是寒假和暑假吗？ • 这个寒假我们假期作业既有中文作业，也有英文作业。 • 请问英国的同学，在你们的假期，老师会留假期作业吗？ • 春节快乐！我们没有很多作业 • 英国假期没有作业，因为它是 break 休息:) • 真好，哈哈我们中国的假期很苦逼，发六个这样的作业本子和很多试卷！ • 我们就是换个地方写作业 [Sticker] • 字有点丑 [Sticker] • [捂脸]真好，用来休息的假期 • 没有假期作业，你们会利用假期做些什么呢？ • 我们庆祝圣诞节， stay with family • 我们可以 WeChat 多和你们！ • 你们可以 visit us next winter! • 好的啊，我们带作业过去找你们玩` (▽)` • Hi everybody, I have just found out that we are not able to PM each other on Edmodo, as this is a safety feature of Edmodo. Miss will create small groups for us, where only you and your partner can see your messages. • Exam Week... I am very stressed! 考试星期，我是很紧张。 • 你可以提前多复习哦，准备充分了就不怕了 • Ok 可以你帮我吗 • 好的我们多联系 NEVER stop study |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Cognitive presence-Resolution-Applying new ideas/Creating solutions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 开始放寒假了，很开心吧[Joyful] • 英国学校的假期也是寒假和暑假吗？ • 这个寒假我们假期作业既有中文作业，也有英文作业。 • 请问英国的同学，在你们的假期，老师会留假期作业吗？ • 春节快乐！我们没有很多作业 • 英国假期没有作业，因为它是 break 休息:) • 真好，哈哈我们中国的假期很苦逼，发六个这样的作业本子和很多试卷！ • 我们就是换个地方写作业[Sticker] • 字有点丑[Sticker] • [捂脸]真好，用来休息的假期 • 没有假期作业，你们会利用假期做些什么呢？ • 我们庆祝圣诞节，stay with family • 我们可以 WeChat 多和你们！ • 你们可以 visit us next winter! • 好的啊，我们带作业过去找你们玩`(`▽`) • Hi everybody, I have just found out that we are not able to PM each other on Edmodo, as this is a safety feature of Edmodo. Miss will create small groups for us, where only you and your partner can see your messages. • Exam Week... I am very stressed! 考试星期，我是很紧张。 • 你可以提前多复习哦，准备充分了就不怕了 • Ok 可以你帮我吗 • 好的我们多联系 NEVER stop study |
| <p>Social presence-Emotional expression-Emoticons/Giving praise</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We had 饺子 tonight! • EZ made a bow out of one! ☺ • [picture] • 很喜欢很好吃, my family said the dumplings everyone made were very tasty! • 我爱中国的饺子! • 你发烧了吗？ • 发烧还坚持学习[ThumbsUp] • 好好休息，多喝水 • 现在诺丁汉下雨，但是也晴天 • 太阳雨？@_@ • 是啊，下雨了一点 • “下了一点雨”。中国有的地方已经下雪了！ • 现在在下雨，可也是晴天。 • 谢谢你！ • 不客气，你的中文会变得越来越好 • 谢谢你们帮我，因为我做 GCSE 中文考试，所以我去中国在将来 • 在中国被欺负了就打 110。你们打的话非常有用。 • 你真好，帮我们 ☺ • 哇，欢迎你来上海哦！ • 你们真的友好 ☺ • 等待你来中国 • 大家新年快乐，这一年我去过很多城市，遇到了很多的困难，也将面临许多新的挑战，但同时也收获了很多，其中最令我感到幸福的是认识了很多的新朋友，中国，你永远在我心里 • 我喜欢你的狗因为他可爱！我希望在将来我们多联系！ |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Social presence- Open communication- Using Salutations/Risk-free expressions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am suffering from a super heavy cold. ☹️ • 希望你早点好起来。Hope you get well soon. :) • Get well soon! • 我今天生痛了，可是我在学中文 • 生病了仍然坚持学中文很赞哦 • 你说得对 • 你好 6 • 霍金既视感啊 • 今天诺丁汉有点儿冷，我明天应该穿衣服多 • 汉语的儿化音只口语中有表示，书面语中不用表示 • 没知道，谢谢你! 中国冷吗 • 不冷，中国有空调，有机会来中国旅行吧，一定不会让你失望的 • 我不去中国，很贵和 some apps are illegal there • 没事，你可以用微信 • 女士们，先生们，请注意今天是平安夜，反正不是苹果夜！我给你解释一下英国文化，或者比你们的印象反向吧，但是送苹果不是英国的传统。在英国我们这个时候永不送人们苹果。对不起打破你们的思想。 |
