Culture Teaching in the Chinese High School Education Context: A Study of Teachers' Attitudes and Beliefs

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2011
Abstract

Developing learners’ intercultural awareness and their communicative competence has been an important and acknowledged goal of foreign language education. To achieve this goal, the integration of culture teaching has become important for researchers and practitioners in the field of foreign language education. Understanding of the concept of culture, the approach to culture teaching and the cultural content of the curriculum varies across different social environments. This study looks at culture teaching in the current context of English teaching in Chinese high schools, exploring teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching in the Chinese educational context.

The impetus for locating this research focus in teacher attitudes and beliefs comes from reforms to current Chinese school education that started in 2001. The central appeal of this reform, and what differentiates it from previous reforms, is that it shifts attention to humanities-based education across school subjects. The reform in relation to English teaching was launched with the promulgation of the National High School English Curriculum Standard (MoE, 2001, the Standard used in this thesis). Developing students’ intercultural awareness and cultivating in them a healthy global view is explicitly stated in the Standard as one of the ultimate goals of school English education. Therefore, the cultural dimension is clearly stated as one of the explicit teaching content areas instead of being a hidden aspect of the curriculum as it was in previous curricula. The aim of the investigation of this study is to answer two research questions: “To what extent are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching congruent with the relevant
objectives presented in the Standard?” and “To what extent can the cultural objectives stated in the Standard be achieved within the current Chinese educational environment?”

For this investigation, I employed an interpretative research design using multi-methods as investigating instruments, involving a questionnaire, interviews and classroom observation. Quantitative data from the questionnaire and qualitative data from the interview transcripts and my classroom observation notes provided a holistic view of the research participants’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching. Based on the data gathered, a statistical analysis and a discourse analysis were conducted and findings were discussed by synthesising the literature reviewed and linking it to an analysis of the Chinese educational environment and the participants’ individual teaching situations.

The main finding of the investigation is that there are significant tensions between what is expected of teachers in the Standard and what is achievable in the classroom. Two factors contribute to this tension: One is the conflict between the exam-oriented culture of Chinese education and the requirements of the Standard which emphasise inquiry and process-oriented educational practices. The other is the gap that exists between teachers’ perceptions of culture, the content they actually teach and the way they are supposed to conceptualise culture if their teaching goal is to develop students’ intercultural awareness.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who gave me the opportunity to complete this thesis. I am deeply indebted to my supervisors Dr. Susana A. Eisenchlas and Associate Professor Sue Trevaskes, for their expert guidance, continuous encouragement and unfailing support. Their stimulating suggestions and encouraging patience helped me during the time I spent researching and writing this thesis. I particularly appreciate their promptness in providing feedback and in inspiring me in this study.

I appreciate the guidance provided by Professor Mike Levy, who supervised me for the first four years before transferring to another university in my final year. His professional supervision and positive attitude towards the significance of this study motivated me greatly and helped me to overcome challenges. I also appreciate the guidance provided by Dr. Michael Haugh, who supervised me in the first year of my PhD candidature. Dr. Haugh provided important suggestions and included me in a supportive research environment. I am extremely grateful to Professor Marilyn McMeniman whose suggestions on my confirmation proposal played an important part in this study.

I also appreciate the support provided by the technical and academic staff from the School of Languages and Linguistics at Griffith University. Their constant encouragement not only provided me with academic support, but also developed in me a sense of belonging to the School. I would like to express my gratitude to Griffith
University for providing me with a full scholarship. Without this strong financial support, my research journey would have been extremely difficult.

My greatest appreciation goes to the participants in this study, a group of friendly and supportive high school English teachers. This study would have been impossible without their kind cooperation. Their hard work and great sense of responsibility towards their students were impressive. Their concerns about the teaching of culture and their eagerness to help motivated me in this study. I thank them for their willingness to share their time, classroom and stories with me. I also would like to express my gratitude to my former colleagues at Tianjin Normal University for supporting me whenever I needed it. My great thanks to Ms. Xuming Yang, Ms. Feng Sun and Ms. Tong Chen, my close friends in China, for giving me unlimited care and for increasing my confidence.

My greatest gratitude goes to my husband, daughter and all my relatives in China. They never stopped giving me the emotional support that sustained me throughout the hard years of the PhD journey. My husband and daughter shared with me all the emotional ups and downs in this study. I was grateful for always being able to share the joys with them, as well as the occasional sad face.
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This thesis investigates teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the cultural dimension of English teaching in the Chinese context. Following the rise of English as a global language, the integration of culture into English language teaching has acquired greater significance. This thesis explores the Chinese context where English is widely taught as a foreign language, mainly by Chinese teachers who have had little exposure to the cultures about which they are expected to teach. The findings should be of relevance not only to language teaching in China but also in many other contexts where English is taught as a foreign language.

This chapter briefly introduces the background to and the significance of this study. The impetus for this study stems from reforms to China’s current English curriculum, which started in 2001. Different in scope and content from previous curricula, this curriculum explicitly stated culture as one of the main components of English teaching. The change was prompted by many forces, such as the global context, China’s social development and the orientation of the overall educational reforms. Teachers are regarded as one of the decisive factors in the implementation of this educational reform (Wei & Lü, 2004). Since this reform agenda began to take effect in 2003, little research has been conducted regarding teachers’ implementation of and their thoughts about the teaching of culture in their English language classrooms. This study is an investigation of this important issue with the aim of filling an important gap in the research. Simply put, teachers are the
critical link between education objectives, content and student learning. Thus, in order to gain an overview of culture teaching practice in real classrooms, and to contribute to finding ways to achieve the requirements of the reform, this study investigates teachers’ attitudes and beliefs in terms of culture teaching in their English classroom practice.

1.1 Background of the study

English as a foreign language is a compulsory high school subject in the overwhelming majority of regions in China. Since the foundation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, English teaching has experienced constant changes and reforms. These changes and reforms have been influenced by and reflect China’s social development. Firstly, Chinese politics and society have historically influenced the content of English teaching. The role and status of English as a foreign language have varied at different times. It has, sometimes been perceived as being anti-Communist, a threat to national integrity and at other times has been seen as an important tool for communication with the rest of the world. As Adamson (2002, p.231) concludes, the status of English has been riddled with ambivalence and paradoxes, with the major tension centring on the Chinese government’s perception of English as a necessary tool for communicating with the rest of the world, but also of the potential negative effect of introducing a foreign and unwelcome culture through English language learning. Secondly, with the increasing academic exchange with the rest of the world, new English teaching theories, pedagogies and materials are constantly being introduced into China. When applying these teaching approaches, methods and materials, Chinese scholars and educators have endeavoured to search for the methods and content suitable to China’s educational and teaching realities.
The rationale for the selection of English as the main foreign language taught in China lies in the international status of the English language and China’s economic development policy. Both in the study and practice of English teaching, the cultural dimension is an unavoidable component. English teaching aims to develop students’ competencies, including language proficiency, communicative competence and the awareness of foreign cultures and native culture. These aims were explicitly stated in the National High School English Curriculum Standard (MoE, 2001; henceforth, the Standard).

The Standard is a 141-page document that consists of four parts: introduction, objectives, content and assessment, and implementation suggestions. English teaching is defined as a two-fold process in the Introduction. Students are expected to gradually master English knowledge and skills and raise their competence in the pragmatic use of the language. It also states that English teaching is a process whereby students achieve “personality cultivation” (xinzhi), horizon broadening, development in thinking capacity and “humanistic quality” (renwen suzhi) growth. The second section of the Standard describes the general English teaching objectives on the basis of nine proficiency levels. In the third section, the five teaching and assessment content areas are illustrated, namely, language skills, language knowledge, emotion and attitude, learning strategies and cultural awareness. As far as the cultural dimension is concerned, this section firstly defines culture as history, geography, customs and traditions, living styles, literature and arts, norms of behaviour, ideological values, and so on. The objectives of cultural awareness are also exemplified for Levels 2, 5 7 and 8 as benchmarks for the nine levels
of English proficiency assessment. The final section of the Standard provides teachers with implementation suggestions including teaching methods, classroom activities, the teacher-student relationship, currency of subject and pedagogical knowledge, and so on. The details of the Standard will be described in section 3.4 of this thesis.

In the Standard, culture is, for the first time, identified as one of the teaching components in China’s English teaching agenda. Since the promulgation of the Standard, debates and discussions among teachers and researchers in China about culture teaching have increased, reflecting the fact that this issue is gaining more attention than before. The debates and discussions are centred around the inseparability of the teaching of culture and language from how culture is presented in textbooks. Research on teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the curricular aspect of culture teaching is scarce. Against the background of this historical review and the evaluation of the cultural dimension in English teaching in the Standard, this study intends to answer two questions: (1) To what extent are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching congruent with the relevant objectives presented in the Standard? and (2) To what extent can the culture objectives stated in the Standard be achieved within the current Chinese educational environment? To answer these questions, the investigation into teachers’ attitudes and beliefs will consider the issue of culture teaching, including why to teach culture, how to teach culture and what to teach.
1.2 Significance of the study

The topic of teaching and learning culture has gained more and more interest from language educators, and much has been written about the role of culture in foreign language teaching in the West over the past four decades. Various educational research projects have called attention to the uniqueness of culture and its inseparability from language (for instance, Byram, 1989; Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Kramsch, 1993 and Liddicoat, 1997, to name a few). Many scholars have proposed models for integrating culture and foreign/second language teaching (See Byram, 1997 and Kramsch, 1993). These works share a common conceptual core: that culture is dynamic and variable. However, learning about culture differs depending on different settings and circumstances. Michael (2000, pp.13-14) argues that context is an overarching concept which subsumes many other variables, including the setting, the teacher, the learner, instructional methods, instructional materials and assessment approaches. These variables are interwoven, yet as far as culture teaching is concerned, each of them is also a discrete research focus. This study focuses on the variable of the teacher.

Theoretical issues in the literature identify many roles and qualities of the teacher that are central to promoting the learning of culture in language education in any language learning context. Hughes (1986, p. 168) states that a teacher should be philosopher, geographer, historian, philologist and literary critic. To Altman (1981, pp. 11-13), the teacher functions as a “skilful developer of communicative competence in the classroom, as a dialectologist and as a communication analyst”. There is important evidence to suggest that what teachers know and believe influences their teaching practice (Clark &
Peterson, 1986; Wood, 1996; Tsui, 2003, to name a few). Pajares (1992, p.319) says that clusters of belief around a particular object or situation form attitudes that become action agendas. Beliefs attached to attitudes have connections to one another and to other beliefs and other attitudes, so that a teacher’s attitude about a particular educational issue may include beliefs connected to attitudes about the nature of society, the community, race and even family. These connections create the values that guide one’s life, develop and maintain other attitudes, interpret information, and determine behaviour.

Questions have been posed by a number of researchers and teachers outside of China regarding what the teachers themselves think about language education, culture teaching and learning, and their role as culture educators (Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Knox, 1984; Robinson, 1981). It is widely agreed that what teachers think, believe, know and do is affected by various factors and is highly context-based. This study explores teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching in the context of high school English teaching in China. The exploration is based on the widely accepted assumption that teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs (Calderhead, 1996; Carter, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Richardson, 1996). Therefore, how teachers think about and perceive culture and culture teaching impacts on what and how they teach.

This domain deserves in-depth investigation and study in the Chinese context. English teaching has been influenced by China’s macro politics over the past decades. During this
time, English teaching curricula were revised in accordance with the needs of China’s domestic political environment, its relationship with the rest of the world and its socioeconomic and political role and status in the world. As a result, the cultural dimension in English teaching has differed during different periods. The context (?) of cultural teaching, whether of Chinese culture or a target culture, has varied over the periods of time in which English has been taught in the PRC. In general, over the past six decades since the establishment of the Chinese government in 1949, the cultural dimension of English teaching has included revolutionary, political, socioeconomic and humanistic overtones. In the current new Standard, humanistic education was highlighted as being what the current educational reform was seeking. In addition, culture teaching was, for the first time in the history of China’ English teaching, explicitly stated as being an area of teaching content. In the meantime, the development of students’ world view and intercultural awareness were clearly identified as the ultimate goal of English teaching. The relevant historical background will be explained in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

Against this background of English teaching in the past decades and the status of the current educational reform, this study into what teachers perceive as being the cultural dimension in English teaching is extremely significant. The importance of integrating the teaching of culture into English language teaching has to be acknowledged by teachers if the new Standard’s intention of promoting the cultivation of intercultural awareness as the ultimate goal of English teaching is to be met. Teachers’ thoughts and attitudes about the teaching of culture are significant concerns in the implementation of the Standard. In addition, the observations and interviews regarding how teachers put their individual
beliefs and knowledge into practice are part of this investigation. Moreover, this study is
timely in that the Standard has now been practised for a number of years since it was
piloted in 2001 and officially implemented in 2003. In the subsequent years, many
teachers have gained considerable experience in teaching the whole set of the textbooks
compiled to match the Standard. This presents an opportunity to investigate what teachers
think of the cultural dimension of language teaching as stated in the Standard and in their
practical application in the classroom.