| <p>Social presence- Group cohesion- Asking questions/Encouraging collaboration</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have this kind of flower in England? 英国有这种花吗？ • 我喜欢 It's one of my favourites! :) • 下次我们去英国，你可以带我去看看吗？ • 没有问题 You can normally get them from Tesco and Asda but they sell them at some florists too. They always have some in IKEA and I find that they last the longest :) • 我今天中文作业写了三个纸。我是累 😊 你们今天作业写几个纸 • 辛苦了，我们有很多作业和试卷要写，每天要写到晚上十点多 • 写了三张纸 * The measure word for 纸 is 张 (zhāng) 😊 • 谢谢~你们作业真的多！你可以用电脑写作业，不写多张纸，也，可以爱好作业 • 今天中文作业是写我每天做什么，我比同学不知道很多汉字和语法，可以你帮我吗 • 我可以帮你哦 • 你会画画吗？我们画学校为你们 • 你们学校有什么设备，可以 Skype with 我们？ |
| <p>Teaching presence- Instructional management- Briefing tasks/Initiating discussion topics</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1月14日“汉语拼音之父”周有光逝世，享年112岁。请记得，在你每一次用拼音输入汉字的时候，他的智慧光芒在闪现…… • 你们聊天用拼音打字很快，但是写字很慢吧？ • 我写完在这个笔记本，有八个页 • 有付出就会有回报的！ • 单元如此啊，我得买一个新的笔记本了 • 但愿如此* • 学习使你快乐 • 要勤学苦练 • 666 • 好厉害_(:3 ∟_) • 加油！中华文化博大精深，在学习中文的过程中会让你其乐无穷 • 我很喜欢学中文，学习汉字好有趣 • 加油 ^ 0 ^ ~加油 • 字写的不错哦 |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Teaching presence- Building understanding- Facilitating discourse/Sharing personal meaning ↵</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 哈哈，新年快乐，大吉[鸡]大利↵ • 祝大家新年快乐，心想事成！厚积[鸡]薄发↵ • [Other Messages: 微信红包]↵ • [Shy]谢谢 ♪••♪↵ • 谁知道鸡年快乐中，鸡用哪个英文单词？↵ • rooster 吧…？↵ • 你们看了梅姨 May 给中国的祝福吗↵ • 因为 rooster 有雄鸡的意思↵ • 她用的就是 rooster↵ • 雄赳赳气昂昂积极向上↵ • [ThumbsUp][ThumbsUp][ThumbsUp]↵ • zhei 样啊↵ • [鸡年的英语怎么说？2017 年就从这七件趣事开始！： http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?_biz=MzA4MjY5NzYyNA==&mid=2650455131&idx=1&sn=59dcf123133a306581ec2bf5e6f5077c&chksm=878fd0acb0f859ba785423de2a898ee1a1450c091e8fc4fb97927854d9f23430439f14117023&mpshare=1&scene=24&srcid=0127THxE9ZDxIFzLH08SjHj8#rd]↵ • 但是我知道 rooster 也有 狂妄自负的人 的意思↵ • 所以形容狂妄自负的人，称之为骄傲的公鸡↵ • [Sticker]↵ • 这样啊↵ |
| <p>Teaching presence- Direct instruction- Focusing discussion/Injecting new knowledge↵</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 我不但没有时间复习老汉字，反而没有时间学习新汉字！↵ • “不但……而且……” means as “not only... but also...” “反而” means “instead” use “而且” not “反而” here ☺↵ • Thanks! 我不但没有时间复习老汉字，而且没有时间学习新汉字！↵ • 你的中文水平又双叒提高了！↵ • 中文简直逆天了，厉害厉害↵ • [汉语的十大优势——本文是对中文最全面科学的阐述！： http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?_biz=MjM5NTkwNzM0Mw==&mid=215341269&idx=4&sn=36fc6c54ba6ac4744f0a2efcc2b81031&mpshare=1&scene=1&srcid=KbToXVXVA0jN[mf7MQ9G#rd]↵ |

Appendix 16: Examples of students' WeChat Moments



麦霸 [麥-]

PY màibà 🔊

DICT STROKE CHARS WORDS SENTS

▼ CC

- 1 mic hog
- 2 person who monopolizes the mike at karaoke party (**hegemon** 霸 of the microphone 麦克风)

▼ ADS

<NOUN> karaoke microphone hog

词典有这么重要的词语，是不是？ 😊



完了! 🎃 ✨

Appendix 17: Examples of common errors in participants' online chats

我希望口语越来越提高↵

她十四岁和她喜欢吃比杂兵和体能音乐↵

我不喜欢他，因为他很响↵

下雨了一点↵

我们会快再见↵

我喜欢体内音乐↵

她们喜欢听映月↵

我有三好朋友↵

谢谢你，不太好了但是我学习努力的！↵

我迫不及待想去马洛卡在半学期。↵

最近我跟中国朋友练习中文口语，我的口语非常不好😬↵

未来,我想旅游世界各地和我将来想做记者↵

我·们·有·两·宠·物·，·一·直·猫·和·蜥·蜴↵

我系环比萨饼和面波啊↵

我妈妈喜欢棉套但是不喜欢绵薄啊↵

英国的 Daniel 和 Phil 很网红。在电影叫 Big Hero 6,他们是配音演员。↵

我谢谢爱收集因为有意思↵

对不起打破你们的思想↵

昨天，我建立了一个雪人。↵

谢谢，我和我爸爸起打排球。↵

我很朋友惊人因为他关心关于我↵

我自啊未来想又是设计师↵

今天我哥哥开始工作第一次。哈哈↵

我好朋友从上海发送我一个明信片！！我真的开心！！我也会发送她一个明信片！她是最棒↵

我非常喜欢穿帽子↵

学中文不是了作业，是我的爱好↵

我今天生痛了↵

我喜欢绵薄啊和棉桃，但是我不喜欢牛肉面。↵

我刚发现这个视频关于书法。又很滑稽又有意思，你们看一看吧。

我今天带狗去了散步，虽然她有很小腿，她还可以走很远。

如果你想经历一些特别好的景色，而且一个和平的环境从诺丁汉，你可以参观

Hartington 中心。

你的早餐总是很大！

我的奶奶是了工程师。

今天我吃了午饭两次。

那个天大雨了，我们踢足球了。下个天我们累死了。

我想见到我的中文同学们！我没过去外国所以我真的高兴☺我要学习好的为那个日。

我的猫不喜欢洗澡。每次我洗澡了她，她都不开心。

我的声调不好！你不可以理解我！写起来更容易...。

我终于在放学。wifi-我很想你。

上周很多中国学生来了，他们在校园里走过。我希望他们都享受了！当我可以见面新的人，我感觉开心！万岁！

这个星期很了令人兴奋。

我很喜欢 WeChat，又有意思，又很有用，真帮我复习中文还提高。

我需要花很多时间写东西我听的。

我很享受了今天的课。

朋友给我看这图片，真漂亮的照片！

这只可怜的鹅不可能找到他的妻子，他跑步到处可是还不可能找到。

干脆-是-申么-意思。

你的毛怎么样。

我很少次看过下雪。

我不但没有时间复习老汉字，反而没有时间学习新汉字！

我-迫不及待-去-复古狂欢节-因为-我爱-各种各样的-复古-事，-比如-衣服，-发式，-汽车。-我-非常-喜欢-复古-事-因为-这些-很-特色。此外，-我-迫不及待-聚头-我的-中国的-朋友，-我们-Skype-视频-很好玩！:-)。

Appendix 18: Examples of positive feedback from target language partners

你们好 6 啊↵

我们会帮助你们学中文的，继续加油哦，保持联系哦 O(∩_∩)O~↵

好荣幸你们喜欢中文和中国文化，作为你们的伙伴，我很骄傲！↵

不客气，你的中文会变得越来越好↵

有付出就会有回报的！↵

你的中文水平又双叒提高了！↵

中文简直逆天了，厉害厉害↵

好样的！ Well done!↵

听说你们再学汉语，对此我感到很高兴也很荣幸。↵

海内存知己，天涯若比邻。↵