It can be argued that this thesis makes an important contribution to the study of the
teaching of culture in foreign language instruction on the following grounds. Firstly, it
examines the main conceptual understandings of culture by scholars in and outside China.
Various approaches to understanding and defining culture have been identified. This
thesis briefly reiterates the main ways in which culture is conceptualised in Western and
Chinese studies. Two main categories of understanding about culture are then identified:
culture as product and culture as process. These two categories form the basic theoretic
framework in terms of the concept of culture for this study, and they inform the
interpretation and discussion of the data gathered by the researcher. In addition, this study
examines the main ways in which the concept of culture is applied and interpreted in the
Chinese political context, which involves the politics of meaning and representation of
this concept that are reflected in the underlying ideologies (Baldwin et al., 2006, p.20).
This examination does not overlap the categories of culture as a product and as a process
of living; rather, the examination helps contextualise the management of the cultural
dimension in English language education in China.
Secondly, the teaching of culture is a contextual issue, and its practice has to be related to different social and educational situations. As Wang & Gao (2008, p.384) note, the contextual reality and mechanisms underlying the influences of cultural discourses should be examined in depth, particularly in contemporary China where new curricula are being implemented at all levels of schooling. In other words, the culture of teaching/learning in the Chinese educational context should be examined before an examination of the teaching of culture is conducted. However, the research so far in this domain in China has not been given sufficient attention. Thirdly, there have been ample studies on teachers’ attitudes and beliefs conducted with native English speaking teachers who teach students whose native language is not English. The topic if this study is usually examined outside China and mainly in English speaking countries where English is taught as a second language. However, similar studies on teachers of English who share the same linguistic and cultural background as their students are rarely found in or outside China. Fourthly, while there have been ample studies conducted, both inside and outside China, on teachers’ belief in a specific subject, studies in this field on a particular aspect of a subject, such as culture in English language teaching, in this case, are rarely found. Finally, this study is timely in that it was conducted not long after the Standard was launched but with enough time having elapsed for teachers to be able to reflect on their experience. The Standard is a very welcome advancement; however, there remain many gaps in teachers’ understanding about what is entailed in teaching culture and how to teach it. In this sense, this thesis is important because the topic is one that has recently come to impact on the Chinese English language curriculum. These aspects of the significance of this study will be explained in more detail in the following chapters.
To a large extent, the following chapters are interrelated, since they present and discuss the research questions of this study (Section 3.4) in a logical sequence. In other words, the discussion in an individual chapter frequently informs the discussion in other chapters. This introductory chapter briefly identified gaps between the existing research outside China and the Chinese educational context to show the significance and the aims of this study. Chapter Two critically reviews the relevant literature relating to these areas: the concept of culture, culture teaching and studies on attitude and belief. The Chinese education context is described in Chapter Three. The review of the relevant literature and the review of the Chinese education context in these two chapters jointly builds up a solid theoretical framework and contributes supportive guidance to the purposes of this study, namely, the examination of the extent to which teachers’ attitudes and beliefs are congruent with the relevant objectives stated in the Standard and whether the culture objectives in the Standard can be achieved within the current Chinese educational environment. Chapter Four explains the methodological issues concerning the exploration of the responses to the research questions. These issues involve the explanation of the interpretive paradigm and case study applied to this research and the approaches to the participant recruitment and the instrument design and the process of conducting the case study. By using the methods and process clarified in Chapter Four, the data collection is presented and the results are examined in Chapter Five. Chapter Six interprets and discusses these results and findings by synthesising them with the literature review in Chapter Two and the Chinese educational context described in Chapter Three. The discussion of the findings shows this study to be of both practical and theoretical significance. In other words, the interpretation makes recommendations concerning the
practice and research of culture teaching issues in the Chinese context by relating the contextual problems to the relevant theoretical framework established in Chapter Two. The recommendations and the agents of these recommended changes are explained in Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight, the last chapter of this thesis, offers a conclusion for the whole thesis by way of revisiting the aims and research questions of this study, summarising the thesis findings, discussions and recommendations for change, and pinpointing the strengths and limitations of the study and suggesting future research that can emerge from this study.
Chapter 2 Literature review

2.0 Introduction
This thesis aims to investigate Chinese teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the teaching of culture and offer recommendations about its implementation. The literature review was conducted in order to clarify the research focus for this study by developing an overview of existing studies and finding gaps in the existing research in order to generate the research questions of this study. The review material falls into three domains: studies on culture, studies on the teaching of culture in the context of foreign language instruction, and studies on teachers’ attitudes and beliefs within the context of curriculum reform. The literature from these three domains is covered in detail in Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 respectively. Two research questions are generated from the gaps in the existing literature reviewed in these three sections, and are presented in section 2.4. A summary of the material and its relevance to the research questions of this study is provided in Section 2.5.

2.1 Studies on culture
This study explores culture teaching in the context of school education, and thus it is essential to examine culture by relating it to education. This section firstly compares academic understandings of culture in China and in English speaking countries, in order to identify the similarities and differences. It then proceeds with an exploration of the relationship between culture and education, which concludes that culture teaching should be investigated in relation to the educational context of a particular society.
2.1.1 Understanding culture

Culture is too complex a concept to be defined accurately in simple terms. Scholars define and study culture in relation to the different features of their disciplines and by different methods, thereby tending to restrict culture within certain parameters (Chen, 2001, p.2). Baldwin, Faulkner and Hecht (2006, p. 4) describe the term ‘culture’ as a sign, an empty vessel waiting for meaning. They also point to the understanding of culture as a sign in the traditional semiotic sense. This view sees culture in relation to the connection between the signifier (the word “culture”) and the signified (what it represents) which shifts, making culture a moving target. In the same book, Baldwin et al. (2006) develop a tree of meaning for the word culture (see Figure 2.1).

From the tree of meanings, derived by tracing the various etymologies of culture in a standard dictionary, one can see the original roots of “culture” (colere in Latin) joined to the histories of ‘cult’ and ‘cultivate’ (Baldwin et al., 2006, p. 5). According to Williams (1958, p. xvi), before the last decades of the eighteenth century, the word ‘culture’ primarily meant the tending of natural growth, and then, by analogy, a process of human training. But in the nineteenth century, the meaning of ‘culture’ changed significantly. First, it meant a general state or habit of the mind, having close relations with the idea of human perfection. Then, it came to mean the general state of intellectual development in a society as a whole. Subsequently, it came to mean the general body of the arts. And, later in the century, it came to mean a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual.
Figure 2.1 Derivation of the English word “culture” and its etymological cousins.

Source: Baldwin et al., 2006.
The British anthropologist Tylor defined the concept of culture as follows:

Culture, or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (1871, p.1).

Tylor’s definition interprets culture as the whole of human creations during the production process, which includes material technology, social norms and ideology. Varied definitions of culture continued to appear after Tylor’s definition. Kroeber and Kluckhohn devote most of their 1952 book (cited in Baldwin et al, 2006) to collecting and critically reviewing around 160 definitions of culture within the 80 years between 1871 and 1951. They classify definitions into six groups, as follows (Baldwin et al., 2006, pp.7-8):

1. Enumeratively descriptive (a list of the content of culture)
2. Historical (emphasis on social heritage, tradition)
3. Normative (focus on ideals or ideals plus behaviour)
4. Psychological (learning, habit, adjustment, problem-solving device)
5. Structural (focus on the pattern or organization of culture)
6. Genetic (symbols, ideas, artifacts)

Baldwin et al. (p.8) contend that we can understand these categories both as aspects of definitions or, to the extent that certain definitions privilege one component over another, as types of definitions. Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952, p.181, as cited in Baldwin et
al.2006, p. 8) also conclude their definition of culture as containing the following elements:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.

Based on the analysis of these definitions, Baldwin et al. (2006, pp.40-45) distinguished between two conceptualisations, namely, culture as a process and culture as a product. Conceptualising culture as a process involves perceiving culture as the embodiment of the processes by which a group constructs and passes on its reality, rather than as the reality itself being handed down to others. Baldwin et al. (2006) also argue that culture as a process not only involves the notion of inherent quality, but also refers to the creation of meanings, social relations, products, structures, and functions. In the sense of culture as product, culture refers to the concrete results of culture, and to those things that are created yet exist beyond individuals and their interactions. Baldwin et al. point out three layers of emphasis in this quality of culture as a product. Firstly, culture can be seen as the product of meaningful activity in which coordinated behaviours are used to create concrete items. Secondly, culture as a product can be understood as representation and signification. Culture, in this sense, might refer to the products and representations of a culture. The emphasis in this layer is not just on any object or artefact of culture, but on
artefacts that create or convey specific meanings for a group of people. The third layer of emphasis is on the variety of the products of meaningful activity, i.e. that products can be both material and non-material. The conceptualisation of culture as both process and product is highly relevant to the research questions explored in this study. In what follows, the main contributions of studies on culture in general to the Chinese context are reviewed and summarised using this conceptualisation to frame the discussion.

In the Chinese language, culture consists of two characters: wenhua (文化). ‘文’ (wen) symbolises the integration of all things in the universe. ‘化’ (hua) is an associative compound of ren (person) and he (kind) which implies leading people to be nice. In ancient times, the Chinese believed that humanistic teaching helped mankind to move out of savagery and learn to be civilized: if everyone understands moral teachings and etiquette, then they can educate their descendants. In so doing, good ideological and ethical standards can be passed on through generations.

In both ancient and modern China, culture is closely related to education. For instance, in archaeology, culture involves the understanding of the history, the formation of historical views and the formation of world views. For example, Mao stated that Chinese educational policy must enable everyone who receives an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and become a worker with both socialist consciousness and culture (Quentin & Basgen, 1966, p.44). Culture in this sense refers to literacy skills and general knowledge. As another example, a ‘four haves’ movement was sponsored by the
Chinese government in the 1980s. Young students were called upon to develop themselves into young socialists in terms of having socialist ideals (lixiang), morality (daode), culture (wenhua) and discipline (jilu).

Scholarly culture studies in modern China start from the late nineteenth century, when modern academic pioneers introduced Western studies into China, during the age called “Western Learning”. Their definition of culture was not so different from that of Western scholars and mainly involved ideology, material products and spiritual products. However, much debate among Chinese scholars centred on culture categories and the functions of culture. During the period between the establishment of the PRC and the Open Door and Reform in the late 1970s and early 1980s, revolutionary culture prevailed, and thus debates focused on the preference for socialist culture over capitalist culture. In the 1980s, economic construction and social revitalisation triggered more debate on culture, which was called ‘culture fever’¹ (wenhua re). Western literature was eagerly read, in particular, literature on philosophy, aesthetics and culture. Popular culture also became a much more prevalent social phenomenon. Chinese society began an era of cultural pluralism.

One of the legacies of ‘culture fever’ was a reflection on the nature of Chinese national culture. The strong tendency towards globalisation intensified this attention. As far as national culture is concerned, globalisation implies the importing and exporting of culture.

¹ A feverish nationwide discussion of and provocative inquiries into notions such as culture, tradition, modernity, and particularly the meaning and implications of Western theories, emerged in China in the early 1980s at the peak of China’s Economic Reforms. It developed into a full-scale social-cultural movement in the years to follow, and was brought to a sudden end by the crackdown in Tiananmen Square in 1989.
Against this background, present day basic cultural philosophical inquiries look into: (1) the status of national culture in the process of globalisation; (2) ontological arguments related to national culture; (3) the rational structure of national culture; (4) the cosmopolitanisation of national culture; (5) foreign culture references; and (6) unity of cultural pluralism (Mou, 2006, p. 1).

Culture is multi-faceted, and every culture is developed on the basis of a particular set of social values, and, conversely, social values always influence cultural development. The issue of culture is one of the priorities on the agenda of the Community Party of China (CPA). Socialist advanced culture is the spiritual core of the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. In contemporary China, to develop advanced culture means to develop a national, scientific and popular socialist culture geared to the needs of modernisation, of the world and of the future, so as to enrich people's mental world and reinforce their mental strength. Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory provide the guidelines in the realm of ideology.

Chinese Vice-President Jiang Zemin stressed that, in the present-day world, culture interacts with economic and political activities (XinhuaNet, 2008a). The power of culture is deeply rooted in the vitality, creativity and cohesiveness of a nation. All Party members must fully understand the strategic significance of cultural development and make socialist culture develop and flourish (p.vi). Jiang notes that the CPC should represent the orientation of China’s advanced culture. A society is truly socialist only when its economic, political and cultural development is balanced. Only by always representing
the orientation of China’s advanced culture and working hard to develop a socialist culture with Chinese characteristics can the CPC achieve this goal. The fundamental task of socialist culture is to educate the citizens to have lofty ideals, moral integrity, a good education and a strong sense of discipline. Jiang also explains that we must always take Marxism as our guide, clearly discern the orientation of advanced culture, and resolutely oppose wrong, anti-Marxist ideas. At the same time, we must clearly understand that Marxism is a developing science. It cannot be regarded as a rigid dogma; new experience and understanding gained from practice must be constantly assimilated and used to enrich and develop Marxism (p.vi).

Hu Jintao, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPC and Chinese President, further stressed the significance of culture development as the key to “soft power” (Xinhua Net, 2008b). The four main points he stresses are the need: (1) to build up the system of socialist core values and make socialist ideology more attractive and cohesive; (2) to foster a culture of harmony and cultivate civilized practices; (3) to promote Chinese culture and build a common spiritual home for the Chinese nation; and (4) to stimulate cultural innovation and enhance the vitality of cultural development.

Dai (2006, p.1) analyses the difficulties involved in developing advanced culture. At the same time, the analysis implies the rationale of the CPC’s call for an advanced culture. Dai’s arguments are summarised as: (1) Chinese mainstream ideologies are strongly challenged by Western ideologies and cultures; (2) China’s reforms produced many changes in social and economic structure, and finding ways to meet the cultural needs of
various social groups is an urgent matter; (3) the market economy influences the allocation, application and social effect of cultural resources; thus people have more autonomy in accessing various cultural resources; and (4) the existing cultural system is less compatible with cultural development and cultural industry is left behind peoples’ needs.

The place of Chinese culture and Western culture in Chinese society has historically been a theme of the culture debate. The integration of foreign culture learning and foreign language learning can be traced back to the practice of the School of Combined Learning (Tongwen Guan). After the Opium Wars, some Westernisers in the Qing Government recognised the military power of Western countries and started to establish foreign language schools. Tongwen Guan was established as a foreign language school in 1862. However, culture learning at that time was basically restricted to Western science and technology. In modern China, foreign language teaching was mandated by political factors and social development, and of course, the cultural dimension was not excluded. A detailed historic review of English teaching and culture teaching is presented in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

Fang and Liao offer a concise summary of the concept of culture, which can be applied to conclude the studies on culture outside of China and in the Chinese context as explained in this section. Fang and Liao (2007, p.21) note that, on the one hand, culture refers to material civilization created by human beings in the practice process. On the other hand, culture refers to spiritual civilization, and belongs to social ideology, including politics,
law, morals, philosophy, art, religion and so on, as well as to the system and the organisations and agencies which adapt with it. In other words, culture, in every society, is established on the basis of the society’s value system. For example, many art performances, such as music and movies, are regarded as cultural product. However, they are formed and produced from the root of a particular culture and may be transformed during social change and development, so they are also perceived as process. As another example, the formation of a particular ideology is inseparable from its material condition. And a particular ideology is usually reflected through material things. There is an old Chinese saying that “each place has its own way of supporting its own inhabitants”, which implies that people in different living conditions form different characteristics and create various regional cultures.

The literature review of studies on culture was drawn from a broad range of contexts and definitions of the concept of culture. These definitions and conceptualisations of culture presented the complexity of the concept and provided multiple focal points from which to observe culture. Both similarities and differences can be noticed across these understandings and definitions of culture. One major similarity was that all the definitions recognised and acknowledged that culture can be seen as both product and process. Chinese scholars tend to classify culture into material products, spiritual products and ideology. In addition, they acknowledge the qualities of transformation and transmission of culture, which can be understood as seeing culture as a process. Furthermore, in the Chinese context, the main themes of the culture debate (advanced
culture, dialogues about Chinese traditional culture/modern culture and Chinese culture/Western culture) reflect the qualities of culture as both process and product.

This literature review provided a framework instrumental to the examination of the perspective from which the Standard conceptualises and defines the concept of culture in the global context in relation to the socioeconomic situation of China. In addition, this review set the foundation for the study and led the researcher to examine understandings of the cultural dimension in English teaching, as education and culture are interrelated concepts, informing a common agenda. This interrelationship of culture and education will be explored in the next section.

2.1.2 Culture and education

Education cannot be conducted in isolation from its particular educational context. Education is one of the components of culture and it is influenced by political systems and economic development. An understanding of the particular culture and society in which education exists is necessary for understanding education. As well, culture leaves many marks on education such as educational thoughts, systems, areas of content and approaches. Broadly speaking, culture is shaped by social practices in the form of traditions, customs, languages, value systems and so on. At the same time, culture creates invisible but formative influences on individuals and shapes people’s thoughts and behaviour. People receive a broad education from society in general, and from family. In particular, school plays a special role in educating people and transmitting culture in an intentional, systematic and organised way. Schooling is not only responsible for the teaching of the material dimension of culture, but also, and more importantly, it teaches
students how to interpret values and beliefs which are embraced and expressed in material products. Education is about changing someone, moulding them, offering them new ways of thinking and being and pointing them in a particular direction (Lucas, Pudsey, Wadham & Boyd, 2007, p. 64). In this sense, education is critically important in creating culture.

Lu (2005, pp. 26-27) points out that education serves as an important way to transmit culture through generations. Culture is developed and transmitted through generations of selection and interpretation. Education has been an essential channel in cultural transference in human history. The selection of educational content in any society reflects the selection of the cultural content to be transmitted. As a result, the mission of education in human development involves defining the content to be taught.

Wadham, Pudsey & Boyd (2007, p.1) pointed out the relationship between culture and education:

Very simply, humans are cultural beings and we can’t understand them without recognising the cultural dimension of their lives. We also can’t understand this cultural dimension of human beings unless we recognise that education and schooling are two of the most important ways in which we learn to live within and contribute to our own cultural lives. Simply put, culture shapes education, and education shapes culture.
The above discussion points to the inextricable associations between education and culture. Firstly, things happening in school should be studied along with what is happening outside school. Secondly, discussions of culture teaching in China cannot ignore the macro social and historic background in which Chinese culture has increasingly been interwoven with Western cultures. Thirdly, foreign language as a “normal” part of general education (Byram, 1989, p. 2), definitely involves the teaching of native culture and foreign culture. Thus, the goals, the selection of the content and the pedagogies of culture teaching must always be in accordance with those of general education. People, as the objects of education, are not totally empty vessels at the beginning of their educational journey. The particular culture and society in which we grow up encourage us to believe certain things about the world and ourselves as well as about our connections with people from other cultures. That pre-existing cognition will be moulded, and human consciousness will be stimulated through education in which the spirit of humanism is cultivated.

By relating the special status of education in a society to the discussion of culture in Section 2.1.1, the significance of the cultural dimension in China’s English teaching becomes salient. At the same time, the complexity of this issue is also evident. Students are required to be educated as talents with socialist beliefs and ideology; however, the school is not a vacuum, and students have easy access to a diversity of cultures. Thus, the objectives and patterns of the teaching of culture in Chinese education and of English teaching in particular, truly merit an in-depth discussion.
2.2 Studies on culture teaching

The dialectical connection between language and culture has gained more attention in foreign language teaching studies both in and outside China. For one thing, language is regarded as fundamental in creating the social context in which language itself is used and constructs the ways in which participants understand the social activity in which they are engaged (Liddicoat 1997; Schegloff, 1996). In other words, it has been emphasised that without the teaching of culture, the teaching of a foreign language is incomplete and inaccurate (Byram, 1997; Byram & Neyner, 1998; Kramsch, 1993; Kramsch, 2006). As well, foreign language learning provides learners with another perspective, distinct from their native culture, from which to observe the world. With increasing concerns in the field of foreign language teaching about the development of intercultural communicative competence, students’ own culture has been taken into consideration. The value of integrating the target culture and the native culture is supported by many scholars such as Kramsch (1993), Crozet and Liddicoat (2000) and Lo Bianco (1999).

Kramsch (1993, p.229) noted that cultural competence can best be developed in a structured learning environment, where conscious parallels can be drawn, where language can be explicitly linked to its meaning in a particular sociocultural and historical context, and where disparate linguistic or cultural phenomena can be brought together and attached to more abstract principles of both base (C1) and target (C2) language and culture. In order to provide an overview of culture teaching studies, this section reviews not only the literature on this domain in the West, but also the studies conducted in China.
2.2.1 Studies on culture teaching conducted out of China

Language and culture, among the foremost means of societies’ and humankind’s development have historically been studied in a number of disciplines. As far as culture teaching in foreign language instruction is concerned, three main perspectives are found in the discussions on the development of students’ communicative competence: an anthropological perspective, a sociolinguistic perspective and an intercultural communication perspective (Lange & Paige, 2003, p.xi).

After the notion of communicative competence was introduced by Hymes (1966), the concept became one of the core terms in the field of sociolinguistics. Hymes calls attention to the notion that in order to speak a language correctly, one needs not only to learn its vocabulary and grammar, but also the context in which words are used. Hymes (1974, pp.54-62) also developed a valuable model to assist in the identification and labelling of components of linguistic interaction. The model is known as S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G (setting and scene, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms and genre). This model facilitates the understanding of the concept of context and of the linkage of context with language. Moreover, culture is omnipresent through context and is recognised as being of potential relevance to communication. Thus, Hymes’s notion of communicative competence implies the significance of learning culture in learning a language. Similarly, many sociolinguists address the inseparability of language and culture, i.e. Halliday (1975, p. 120) claims that the linguistic system is a part of the social system, and neither of them can be learnt without the other.
The concept of communicative competence has been extended to studies on foreign language teaching. It has become a common assumption among language scholars and educators that culture teaching is an inseparable component in language teaching. Saville-Troike (2003, p. 4) notes that some of the dimensions of communicative competence from a sociolinguistic perspective are related to both first and second language acquisition and use. As for foreign language learning, Saville-Troike (2003, p.6) contends that students learning a foreign language within the context of their native culture generally have little opportunity to interact with members of the speech community that speaks the foreign language natively, and little opportunity (or need) to become part of it. Students may learn about different norms of interaction, different values and beliefs related to ways of speaking, but without direct knowledge and experience of the community’s social and cultural organisation, this is an academic exercise. Saville-Troike (2003, p.13) also believes that the limits on the learnability of such skills may have important implications in the selection and sequencing of the second or foreign language curriculum. She also suggests that distinctions be made between receptive and productive competence. Students who are interacting with native speakers should be helped to understand those speakers’ communicative intentions, but not necessarily expected or required to behave likewise. This notion is very helpful in explaining the components of intercultural communicative competence and the real pedagogical concerns of culture teaching. In Saville-Troike’s (2003, p.13) words, the limitations on teaching cultural knowledge in the second, foreign, or auxiliary language classroom should also be recognised, including what needs to be, can be, and should be taught. Thus Saville-Troike (2003, p.15) strongly suggests that the organisation of the curriculum and the choice of
methods, as well as the design of testing, must be based on the goals of instruction and
the background of the students, and thus must recognise the communicative needs of the
learners.

As the concept of culture is the mainstay of anthropology, this discipline can inform
foreign language education in significant ways. Amongst other things, it can provide an
understanding of the concept of culture and of attitudes and approaches to the observation
and interpretation of culture and also inform the selection of the cultural content to be
taught. Lafayette (2003, pp.53-69) provides a comprehensive discussion of the role that
anthropology has played, is playing, and will continue to play in the teaching of culture in
the second language classroom. Until the advent of audio-lingualism during the 1950s
and 1960s, culture in the second language classroom was for the most part limited to
literature, and even that was often confined to textbooks and/or courses beyond the
intermediate level (p.54). However, the relevance of culture to “patterns of living” in
anthropology extends beyond the cultural content in foreign language teaching that is
focussed on the achievements of civilization, such as history or literature. Along with
technological advances, multi-media technology is applied in the foreign language
classroom. Learners have easy access to authentic material through broadcast/television
programs, websites, and even simultaneous communication with native-speakers. These
materials enable learners to establish impressions of “others’” everyday life through a
medium that includes both sound and images.
In relation to language teaching, Brody (2003, p.39) notes that the anthropological perspective makes contributions in three ways: (1) it sharpens the conceptualisations of culture, which contributes to the investigation of how it can be taught; (2) it improves our understanding of the close relationship between language and culture; and (3) it provides methodologies, such as ethnographic observation and discourse analysis, that are useful tools to explore what really happens in the second language classroom.

Since the 1990s, it has been widely recognised in the foreign language teaching domain that language teaching is inseparable from culture teaching, and that foreign language learning itself is also influenced by culture. The goals, the content of culture teaching and the evaluation of what is termed by some experts as students’ “intercultural competence” (Byram, 1997; Byram and Zarate, 1998) have been key issues in the studies of culture teaching. These concerns have become even more complicated with the interwoven relationship between English as an international language and the diversified cultures it embodies as well as the different political and social contexts of English teaching.

Culture teaching within foreign language was explored systematically, methodically and professionally in the 1980s and 1990s by many scholars. These include Littlewood (1984), Byram (1989, 1997) and Kramsch (1993, 1998) among others. Littlewood (1984, p.55) recognises the interrelatedness between language and culture as “when we try to adopt new speech patterns, we are to some extent giving up markers of our own identity, in order to adopt those of another cultural group. In some respects, too, we are accepting another culture’s way of perceiving the world … One of the factors influencing how we
experience the process is our attitude towards the foreign culture itself.” Byram places language and culture firmly in the same frame and sees attitude change as a sometimes necessary component of culture learning. He notes (1989, p.22) that language is inseparable from culture, thus as learners learn about language they learn about culture and as they learn to use a new language they learn to communicate with other individuals from a new culture… One of the aims of cultural studies teaching should be to produce changes of attitude in pupils towards other cultures.

In addition to the significance of other cultures in foreign language teaching, the learners’ native culture and the context of teaching are addressed by a number of scholars. Byram points out that teachers should teach culture in language teaching for intercultural understanding, as the learner’s ultimate goal is to gain intercultural competence (1997, p. 2). The importance of context in language teaching and culture teaching was proposed by Kramsch in 1993. She says (p.11) that given that language teachers have to teach both a normative linguistic system and its variable instances of use, attention to context calls for a type of pedagogy that fosters both direct and indirect ways of transmitting knowledge, that values not only facts but relations between facts, that encourages diversity of experience and reflection on that diversity.

Kramsch (1993, p. 11) takes cultural context as the core of a language class and states that the educational challenge is teaching language as context within a dialogic pedagogy that makes context explicit, thus enabling text and context to interact dialectically in the classroom. Kramsch (1998, p. 31) argues that the responsibility of the language teacher is
to teach culture as it is mediated through language. Crozet & Liddicoat (2000, p.13) point out that teaching culture in language implies an acknowledgement and understanding of the links between language and culture as well as an understanding of how communication works across cultures. In this sense, the integration of culture and language constitutes new teaching content which language teachers need to assess and introduce into their teaching practice.

Since the turn of the new century, intercultural language teaching has become dominant in countries such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia. In brief, current approaches to teaching culture engage a clear intercultural dimension. Moreover, one major concern about culture teaching in foreign language teaching, according to the intercultural language teaching approach, is to teach culture through the teaching of language. These studies usher in a new era for teaching culture within foreign language teaching; moreover, they orient the goals of culture teaching and imply significance for the teacher’s role in this process of leading students to the achievement of intercultural competence and the formation of more open world views.

In addition, many scholars have paid more attention to observing communication from the perspective of the pragmatic use of language in recent years, and this observation has offered sufficient evidence for the complex interrelationships between language and culture in intercultural communication. Liddicoat (2010, p.130) points out that the language-culture interrelation applies at all levels of language of use, and they are central, not peripheral, features of the communication process. Such a view entails that culture is
a constituent element of a communication system rather than “noise” affecting the
effectiveness and efficiency of communication. In fact, the recognition of the crucial role
of culture in intercultural communication was emphasised by Scarino and Liddicoat
(2009) in the Guide for Teaching and Learning Language as the outcome of a project
initiated by the Australian Government. Among the key ideas of the Guide, the two
scholars (p.15) point out that the relationship between language and culture is
fundamental, and that language is more than just the code, also involving social practices
of interpreting and making meanings. These ideas lead to a consideration of how
language as code and language as social practice are balanced in foreign language
teaching curricula.

There are also scholars (Byram & Feng, 2005; Byram, 2006, Himmelmann 2006, Ryan,
2006, to name a few) who explore the significance of the cultural dimension in foreign
language teaching from the perspective of foreign language teaching as social action, and
as a means of cultivating intercultural citizenship. Byram (2010, p.320) reinforces one
vision of foreign language education proposed by a project initiated by the Council of
Europe called “Languages in Education, Languages for Education”. Byram puts forward
this vision and proposes that the content should draw on citizenship education, enriching
it with attention to intercultural communicative competence and giving substantial and
meaningful content to language lessons, while providing opportunities for
methodological innovation and cross-curricular cooperation.
The widespread use of English in the international arena has led to discussions about what cultures to teach and what objectives to aim for when teaching culture. The aim of developing in students a culturally informed native-speaker-like proficiency is problematic in the global context. On the one hand, the number of native English speakers has declined as a proportion of the world’s population (Graddol, 2006, pp. 152-164), and the concept of native-speaker has become blurred (Rajagopalan, 2004, p.111). On the other hand, English is used as a communication tool by people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and thus unavoidably reflects different cultural features. One such discourse is the thesis defence for English majors in Chinese universities. English serves as the defence language. The defence panel usually consists of several examiners, mostly Chinese, who are recognised as prominent scholars in a particular academic field. At the outset of the defence, a chairperson is normally in charge of introducing the panel members. It is often the case that the chairperson tends to emphasise a member’s academic achievement and his/her status in academia. In turn, the person introduced will respond to the praise in a humble way and thank the chairperson for the kind introduction. This kind of conversation style makes interlocutors comfortable because it meets polite norms in Chinese culture, where modesty is achieved by self-deprecation and the exaggerated praise of others.

In addition, studies on the integration of culture into language teaching in language classes remain insubstantial and sporadic, even though the integration of culture into the foreign language curriculum has been discussed since the early 1970s. Although much effort has been made in the discussion of the integration of culture into language teaching
research outside China (Castro, Sercu & Méndez García, 2004; Posthofen, 1994; Sercu, 2002; Sercu, 2004; Savignon & Sysoyev 2002; Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005; Tang, 2006; Thanasoulas, 2001), research into this issue, especially in relation to teacher knowledge and beliefs, is still rare in the Chinese context. There is insufficient research on what teachers perceive the role of culture teaching to be and what the teachers’ conception of what the concept of culture is in the Chinese context as well.

2.2.2 Studies on culture teaching in China

Intercultural communication as an area of study has been conducted in China since the early 1980s. However, most research has centred on the theme of cross-cultural communication and culture rather than on the search for approaches suitable to the Chinese context. Wenzhong Hu, the founder of Chinese Intercultural Communication as a discipline, and the first president of CAFIC (China Association for Intercultural Communication) started to integrate some of the research findings on intercultural communication and its relationship to foreign language teaching based on studies into China in the 1980s that were conducted overseas. Hu (1994) made clear the significance of integrating culture into foreign language teaching by comparing cultural differences reflected in the Chinese and English languages. Since the 1990s, more scholars have engaged in intercultural communication research. In his collection, *Culture and Communication* (1994), Hu edited 44 papers dealing with the following issues: cultural factors and foreign language teaching, language and culture, non-verbal communication, translation and culture, pragmatics and culture. According to Hu (1994, p. 2), this book was the first effort in the history of Chinese foreign language teaching to bring together
the findings of research in sociolinguistics, cultural linguistics, pragmatics, translation, teaching Chinese to foreigners and culture teaching in foreign language teaching.

In their discussion of foreign language teaching, Hu and Gao (1997, pp.8-9) adopted the definition of culture proposed by cultural anthropologists, that is, to view culture as the whole living style of a particular group of people. They explain that this view keeps the content of culture open, including not only daily life and customs, but also the underlying values of a society. They assert the equal importance of cultural knowledge and cultural communication, and they further put forward the vision of teaching cultural knowledge through communication. However, there was no further explanation, expansion or deepening of this view by scholars until Gao put forward her perspective of intercultural communication competence by applying a pair of Chinese philosophic terms, *Dao* and *Qi*, in 2000.

Gao (2000) explained the development of students’ intercultural communication competence with the integration of general empowerment education from the perspective of Chinese *Dao-Qi* philosophy. *Dao* and *Qi* form a pair of Chinese philosophical concepts. *Dao* is a road with a certain direction and it implies “leading to somewhere”, as shown through the Chinese character of *Dao* (道) which is much like a person standing at a cross road who is thinking about where to go to. *Qi* (器) is a container in Chinese, carrying the suggestion of tool. According to the *Book of Changes*, *Dao* is abstract and intangible but represented by *Qi* while *Qi* is concrete and tangible. *Dao* and *Qi* are always
used together as a pair to respectively refer to the law of matter or matter, and noumenon or phenomenon. *Dao* is divided into *Tiandao* and *Rendao*. *Tiandao* refers to the existence and ways of existence of the world which are outside the human sphere. *Rendao* refers to human values, ethics and morals which are internal to people. When *Qi* refers to means and strategies for reaching a goal, another Chinese character *Shu* is used; *Shu* can be regarded as a part of *Qi*.

In the context of intercultural communication, *Dao* refers to the general principle of the communication subject and *Qi* refers to the instrument and function of mastery of the communication message and communicative strategies as well as the outcome and effect of communication. In fact the basic orientation involves the participant’s personality and overall personal quality from which the communicative attitude is formed. Messages, strategies, and outcomes are all carried by general principles of communication and the subjects involved in communication. According to Gao, *Dao* is above *Qi* in intercultural communication, because *Dao* is the nature and motive power of communication, which is universal in every culture and, moreover, as a realm of thought, *Dao* is beyond language and includes language. However *Qi* refers to concrete cultural knowledge and behaviour which can be expressed through language. Gao argues/suggests/states that intercultural communication, in fact, seeks mutual understanding between people from different cultures, that is, the similarities between different cultures are emphasised. Different cultural knowledge and behaviour belong to the field of *Qi*, which can be expressed through language. Gao’s defining and understanding of the concept of culture using *Dao-* *Qi* is significant for the studies on culture in China. This way of defining and interpreting
culture presented an attempt to articulate the difference between the concept of culture as a product and the concept of culture as a process, using Chinese cultural concepts rather than simply borrowing Western understandings. This local approach to understanding cultural concepts immediately attracted the attention of many researchers and educators and was frequently cited or applied in academic publications in the fields of intercultural communication and foreign language teaching (Liu, 2003; Wu & Wen, 2005; Yu, 2010, to name a few).

In addition, Gao, when analysing the meaning of “intercultural communication”, emphasises the education aspect, rather than the skill training aspect, that culture teaching serves in the development of one’s empowerment. This argument is in accordance with the educational ideology that the current school education reform and the Standard called for. In Gao’s theory, greater attention is paid to the level of Dao in the studies of intercultural communicative competence (2000, p.196). However, the pedagogical concerns of intercultural communicative competence still centre on the level of Qi, that is, the teaching of cultural knowledge. Gao’s interpretation implies that the development of intercultural communicative competence is essentially part of education as a way of developing quality of character rather than skills training. Although this idea of ‘suzhi jiaoyu’ is uniquely Chinese, it has some parallels with the orientation of Western studies on the language–culture link, which point out that learning about culture in language use is not simply a question of learning where and how language can interact with culture; instead, in their view, learning about culture implies understanding culture as a process and a maker of reality/world view (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000, p. 15).
Qiufang Wen is another influential scholar in the field of English teaching in China who pays a great deal of attention to the discussions of English learners’ intercultural communicative competence. Wen (2004, pp.170-171) points out that the implicit assumption underlying the notion of appropriateness in communication is that learners of English as a foreign language should take the native speaker as their model of appropriate communicative behaviours, and the best learners should be able to approximate the native-speaker’s behaviour in communication. Wen argues that, as learners of English as a foreign language, we are not able to predict what kind of speakers with what cultural backgrounds we will encounter in our future life (p. 174). In relation to English as a foreign language, Wen proposes a model from the perspective of learning English as an international language to cater for the requirements of a globalised community (see Figure 2.2). According to this model, the overall objective of English language teaching is to develop students’ intercultural communicative competence.

Figure 2.2 A model of proficiency for learners of English as a foreign language

Wen further explains three types of intercultural competences. Firstly, sensitivity is the basis on which the other two kinds of abilities can be developed. Level of awareness can be developed only when we have exposure to new cultures, by comparing the other’s culture with our own. However, the ability to discern differences is not the same as the actual knowledge of a particular culture. For example, abundant knowledge about American culture can facilitate the understanding of differences between Chinese and American culture. This kind of knowledge may be helpful in understanding the difference between Indian culture and ours. Therefore, our sensitivity to cultural differences should go beyond the knowledge about specific cultures. In this case, culture–knowledge learning is not the end, but a means. The process of identifying differences is by nature one of paradigm-shifting or perspective-shifting, that is, thinking of something from a new perspective.

Secondly, one’s sharp sensitivity to cultural differences can facilitate the process of learning to be tolerant about differences in foreign cultures, but it does not naturally lead to it. To be tolerant in intercultural situations, a person should not only have appropriate attitudes towards different cultures but also be psychologically empathetic. Thirdly, the flexibility of dealing with cultural differences demands a behavioural solution that is appropriate for a specific intercultural context. In this sense, flexibility is needed in two regards, i.e. in addition to interlocutors’ sensitivity to and tolerance of cultural differences, they need open communication to discuss the issue of conflict and understand the cause (Wen, 2004, pp.176-178).
Wen explained this view (above) of intercultural communicative competence on the basis of China’s tertiary education, in particular, in relation to teaching students undertaking an English major. She points out that, all in all, proficiency in the language used in communication is a precondition for enabling intercultural communication, but it is not sufficient to guarantee success. In line with Gao’s (2000) theory, Wen’s view regards English teaching as the height of education for “quality of character” (sushi). They both emphasise the significance of learning English as a process of developing learners’ cultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence.

Apart from a few key figures, research studies into culture teaching are peripheral in the area of English teaching or foreign language teaching. Wang and Gao (2008) reviewed the research output on English language education in China published in 24 international journals from 2001 to 2006. They found limited information about how teaching is undertaken and how teachers experience professional development in school settings (2008, p.392). These two scholars identified many research gaps through their review. Culture teaching and the investigation of teachers and their classroom practices are among the many gaps they listed (p.393).

The low proportion of culture-related articles in the following three academic journals clearly points to the situation that studies on culture teaching are peripheral in China. The three journals are among the core national academic journals in the field of foreign language teaching. They are Foreign Languages and Their Teaching (FLTT), Foreign Language Teaching and Research (FLTR) and Teaching English in China (TEIC). The
three journals are commonly viewed as the leading journals of high academic standard in
the field of China’s foreign language teaching and research Table 2.1 presents the
percentage of culture-related articles in these three journals between the years 2006 and
2009. The 77 articles generally cover culture-related areas and topics such as translation,
intercultural communication, and rhetoric and discourse analysis. Only six of the 77
articles relate to foreign language teaching based on the university setting, and none of
them related to school education. Another way to search for culture teaching related
research and academic articles is through the article collections complied by the China
Association for Intercultural Communication (CAFIC).

Table 2.1 The number of culture-related articles in three leading academic journals
between the years 2006 and 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Number of issues</th>
<th>Number of articles</th>
<th>Number of culture-related articles and their percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLTT</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>17 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLTR</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEIC</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>7 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1091</td>
<td>25 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking a 2006 conference article collection as an example, 26 out of the total 245 (10.6%)
articles are related to culture teaching in foreign language teaching. Again none of the 26
articles specifically focuses on the setting of school education. A similar situation is
found by examining a leading journal of basic education, the Foreign Language Teaching in Schools Journal. Only one article about culture teaching is found among the 198 articles in the years 2008 and 2009. This indicates that the research on culture teaching in the context of school education in China is insufficient.

To conclude the literature reviewed in this section, the integration of teaching culture with foreign language teaching has become a widely accepted idea among educators and teachers. In this integration, it is evident that teachers play a crucial role, mainly because the integration largely depends on teachers’ attitudes towards their subject and their pedagogical knowledge of culture and how it is taught. However, compared with the overall situation of foreign language teaching research in China, research on culture teaching is peripheral and has not been paid sufficient and in-depth attention. Therefore deeper investigation was required in order to reveal teachers’ attitudes to and beliefs about this issue, and to devise appropriate possible solutions. The emphasis on the integration and reinforcement of the cultural dimension in English teaching given by the Standard made this research significant. In this sense, the empirical study of this thesis is expected to fill the identified research gap by combining the examination of the existing literature of the relevant academic areas with the deep investigation of teachers as the critical group of people implementing the Standard.

2.3 Study on foreign language teachers’ attitudes and beliefs

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2 Basic education in China includes pre-school education, primary education and regular secondary education. School education in this thesis refers to secondary education.
Teachers’ attitudes and their beliefs about the teaching of culture play a significant role in their classroom practice. The review of literature on this domain provides a background understanding for the thesis with regards to teacher attitudes and beliefs and the factors that affect these constructs.

This thesis assumes that teachers are the principal decision makers at the classroom level; they decide, shape and modify the curriculum based on their classroom reality. According to Fullan (2001, p. 9), it is what teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning young people receive. Shulman (1987, p.7) highlights the significance of teachers in this manner: “Teachers can transform understanding, performance skills, or desired attitudes or values into pedagogical representations and actions… teaching necessarily begins with a teacher’s understanding of what is to be learned and how it is to be taught.” In a dialogue with Carol Tell, Shulman (2001, p.6) describes teachers as the mechanism by which our societies pass on knowledge and values. Teachers, in this sense, are uniquely responsible for carrying on our cultural, intellectual and aesthetic achievements. It is widely acknowledged that teachers’ educational attitudes and theories, although in many cases unconsciously held, have an effect on their classroom behaviour, influence what students actually learn, and are a potent determinant of teachers’ teaching style (Burns, 1992; McNergney & Carrier, 1981; Nunan, 1990). In highlighting the significant role of teachers in contemporary society, Gu (2007, p.7) points out that teachers play a mediating role in bridging the past, the present and the future, the traditions and the innovation, the old and the new and the local and the expatriate. The latest reform in China’s school
education in the context of globalisation and China’s national changes, advocated many changes and innovations in terms of teachers’ philosophies of education and subject teaching. Teachers are front-line actors whose attitudes and beliefs should be examined to better understand the dynamics and challenges of education within a certain society (Gu, 2007, p. 5). As discussed by Brindley and Hood (1990, p.241), any implementation of innovation involves a change in beliefs, and this usually can only come through personal involvement in the innovation.

The notion that teachers’ beliefs are a significant factor in the implementation of educational reforms has been stressed in the area of educational research. When it comes to modifying classroom practices, teachers are the most powerful agents (Prawat, 1992; Richardson & Anders, 1994; Tedick & Walker, 1996), and teachers change the way they teach when their beliefs about foreign language learning change (Freeman & Freeman, 1994, p.41). Moreover, in most current conceptions, the perceived relationship between beliefs and actions is interactive. Beliefs are thought to drive actions; however, experiences and reflection on action may lead to change in, and/or additions to, beliefs (Richardson, 1996, p.104). Due to the significance of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and their actions, Shaw & Jakubowski (1991, p.13) maintain that for effective and continuing change to occur, each teacher should reflect on his or her own beliefs and should commit to modifying them to include new recommendations. Because the beliefs teachers hold influence their classroom judgements and actions, understanding more about the beliefs of teachers is essential to improving teaching practice (Calderhead, 1996; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 2003).
Much empirical and exploratory research has been conducted on teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and their practical instruction as well as the links between them (Moom et al., 1999; Pelco & Ries, 1999; Bateman, 2006, to name a few). Researchers interested in this area have paid much attention to pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. This body of research has supported the notion that teachers’ attitude and beliefs have a close relationship with their classroom instruction and with student learning. Ample research in this area has provided valuable data with implications for many educational activities such as teacher education, curriculum design and implementation, and pedagogical development. In addition, such research on teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and practices provides contextual pictures of education by way of listening to and observing teachers, the most valuable human resources (Jegede et al., 2000, p.287) in education. In collaboration with a team that had many years of experience in education, Karabenick & Noda (2004), conducted a survey of 729 teachers in one Midwestern suburban district in the U.S. impacted by high numbers of immigrant and refugee English language learners (ELLs). The survey focussed on the teachers’ beliefs, attitudes, practices and needs in relation to ELLs. The research team investigated the teachers’ beliefs about second language acquisition and ELL students’ parents as well as their beliefs about the broader cultural context. It was found through this comprehensive survey that, in general, teachers held positive attitudes toward ELLs, bilingual education, and bilingualism; however, there was considerable variability, with sizeable proportions of teachers demonstrating less supportive beliefs, attitudes and practices. The results also show that teachers with more favourable attitudes towards ELLs tended to take a mastery versus a
performance (or competitive) approach to instruction and had a higher self-efficacy for teaching ELLs. Based on the data results, the authors offered recommendations for the district in terms of instructional model restructuring and teacher training and saw positive change (p.74).

Bateman (2004) aimed to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of students considering a career as language teachers towards the teaching profession in general, and specifically towards teaching second languages, and whether these perceptions and attitudes develop and change during an exploratory course on language teaching. To achieve this aim, Bateman tracked 18 undergraduate students enrolled in the Exploration of Foreign Language Teaching course during Winter Semester 2003. Bateman constructed a questionnaire for the students to complete on the second day of class and again on the last day of class. Bateman also gained data from the students’ final paper for the course, in which they were asked to identify the five most important things they had learned about language teaching during the course. Both the quantitative and qualitative data gave the researcher evidence to support the assertion that the course increased the students’ beliefs regarding many issues related specifically to language teaching and learning, such as the importance of speaking the target language in the classroom, the importance of using a variety of creative activities, the exposure to new and effective teaching techniques, the importance of teaching culture along with language and the importance of creating a low-anxiety environment. Moreover, the course intensified the students’ beliefs and awareness about what it takes to make a good teacher and helped them to be well prepared for and well informed about their chosen profession.
Monsaas & Engelhard (1993) examined 186 classroom teachers from Georgia to investigate how teachers’ attitudes toward testing practices affect the way they prepare and administer standardised tests. The purpose of the research was to investigate teachers’ attitudes toward specific test preparation and administration practices, and the amount of pressure that teachers feel to increase scores on standardised tests as predictors of their practices. It was found that attitudes were negatively correlated with behaviour; teachers who felt that the testing practices were dishonest were less likely to engage in them. Pressure to increase standardised test scores was positively correlated with behaviour; the greater the perceived pressure to increase test scores, the greater the likelihood that teachers had engaged in more test preparation activities. It was also found that the amount of test preparation was greater in the lower grades than in the upper grades and that teachers in schools with more low-socioeconomic-status (SES) students tended to engage in more test preparation activities than their colleagues in higher SES schools. This research suggests that attitudes are significant predictors of behaviour (p.474) as the data results suggested that teachers’ attitudes about cheating and the amount of pressure to improve test scores are clearly related to their behaviour (p.475).

For her PhD thesis, Leung (2003) conducted a longitudinal study examining the problems of Chinese language education in Hong Kong. Her study examined pre-service teachers’ (PSTs) perceptions as the predominant factor in understanding how they learn to become teachers of Chinese. The study first examined the PSTs’ perceptions of teaching and learning Chinese on entry to, during, and on exit from a two-year teacher education
program. Then the study scrutinised the perceptual development and the sources of perceptions and perceptual changes, and how they impact on the PSTs. Finally the complex relationship between perceptions, lesson planning and classroom practices was explored. The results of this study suggested that Chinese language education in Hong Kong has been ineffective in many ways. The researcher argued that student teachers’ perspectives form a critical element in reforming Chinese language teacher education in Hong Kong, and that language teacher education should first be improved before language education can be effectively improved. This notion of the significance of teacher education on teachers’ perception of language teaching was also pointed out by other researchers such as Richards and Rodgers (2001) who argued that teachers possess assumptions about language and language learning, and that these provide the basis for a particular approach to language instruction. Cummins, Cheek and Lindsey (2004) pointed out that teacher educators can affect classroom practice by ensuring that teachers develop a theoretical orientation that is reflective of current and pertinent research in the field.

This line of research on teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and behaviour provided much supportive evidence that the three constructs are essential elements in improving understanding about teachers and their work. The various research projects discussed above were conducted in different contexts. These studies share a view of the teacher as a social being, and of teaching as a social activity that carries distinctive meanings in specific sociocultural and educational environments, but is also affected by teachers’ individual experiences and personalities (Gu, 2005, p.17). Foreign language is both the teaching content and the tool used by teachers to teach, so the understanding of teachers’
knowledge and beliefs about the language they are teaching is crucial to improving educational processes.

Apart from the empirical research focusing on the significance and effect of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs on teaching practice and the significance of teacher education, some researchers focused their research on the social aspects of teachers’ beliefs. Hyland and Hyland (2006) conducted research into language teachers’ written feedback to students’ writing. The scholars strongly argued that teachers comments are always relevant to specific pedagogic and interpersonal goals that both help to construct and are influenced by the teaching context (2006, p.213). These two scholars also pointed out that teachers’ action in relation to their assessment of the context is not only influenced by their personal belief systems but also are firmly anchored in the social and institutional context in which the teacher works (p.212). The scholars concluded their research into the teachers’ written feedback by pointing out that teachers’ feedback not only communicates beliefs about writing, language, or content but also expresses and negotiates human relationships (p.222).

In a review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do, Borg (2003) listed 64 studies published between the 1970s and 2002 on this topic. In the review, Borg applied the term “cognition” to refer to the entire process of thinking, knowing and believing. These studies focused on different topics and were conducted in different contexts. In terms of topic, two curricular areas in language teaching have been specifically examined, namely grammar and literacy instruction (e.g. Andrews, 1997,
The remaining studies focussed on more general processes, such as knowledge growth during teacher education or planning and decision-making (e.g. Almarza, 1996; Cumming, 1989; Freeman, 1993; Mitchell & Hooper, 1992; Sendan & Roberts, 1998; Woods, 1996). Most of the studies examined the teaching of English, mainly in ESL (as opposed to EFL) contexts, though in several cases teachers of English have been just one of a larger group of foreign language teachers studied (Lam, 2000; Meijer et al., 1999). Most teachers of English in China teach English as a foreign language rather than as a second language or as a lingua franca. Teachers in these teaching contexts share the same linguistic and cultural background as their students. Study on the attitudes and beliefs about English teaching of these groups of teachers are scarcely found. Despite the importance the topic merits, the discussion above indicates that Chinese teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching in the foreign language context has received scant attention.

2.4 Research questions

It can be seen from the studies reviewed in this chapter that teachers’ attitudes and beliefs mutually influence each other and that teachers hold different attitudes and beliefs about the same teaching subject. In addition, teachers’ attitudes and beliefs have been found to influence their teaching behaviours. These studies have been instrumental in conceptualising the present study, which examines Chinese teachers of English in terms of what they think of culture teaching and what they actually do in their practical
instruction with regards to this aspect of teaching. Specifically this study explored the following research questions:

(1) To what extent are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching congruent with the relevant objectives presented in the Standard? and

(2) To what extent can the culture objectives stated in the Standard be achieved within the current Chinese educational environment?

2.5 Summary
As a review of the literature on culture teaching in foreign language teaching, this chapter examined studies on culture and the relationship between culture and education. In the examination of studies on culture, literature from both inside and outside China (mainly from English speaking countries) was reviewed (Section 2.1). Culture is a comprehensive concept, and its definition has been provided by different disciplines and using different methodologies. Selected definitions of culture were extracted from Baldwin et al.’s review, mainly in chronological order. The purpose of doing so was to highlight the contribution of social development to the understandings of culture. It was evident that, with the enhancement of global communication and increases in migration, cultural content is enriched. Understandings of culture in the West concluded with the definition suggested by UNESCO, which presents the dynamic feature of culture and two core elements of this concept: modes of life and value system.
In addition to the review of understandings of culture by scholars outside China, this section examined its interpretation by their Chinese counterparts. Chinese academic understandings of culture also tend to apply anthropological perspectives and approaches. On the one hand, many academic scholars agree that culture includes at least three elements, namely, ideology, material products and spiritual products. The interpretation of diversified social phenomena was another academic interest among Chinese academics. Due to China’s socialist society and developing relations with the rest of the world, culture is a loaded term, full of connotations about China’s society. Two cultural “dialogues” were basically examined in this section, namely, the dialogue between Chinese national culture and contemporary culture, and between Chinese culture and Western culture. In the first dialogue, national culture is represented by the thoughts of Confucius, an ancient Chinese sage, and features the re-examination and reconstruction of Chinese traditional culture in the context of the new era. The second dialogue also makes reference to periods of modern China and features the pursuit of a balance between absorbing Western culture and enhancing Chinese cultural identity. In this dialogue, a special category of culture was examined, namely “advanced culture”. Although advanced culture is often neglected and regarded as communist propaganda by Western academics, in fact, it plays a crucial role in China’s social life in general, and in education in particular. Despite the differences in interpretation of the concept of culture between Chinese scholars and their counterparts outside China, this study summarised a common feature: in both contexts, culture can be understood as a process and as a product. The description of the debates about culture in the Chinese literature provides
the background for an understanding the government’s preference in relation to promoting cultural content.

As the context for the discussion of culture in this study, the relationship between culture and education was examined with special emphasis in this chapter (Section 2.1.2). Education is one of the components of culture and it is influenced by political systems and economic development. Understanding the culture and society in which education exists is necessary for understanding education. Culture can heavily influence education in terms of educational thinking, course content and teaching approaches. This examination of the relationship between culture and education identifies three key ideas of this study. First, social practices happening in school should be studied along with what is happening outside school. Second, discussion of culture teaching in China cannot ignore the macro social and historic background in which Chinese culture has been interwoven with Western cultures. Third, foreign language as a “normal” part of general education (Byram, 1989, p. 2), involves teaching both the native culture and the foreign culture. Thus, the objectives and patterns of culture teaching in Chinese education, and in English teaching particularly, deserve in-depth discussion. The exploration of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs serves as an entry point to this exploration.

Following the examination of understandings of culture and the relationship between culture and education, this chapter reviewed studies on culture teaching in foreign language teaching (Section 2.2). This examination was conducted on studies both outside (mainly English speaking countries) and within Chinese academia. Studies in
sociolinguistics, anthropology and intercultural communication all contribute to research on the cultural dimension in foreign language teaching. The goals of culture teaching and approaches to integrating culture into language teaching are much-studied topics. This section also examined studies on culture teaching in China, in particular, Gao’s (2000) interpretation of the development of intercultural communicative competence with the application of Chinese Dao-Qi philosophical concepts. Gao emphasises the educational rather than the skills training role that culture teaching plays in achieving empowerment. This argument is in accordance with the educational ideology that the New Reform and the Standard call for.

Research on what foreign language teachers think, believe, know and do suggests that teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and behaviour are affected by various factors and are highly context-based. For instance, the cultural dimension is paid increasing attention in foreign language teaching and research. The theoretical literature identifies many teacher roles and qualities, which, it is argued, are central to promoting culture learning in language education. Hughes (1986, p. 168) states that a teacher should be philosopher, geographer, historian, philologist and literary critic. To Altman (1981, pp. 11-13), the teacher functions as a skilful developer of communicative competence in the classroom, as a dialectologist and as a communication analyst. Ample studies are found in this area in relation to what aspects of culture to teach and how to teach them. However, questions have been posed by a number of researchers and teachers regarding how the teachers themselves perceive language education, culture teaching and learning, and their role as culture educators (Byram & Esarte-Sarries, 1991; Knox, 1984; Robinson, 1981).
Unfortunately, the research on teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the cultural dimension of foreign language teaching is scarce. In order to fill this gap two research questions were formulated. This study is focussed on the Chinese context, and therefore the situation of Chinese English language instruction and culture teaching needs to be explained. Chapter Three will discuss the situation of the Chinese education system.

**Chapter 3 The Chinese education context**

**3.0 Introduction**

Chapter Two reviewed the relevant literature, namely, studies of culture and culture teaching and of teachers’ knowledge and beliefs. The review provided the theoretical framework for examining and contemplating the research focus of this study: teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching. The direct impetus for this research focus was the current education reform. However, this reform did not take place in a vacuum, but in the context of the history and current situation of Chinese education. Therefore, a review of the Chinese education context is necessary both for the researcher to explore the research and for the readers to have an overview of the Chinese education situation.
This chapter explains the background of the study in this thesis, that is, the Chinese context. In order to contextualise the specific topic of the cultural dimension in English teaching, a broader background of general education and English teaching in China are respectively described in Sections 3.1 and 3.2. These two sections focus on a brief overview to modern Chinese education, illustrating the main features of current high school English teaching. Section 3.3 describes the ways in which the cultural dimension in high school English teaching has been dealt with from the post-Mao period to the present. This brief historic revision provides the background to understanding the policies and practices related to culture teaching. The most recent document illustrating the cultural dimension in English teaching is described in Section 3.4. This section also includes a look at cultural presentation in the textbooks. A summary will be provided at the end of the chapter.

3.1 Overview of the current Chinese secondary education system

To place the issue of English teaching in China in context, it is important to understand the contemporary Chinese education system and the need for reform. This study explores culture teaching in relation to the latest school education reform, which began in 2001; therefore, it is essential to understand the main features of the reform, which are explained in this section. In order to facilitate an understanding of this reform, this section begins with a brief description of Chinese education during the 50 years since the foundation of the PRC in 1949. Due to China’s large land mass and the disparity in overall development, education in urban and rural China differs profoundly in many ways. Seeking solutions to this problem has been one of the tasks in every education reform. In
general, secondary school education and English teaching in this study refer to the urban areas.

According to Theodore His-en Chen (Chen, 1981, p.2), education in the People’s Republic of China has followed a zigzag path because it has been governed by politics, which is subject to twists and turns. In the same study, Chen (pp.3-7) identifies two models of education, the academic model and the revolutionary model. Chen explains that the central aim of the academic model is to promote academic learning. Education, to all intents and purposes, means schooling. On the other hand, the revolutionary model is based on a concept of education that is much broader than schooling and the acquisition of knowledge, and includes learning from workers in factories and peasants on farmlands. The revolutionary model embraces a wide range of what the academic model considers as informal or non–formal education.

Chinese education between 1949 and 1966 tended to be a combination of these two models, featuring the establishment of a new school system by purging feudal, comprador and fascist ideologies. An examination system at all levels was gradually established, including the National College Entrance Exam. But political and ideological education permeated the entire curriculum at all levels of schooling (Chen, 1981, p.10). This feature will be further discussed in Section 3.2, where the history of English teaching will be examined. Beyond the ideological revolution, building and restoring the whole nation after waging wars provided another point of departure for educational reform during this period. Restoring the nation after these wars led to more attention being given to
technology than to science and more study of engineering than of theoretical science in education. Consequently, there was neglect of the humanities and social science unless these were linked with political ideological education (Chen, 1981, p.15). Another feature of Chinese education in this period was strong centralisation, against the background of a highly centralised political economy. The central government controlled education finances, school management, schooling content and curriculum/textbook design.

The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, and a new era of national reform and development began in the late 1970s. The National Education Work Conference held in 1978 approved a 1978–1985 plan for educational work in the whole country and drafted regulations for institutions of higher learning, full-time middle schools, and full-time elementary schools (Chen, 1981, p. 156). In addition, four major points were addressed in the Conference: improving the quality of education, strengthening revolutionary order and discipline, keeping pace with the requirements of national economic development and raising the level of teacher training and teaching efficacy (p. 156). Professional educators regained leadership over education, and enjoyed greater pre-eminence than at any time since the early 1950s (Pepper, 1990, p.28).

With the Open Door policy launched in 1979, China entered a period of the pursuit of modernisation. Science and technology were given more serious attention than in previous times. China’s leader, Deng Xiaoping, stated that the key to modernisation lies in science and technology and the key to these lies in education. However, considering China’s past complex relationships with foreign culture and its socialist identity, Deng
repeatedly reaffirmed that China would follow the Open Door policy while resisting the temptations of bourgeois life. As Liu Kang (1996, p.201) concludes, an ideological crisis among Chinese people appeared in the wake of the widening rift between the revolutionary hegemony and economic development after the Culture Revolution. Essentially, this ideological crisis was caused by Mao’s calling for the abandonment of Chinese traditional culture and the establishment of a new nationalism in his discourse. Chinese traditional culture in this sense refers to Confucianism, which was the moral basis for Chinese people over one thousand years before the foundation of the PRC. In Mao’s discourse on new nationalism, Confucianism is caricatured as feudalist nonsense and plays the role of villain in China’s political and ideological arena (p.202). However, over the past two decades, this radical left-wing ideology weakened. In the global context, both the Chinese government and academia are re-evaluating and re-interpreting Confucian thought as one of the tenets of humanistic education; and pursuing the balance between opening up to the outside world and resisting unwelcome side-effects of such openness has been another dilemma confronting the Chinese government. “Pollution” was a typical officially applied word to describe the side-effects of foreign cultures in the 1980s. From October 1983 to February 1984, the Chinese government sponsored a campaign against spiritual pollution, to resist the blind imitation of foreign culture among the Chinese population. However, foreign culture in this context mainly refers to foreign ideological systems rather than science and technology. Deng pointed out that the resistance to spiritual pollution was not a trifling issue, and he related this issue, in the long run, to the prospective generation of the Chinese Communist Party (PEP, 1997, pp.157-158).
Although China has retained its socialist ideological and political identity, at the same time, the strong trend for China to communicate with the outside world in every respect has been irreversible, driven by the enhanced market economy. As Liu (2004, p.78) points out, China, the emergent economic giant of the 1990s, has caught on to the latest market trend at an astonishing pace. While seeking a balance between the positive and negative influences brought in by foreign cultures, China never slowed its pace in the implementation of the Open Door policy and economic and political reforms. These policies led to unprecedented collaboration between Chinese and foreign education researchers. In 1986, the Chinese Government first enacted the Law of Compulsory Education, decentralised the education finance and administrative systems, diversified high school education and started to introduce several market elements to the management of the education system (Liang, 2001, p. 4).

In 1992, the Chinese 14th Party Congress put forward the view that education, of fundamental importance for the realisation of China's modernisation, should be the priority of the government’s social development agenda. This priority was further enhanced in the 15th Party Congress in 1997, which proposed that science, education and sustainable development should be the main strategies for building socialism with Chinese characteristics (Zhou, 2004, p.3). At the beginning of 1999, the State Council of the PRC approved the Action Scheme for Invigorating Education Geared to the 21st Century, which turned out to be the blueprint for Chinese cross-century education development and reform at all educational levels.
The 20 years from 1979 to 1999 witnessed consistent enhancements to basic education by the Chinese Government. Furthermore, to meet global challenges and enhance domestic education, in 1999, the Chinese government made a significant decision to extend education reforms comprehensively and promote the quality of education. The *Action Scheme* states that the knowledge economy, with high-tech at the core, will dominate; the comprehensive strength and international competitiveness of the nation will increasingly depend on the level of educational development and innovation in science and technology and knowledge, and educational development will remain a strategic priority (MoE, 1998, p.1). With this as one of the decisive reform factors, great attention was paid to teachers’ education. The cross-century Gardener Project was launched in 1999, with the aim of selecting and training 10,000 top teachers of the main school subjects (Chinese, Maths, Chemistry, Physics, Arts and English) at the high school education level. The Gardener Project was later incorporated into the national basic education reform, known as the New Reform. According to this reform, school curricula, course syllabi, textbooks and subject standards would undergo changes gradually within the next 10 years (Wu, 2005, p.2). Teacher education, especially the training of in-service teachers, gained importance as one of the more urgent tasks.

Compared with previous education reforms, the ‘New Reform’ was a brand-new innovation in curriculum culture, based on inherited Chinese traditional culture and

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3 The terms of *pre-service* and *in-service* are used in this thesis. In the Chinese context, in the broad sense, pre-service teachers refer to those students who are studying for a Bachelor or Master degree in universities. These students are not certified and normally have no teaching experience before they graduate and enter the teaching force. In-service teachers refer to those who are certified and teaching in schools.
extended by the context of globalisation (Zhong, 2005, p. 23). The New Reform was carried out not only at the level of substituting textbooks and simple changes in curricula and syllabi, but also called for the simultaneous reform of both curriculum ideology and system. Zhong (p. 24) analysed the New Reform, identifying some distinctive characteristics as summarised below:

**Shaking off compartmentalised teaching and promoting curriculum integration**

Teaching students how to integrate their learned knowledge with the help of curriculum integration is the major requirement of the New Reform. The core question raised by this requirement is how to bridge the disciplinary boundaries in order to develop students’ comprehensive problem-solving competence and the overall sound development of human personality. It is a great challenge to teachers’ knowledge/beliefs in education and in subject matter, as well as to their competence in cooperating with colleagues in the same subject area and in other subjects, as cross-disciplinary bridging and teacher collaboration across different school subjects has not been a normal practice.

**Creating a new classroom culture**

A memory-based, centralised, examination-oriented classroom culture has prevailed in Chinese classrooms, with teachers’ main role being to impart subject knowledge to students, and students being responsible for receiving and storing the information. Teachers have been dominant, and students have been passive learners in classrooms. The New Reform emphasises a culture of dialogue between learners and teachers, encouraging students to develop reflective thinking about the physical world and about
others and self, through which they are expected to grow into active cooperative and reflective learners.

*Establishing a new curriculum resources view*

The New Reform calls for teachers to change their perspective on the use of textbooks, to realise that textbooks are a basic but not the only teaching resource. Teachers are encouraged to develop and integrate teaching resources. The New Reform stresses that teachers are the most important teaching resource and that the level of teachers’ professional quality is decisive, both in integrating curriculum resources and in the degree to which these resources are to be developed and applied.

*Cooperative development of teachers and schools*

Previous education reforms featured a top-down approach in which education authorities issued reform documents and teachers just passively carried them out. However, the New Reform endows teachers with the right to participate in curriculum development and management; in other words, this reform encourages teachers to become the principal agents of the reform. Without prescribed teaching patterns and fixed methods within the new reform background, teachers are expected to apply their intelligence to subject teaching and education. To meet this great challenge, teachers are encouraged to enhance their subject and education knowledge and to do action research projects so as to grow into reflective practitioners and skilled teachers.

This dramatic curriculum reform immediately became controversial among educators and teachers. Elucidation of the reform has been a heated topic (Zhong, 2005; Chen, 2006).
There is general agreement that this reform will serve socioeconomic and education development. At the same time, much research has been conducted to explore the new challenges confronting both teachers and schools.

3.2 An overview of English teaching in China

As evident from the discussion in section 3.1, macro politics dictated Chinese education. Undoubtedly, politics has significantly influenced the teaching of English. Following a brief description of the development of English teaching from 1949, this section focuses on features of the current situation in English teaching. The current situation is examined from four perspectives, namely, the school system, teacher education, teaching approaches and the testing system.

Macro politics in China has significantly influenced the development of the English curriculum and pedagogy. English syllabi and teaching materials have always reflected a balance between the prevailing political, economic and academic orientations (Adamson & Morris, 1997, p. 3). After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, nation building was the priority. Help was solicited from the Soviet Union, which had undergone a similar revolution in 1917. As a result, English was rarely found in the school curriculum, as Russian was the main foreign language. The Ministry of Education (henceforth, the MoE) issued a new *Scheme for English Instruction in Secondary Schools* in which the goal of English language learning was clearly stated as being to serve the New Republic. However, all capitalist thinking, especially educational ideas from the United States and Britain, was condemned as unpatriotic. Mao said it would take a long time to resolve the
ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism in China. The reason for this was that the influence of the bourgeoisie and of the intellectuals who came from the old society would remain in China for a long time to come, and so would their class ideology (Quentin & Basgen, 1966, pp.52-53).

On the other hand, the government did not completely lose sight of the practical value of the English language as a means of accessing science and technology. In 1956, the MoE announced that from the following year, junior secondary schools would teach either English or Russian, although English teaching would be initially limited to those schools in the major cities that possessed sufficient teachers (Adamson, 2002, p. 238). To remedy the shortage of teachers, many teachers of English were asked to switch to teaching Russian and had to take short-term courses just to learn enough to keep a lesson or two ahead of students (Chen, 1981, p.38). The ratio of Russian teachers and English teachers was one to one. The textbooks were full of scientific and political texts and anecdotes. The grammar–translation method was the sole pedagogy. Many problems in later English teaching, such as the shortage of English teachers and limited teaching methods, stem from this trend.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a minor revolution in education took place in China, as the need to open up to the international scene became more urgent. The importance of English was accepted. A significant step was taken in 1962 when English became part of the entrance examination for universities. New teaching materials appeared, with listening and speaking again given prominence. The MoE issued guidelines for textbook
writers, recommending that English textbooks should include materials on the culture of English-speaking countries.

But the Cultural Revolution, which broke out in 1966 and lasted for ten traumatic years, destroyed all academic activities. Many educational organisations were closed down and intellectuals, who were considered to be prone to bourgeois ideology, were persecuted or assigned to manual labour. This led directly to a shortage of teachers in the following decades. Young people saw the sacrifices their teachers had made and didn’t want to make such sacrifices themselves. English teachers were major targets, because of the connotations of capitalism, privilege and other forms of political undesirability associated with the English language. Many English teachers were accused of spying for other countries or worshipping everything foreign. English was totally banned from schools.

Schools were reopened from 1968 onwards, although they were drastically remodelled as centres for political indoctrination and radicalisation (Löfstedt, 1980, p. 128). English started to reappear on the school curriculum after Mao’s statement, “It is good to know English. I studied foreign languages late in life. I suffered. One has to learn foreign languages when one is young” (cited in Unger, 1982, p. 282). But the textbooks produced at that time were highly politicised and paid scant attention to pedagogy (Tang, 1983, p. 45).

Mao died in 1976, and the Cultural Revolution ended, marking the end of a period of political turmoil and economic isolation for China. The People’s Education Press (PEP,
henceforth) was re-established in 1977 and quickly produced a new syllabus and accompanying textbooks as schooling returned to a semblance of normality (Adamson & Morris, 1997, p. 13). The content of the textbooks included mainly stories and regular references to socialism and Marxism. For example, “The Chinese people are a brave and hard-working people” and “We hold high the great banner of Chairman Mao” (PEP, 1978). However, for the first time, cassettes were compiled along with the textbooks. The pedagogical approach was a blend of the grammar–translation method and an audio-lingual approach, in which audio-lingual pattern drills in the early series of the textbooks were gradually combined with and then superseded by the grammar–translation method.

The Chinese government profoundly enhanced communication with the outside world after the Open Door policy. In 1978 Deng Xiaoping ordered the MoE to send 10,000 students to the United States as soon as possible (Pepper, 1990, p. 71). The National College Entrance Examinations (NCEE) restarted in 1977 and English became one of the exam subjects. Ever since, English teaching has attracted unprecedented attention, both from the authorities and from ordinary people, as a fundamental tool in the pursuit of modernisation (Wu, 2005, p. 3).

The modernisation agenda was reflected in the recognition of English as a tool for economic, commercial, scientific and technological exchange with the rest of the world (Hu, 2002, p. 32). However, English teaching still tended to be underdeveloped. According to Liu Daoyi, in charge of the English syllabus design and textbook compilation since 1977, structuralism significantly influenced English teaching pedagogy in China during the 1980s and 1990s (Liu, 2002, p.1).
After the late 1980s, concerns for improving China’s foreign relations with the West gave rise to the proposal that a four-skill approach (speaking, listening, reading and writing) should replace the grammar–translation method. In response to the changing needs of English teaching in China, and to catch up with new developments in ELT theories and practices worldwide, secondary English syllabi have been updated constantly since the mid-1980s. Subsequent syllabi began to adapt new second language acquisition theories, pedagogical practices and assessment procedures to the Chinese context (Hu, 2002, p. 6).

At the time when foreign language teaching research was being rapidly developed by Western ELT experts and teachers in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, English teaching in China was still experiencing difficulties. It was not until the late 1970s that Western debate about the merits of one method over another engaged the attention of Chinese researchers, especially those who had the opportunity to receive a Western education (Wu, 2005). Many of them took part in syllabus design and textbook compilation.

The 1996 syllabus was the first English syllabus that stressed the importance of the affective development of students; it even clearly spelled out the development of individuality and specialty as two major goals (Hu, 2002, p. 7). However, the uninteresting content of the textbooks, the low teaching quality and the exam-orientation of education all contributed to the low efficacy of English teaching (Liu, 2002, p. 2).

The latest reform was launched at the beginning of the current millennium. Many features of this reform have provided the impetus for and give significance to this study. The
features of this reform, and, in particular, the subject of English, are discussed, where relevant, throughout this thesis. The following part of this section will summarise the main features of current English teaching from four perspectives, namely, the school system, teaching approaches, the evaluation system and teacher education.

The school system
There are three types of secondary schools in China: high schools, foreign languages schools (usually attached to a foreign languages institute) and vocational schools. Due to the disparity in economic and education development, different cities may present different modes. Taking Tianjin\(^4\), the focus of this thesis, as an example, high schools are comprised of key schools and ordinary schools. There has long been the concept of key schools in China. Key schools are selected by education authorities to be given additional resources and assigned better teachers. Key schools set higher admission levels than ordinary schools. The admission requirements depend almost solely on students’ admission exam scores. The exams are unified on a district basis for junior high school admission and on a municipality-wide basis for senior admission. Key schools are comprised of municipal key schools and district key schools. There are five municipal key schools in the city of Tianjin. There are a number of district key schools and ordinary schools in every district. The municipal key schools set the highest admission requirements. They are commonly believed to be the schools for the best students. The district key schools also require much higher admission scores than the ordinary schools.

\(^4\) Tianjin is a metropolis in northern China and one of the five national central cities of the People’s Republic of China. The city of Tianjin is the sixth-largest city in China in terms of urban population and is a main economic, education and cultural centre. It is one of the pilot cities for the latest school education reform.
Therefore, the ordinary schools are commonly considered to be the schools for academically low achieving students. There is only one foreign language school in Tianjin, attached to Tianjin Foreign Languages Institute. The three types of schools mentioned above belong to general secondary education and use the same curriculum and textbooks in most of the subjects. The foreign languages school uses extra textbooks alongside the unified English ones.

High schools are generally divided into a junior section and a senior section. Teachers remain in each section largely according to their teaching qualifications. Students do not necessarily remain in a particular high school for six years, because a municipality-wide exam at the end of the third junior year decides the senior high schools in which they will be enrolled. Some students who cannot meet the admission requirement of either key schools or ordinary schools will choose to go to vocational schools. Students from all types of schools are eligible to take the NCEE at the end of their last year of secondary education. The outcome of the exam decides which universities they can apply to and their academic specialties.

All the high schools are administrated by the Basic Education Section in local Education Bureaus, which are governed by the MoE. The schools involved in this research are the municipal key schools, the district key schools and ordinary schools, because these schools form the mainstream of high school education. English generally occupies four teaching periods (45 minutes for one period) every week. One class usually contains around 50 students. New teaching technologies, applied as auxiliary teaching methods,
are encouraged; however, different schools use these technologies differently depending on their different facilities.

*Teaching approach*

Since the 1990s, more research has been carried out and more efforts made to apply Western language teaching pedagogies in the Chinese context. For example, since 1993, a series of textbooks based on the communicative approach has been published by the PEP. Teachers were persuaded to change the way they taught English from an approach using the traditional grammar–translation method to a modern communicative approach. However, whether the approach is suited to the Chinese context and how to put it into effective use are still matters of controversy among scholars and teachers (Liao, 2004; Anderson, 1993; Hu, 2005).

The current reform began in 2001. It advocates a task-based approach to be implemented in classrooms, and the accompanying textbooks are claimed to have been designed on the basis of social constructivism. In general, it is hard to identify a leading teaching approach in current English classrooms. Although curriculum and textbook design appear to be communicatively oriented and task based, teachers tend to apply different teaching approaches and methods according to their own teaching situation. Different types of schools have different teaching facilities, including teachers’ teaching proficiency and school teaching technologies. In addition, the students’ cognitive level and learning proficiency are not on the same level between key schools and ordinary school as the different types of schools set different admission requirements. In this sense, the teachers
are facing different teaching realities. However, in general, English classrooms in Chinese schools are teacher-centred. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) report that class observers might notice the degree of discipline and concentrated attention of students and the high pace and intensity of the teacher-centred interaction. The scholars related Chinese teachers’ beliefs about their roles to the teacher-centred classroom (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006, p.10). Chinese teachers believe the role of modelling is crucial: the teacher is a model of authoritative learning, expert knowledge and skills, and moral behaviour, and should have an answer to any learner’s questions. The current evaluation system is an important factor and impossible to ignore.

_Evaluation system_

Since the restart of the NCEE in 1978, following the end of the Cultural Revolution and the recovery of China’s education system, this exam has been regarded as the ultimate goal of high school teaching by teachers and students. This mode of assessment has been practised as the only means, until now, of university entry. As a compulsory school subject, English has been one of the test subjects in the NCEE. The NMET (the National Matriculation English Test) was introduced in 1985 as a norm-referenced standardised test with the major function of selecting secondary school graduates for institutions of higher education (Cheng, 2008, p.19) and a “wash back” for English teaching. Before 2004, only one examination paper, developed by the National Education Examinations Authority (NEEA) under the Ministry of Education (MoE), was used nationwide. Since 2004, four cities and seven provinces have set their own papers following the same
testing syllabus and testing format (Cheng & Qi, 2006, p.54). The research city of this study is among the four cities that set their own papers.

The students are overwhelmed with the endless exams and lack interest in learning English. Worst of all, for many students passing exams is their only motivation to learn English, which causes them to practise or even memorise a sea of exercises or sample exams (known as an ‘exercise strategy’) instead of trying to understand and appreciate the language. “Dumb English” (Yaba Yingyu) is the term for a common phenomenon where students who have been studying English for many years are not able to communicate effectively in the language⁵. Most of the exam items are set as multiple choice questions. This kind of question, in fact, reflects the traditional role of teachers as rulers, dictators and speakers instead of being enlighteners (Zhu, 2003, p.38). The teacher’s authority is reflected in the answering of questions. It is usually the teacher who gives the ‘standard’ answer, the only ‘correct’ answer. This is taken for granted to such a degree that students believe there is only one answer to any question.

The Standard advocates that evaluation be taken in diversified forms and that students’ comprehensive language competence be taken as the point of departure. The Standard also highlights the importance of applying formative evaluation in teaching to trace students’ development in listening, speaking, reading, writing and problem-solving abilities. Although the Standard sets up a nine-level objective framework, the relationship

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⁵ Dumb English is a phenomenon, especially common in China, where people can read and understand English but cannot speak it well. It is commonly agreed by English educators in China that the main reason for this phenomenon is the emphasis on linguistic forms of English instead of communication in English teaching.
between the achievement of the nine-level objectives and the English score in the NCEE has not been formally acknowledged by relevant authorities such as the MoE or the NCEE Proposition Group.

Teacher education

In the long history of China before the Cultural Revolution, intellectuals, including teachers, were highly respected. However, the anti-intellectual Cultural Revolution destroyed this tradition, and the whole of Chinese academia and teachers were categorised into a very low social class. This led to severe teacher shortages and low teacher quality in the following two decades. During the National Technology Conference in 1978, Deng Xiaoping argued for teachers’ positive and significant role in Chinese society and also declared teachers to be a decisive factor in China’s ongoing national and economic development.

The rejuvenation of a nation depends upon education and the development of education depends upon teachers. The Fourth National Conference on Teacher Education was held in 1980. The targets and tasks of teacher education in the new era were defined at the meeting following a summary of thirty years of experience. In 1985, the Decision of the General Committee of the Communist party of China on the Reform of the Educational System pointed out that the development of teacher education and training for in-service teachers should be regarded as strategic measures in the development of education. Teacher education was promoted to a much higher status than ever before. The National Meeting on Secondary and Primary School Teachers was held in the same year, and the
targets, policies and procedures for extending the number of teachers for basic education and a set of policies for further development of teacher education were confirmed in accordance with the above-mentioned decision. The Outline for Reform and Development of Education in China, issued in 1993, emphasised in clearer terms that government at all levels should increase its financial input to improve teacher education. The Fifth National Meeting of Teacher Education held in 1996, pointed out that teacher education should be regarded as the strategic priority for the development of education. The Government is responsible for providing a better teacher education system. Government at all levels should consider teacher education as crucially important to society for future generations.

As reforms are implemented and the competence of schools is gradually improved, great developments and remarkable achievements have been made in teacher education. It has been on the priority list of government at all levels to increase financial input and effort so as to speed up the standardisation of teaching conditions. The management of schools is becoming more standardised and rationalised. The quality of teaching and the academic competence of the faculty members in the teacher training institutions have been comprehensively improved through the deepening reforms. The scope of international exchanges and cooperation has been broadened and strengthened.

Teacher education institutions and colleges of different kinds and levels have educated thousands of qualified teachers for secondary and primary schools and trained thousands of teachers through in-service. They have made historic contributions to basic education.
and especially to the development of nine-year compulsory education and upgrading the quality of education in the country. Taking the subject of English as an example, according to the MoE’s statistics (MoE website, 2008) there were 746,126 high school English teachers in 2006. Their educational qualifications are shown in the bar chart below (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Education qualifications of high School English teachers in 2006.

Source: the MoE’s statistics

Teacher education takes two main forms, namely, pre-service education and in-service education. The majority of teachers receive pre-service in a four-year Bachelor program at a “Normal University” (Shifan Daxue, teaching university in China). The students of normal universities are senior secondary graduates who have no teaching experience prior to entering the universities. In the universities, they study a specific discipline, and the specialised course takes up the largest share of their curricular time. The second half of the fourth year is usually allocated for the students to practise teaching in high schools,
complete their thesis, prepare for the thesis defence and even seek jobs. At graduation, they are granted a diploma and a Bachelor degree. High schools usually assign them to teach English in different grades according to their school report and interview performance. Interviews are usually conducted in the form of 20-minute teaching trials. Some senior secondary graduates go into teachers colleges. Teachers colleges are regarded as tertiary institutions like normal universities. However, teachers colleges offer two to three years of teacher education programs that lead to a diploma and mainly prepare teachers for junior secondary schools.

A number of important changes have occurred in the pre-service teacher education system in the last decade, and the system is currently undergoing a fundamental restructuring in response to the central government’s call for quality basic education. Many teachers colleges merged with normal universities and, consequently, the number of normal universities has increased considerably (Hu, 2005, p. 667). At the same time, the pre-service teacher education system is changing from a closed structure comprising only specialised teacher education institutions to an open one involving many comprehensive universities as well. According to Hu (p.667), the participation of these universities in teacher preparation can serve three purposes. One is to ameliorate the problems of quantity and quality within the teaching force. Another is to make better use of the available higher education resources. The third is to introduce a measure of competitiveness into the teacher education system and to facilitate curricular experimentation and reform in teacher education.
Traditionally, either in normal universities or in teachers colleges, language proficiency courses occupy a very prominent position within the specialised course component. These courses are structured according to the macro language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Instruction is centred on selected texts, which are used to transmit knowledge of phonetics, grammar and vocabulary on the one hand, and to integrate training in listening, speaking, reading and writing on the other. Usually, theory-oriented courses are gradually introduced as the students’ English proficiency improves. These theory-oriented courses traditionally include English grammar, an introduction to linguistics and American/English literature. According to Hu (p. 673) these theory-oriented courses carry more prestige than pedagogical courses and are usually taught by leading lecturers who enjoy respect for their high proficiency in English or their expertise in an area of theoretical knowledge.

As well as the specialised courses, students are also required to take educational courses such as Education, Psychology, and Pedagogy. These courses are not specially designed for prospective EFL teachers. The lecturers for these educational courses, traditionally from psychology and education colleges, do not specialise in language development and education (Paine, 1992, p.189). Moreover, these courses are delivered in a traditional lecture format to large groups of students. It is common to find, as Paine described, that “…lecturers read their notes with marked slowness so that students could transcribe virtually the entire text” (Paine, 1992, p. 188). This leads to the result that even those who have graduated from teachers colleges still lack teaching experience (Yu, 1990, p.59). Paine (1991, pp.224-225) describes the situation when normal university students initially
go into their career as teachers. After four years of formal preparation, the prospective secondary school teacher has had extensive but narrow exposure in one area, very limited experience with teaching and learning as it occurs in schools, and few opportunities to design his/her program. Teacher education programs produce people prone to maintaining conventional teaching practices, which are dominated by concerns regarding the subject matter and not individual learners.

Another type of teacher education is in-service education, which occurs in normal universities, education colleges and teachers’ work places. Since the 1980s, in-service teacher training courses have been increasingly available in normal universities and teachers colleges to meet the need for systematic training in current methodologies. The Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education (State Council, 2001) promulgated the notion of career-long development for teachers. In 1999, the MoE issued the Regulations on Continuing Education for Primary and Secondary Teachers. According to the Regulations, all licenced primary and secondary teachers must participate in organised continuing education every five years. The focus of continuing education is to raise teachers’ ability to deliver quality education, and the subject matter should include ideological and ethical cultivation, renewal and expansion of professional knowledge, modern educational theory and practice, educational research, professional competences and modern instructional technology (MoE, 1999). To provide incentives for teachers to participate in continuing education, the Regulations listed the compensation and benefits that teachers attending continuing education programs are entitled to. Furthermore, it mandates that local education authorities keep records of and
provide assessment for teachers’ participation in continuing education and that the assessments be used as one of the bases for professional promotion and other forms of reward.

Continuing education is usually provided by normal universities and education colleges. The education colleges are run by provincial and municipal educational authorities and have close links with schools under their jurisdiction (Hu, 2005, p. 687). These colleges oversee the implementation of top-down curricular reform initiatives and provide guidance and training on a regular basis. In-service teacher development undertaken by the education colleges mainly takes the form of seminars and workshops conducted by in-house or invited specialists. However, with the merging of the education colleges with normal universities, this type of training has gradually disappeared.

Normal universities usually provide two- to three-year off-the-job courses that lead to the award of a postgraduate diploma. In addition, during school holidays, normal universities offer short-term intensive programs that lead to the award of a certificate. In recent years, with the restructuring of tertiary education, more education colleges have merged with normal universities. This brought about some valuable links between normal universities and secondary education, as many staff from the education colleges joined the teaching staffs of universities. Their understanding of secondary education and previously established close relationships with high school administrators and teachers broadened the academic research base and enhanced university-based in-service teacher education.
Since 1997, many normal universities have established a degree program for in-service secondary school teachers. The Education Master Degree of Subject Teaching (EdM, henceforth) program was established against the background of the New Reform. It is a two-year full-time or four-year part-time program with a combination of coursework and research, and the participating high school teachers are encouraged to undertake action research during this time. Completion of the required credits and a thesis plus a defence leads to the award of the degree of Master of Education. As well as having access to formal education in education colleges and normal universities, teachers also have the opportunity to develop their teaching skills in their workplaces in two main ways: teaching and research groups (Jiaoyanshi) and classroom observation.

A Jiaoyanshi is comprised of teachers from the same subject and usually from the same school level. The establishment of jiaoyanshi can be traced back to 1957. The main tasks of a jiaoyanshi are to formulate teaching plans, discuss the curriculum and the syllabus, share knowledge and skills, exchange ideas about teaching and students and seek assistance from each other. This kind of collective curriculum and lesson planning is usually organised by the head of a jiaoyanshi, who is typically an expert teacher. As Sparks & Loucks-Horsley (cited from Hu, 2005, p. 681) explain, the collective curriculum/lesson planning constitutes a form of continuous, job-embedded professional development and embodies a process-based or inquiry-oriented model of staff development.
Another way for teachers to develop their teaching skills is through classroom observation. Like collective lesson planning, classroom observation has a tradition in China. It is an integral part of teachers’ workloads and occurs on a regular basis. According to Wang & Gu (2007, p. 12), classroom observation is in fact a form of case, and all the observed lessons form extensive resources containing both educational/pedagogical theories and teaching practice. In China, classroom observation is conducted for different purposes. In some instances, experienced teachers may conduct classes for novice teachers to observe and learn, or they may observe novice teachers conducting a class and provide feedback. Other classroom observations are conducted for collegial communication in exchanging teaching ideas and skills or to compete for a particular award, such as teaching excellence.

Furthermore, since the 1980s, more and more international cooperation projects have given in-service teachers the opportunity to take three- to 12-month training courses abroad, mainly in universities in the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand. These projects give teachers exposure to an English-speaking environment while learning linguistic and pedagogic theories.

A broad picture of Chinese education reforms from 1949 to the present has been presented in the discussion above. In brief, Chinese education has been significantly influenced by macro politics. The revolutionary model, the academic model and the combination of the two models prevailed at different stages and with different levels of importance. This historical overview provides a general background to the way in which
the cultural dimension of English teaching has been dealt with over the years. Detailed information will be provided in the next section.

The New Reform, launched at the beginning of the twenty-first century, marks the enhancement of an education-oriented national development strategy. According to Zhou Ji, the Minister of Education in 2004, this reform is based on the concept of people-oriented, comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable scientific development (China Internet, 2004). The development of students’ humanity is invested with great importance in the New Reform.

### 3.3 Culture teaching in high school English teaching

As indicated in the description in Section 3.2, macro politics has dictated the nature of English teaching in China. On the one hand, English has served as a necessary access point for China to communicate with the outside world; on the other hand, it has been viewed as a threat to political stability and cultural identity. The cultural dimension in English teaching, as a result, has been different during different periods of time. This section describes culture teaching in four historical periods: after the establishment of the PRC, during the Cultural Revolution, after the Cultural Revolution and in the period of modernisation and globalisation.

During the 1950s, China maintained an intimate relationship with the Soviet Union while applying an anti-US policy. As Pepper (1991, p.20) notes, the official rationale was that since the best of Western science and technology had already been absorbed by the
Russians, the most efficient way was to acquire it directly from them [and] perhaps there was an initial, unspoken assumption that copying from a socialist ally was not the same as imitating the capitalist West. At that time, Russian was the main foreign language taught in schools. Even the English textbooks used during that time reflected Russian culture. As Chen notes, rather than providing cultural information about English speaking countries, the English textbooks imported from the Soviet Union contained a large amount of information about the Soviet way of life (Chen, 1999, p. 30).

During the Cultural Revolution, English teaching was highly politicised. As a result, articles of a political nature reflecting the realities of Chinese contemporary society dominated the textbooks. Translated texts of Chairman Mao’s works and quotations also occupied a large part of textbooks. As described by Xiao (2001, p.109), language teaching theory was ignored and the teaching of the language mostly occurred outside its social and cultural context.

After the Cultural Revolution, when English classes began again in high schools, only a few periods of classroom teaching were offered. Some textbooks were compiled as a way of addressing the problems of the damaged school education system. For example, the objectives of English teaching in the 1978 syllabus were to develop the students’ basic ability to listen, speak, read, write and translate, and to lay a good foundation for further study (cited in Xiao, 2001, p. 143). However, this syllabus reflected the fact that China was recovering from domestic turbulence and destruction and moving to a more open view of the outside world. This syllabus specified that the purpose of English teaching
was to prepare students for the international class struggle, for economic and trading communication and for cultural, technological and foreign communication (Lu, 2005, p. 82). Furthermore, the syllabus mentioned that the selected texts in the textbooks should reflect the political, social, cultural, economic, historic and geographic dimensions of the foreign countries, mainly the UK and the US. Obviously, the syllabus’ understanding of the concept of culture was very vague at that time. After all, it had already begun to see the cultural dimension integrated with the language. However, the series of textbooks under this syllabus still contained much political material and preferences. The political messages were dispersed through drills and passages including references to the late Chairman Mao Zedong, and to his immediate successor, Hua Guofeng (Adamson, 2004, p. 144). For instance, the passage in one lesson, which was a pupil’s description of her class, concluded:

We study for the people. We love the people. We love the Communist Party.

We love Chairman Hua.

(Cited in Adamson, 2004, p. 144)

With the Open Door policy of the early 1980s, China entered a stage that involved the pursuit of modernisation. The widely held perception that English proficiency could facilitate economic mobility made English extremely popular. The movies and TV programs produced in some Western countries began to surge into China as the result of the open market, and Chinese people began to have greater exposure to Western cultures. A debate began among public officials and educators on how to respond creatively to the resulting economic and cultural pressures (Ross, 1992, p. 250).
The 1982 curriculum was produced against this background of relatively mild politicisation and the status of English continued to rise. The Open Door Policy raised many Chinese people’s interest in interacting with foreigners. Spoken and written English gained more attention in English learning both in schools and among the general public. Many zealous English learners automatically established “English Corners” in public parks and university campuses to converse in English. Overseas English teaching programs were popular. For example, BBC Television’s *Follow Me* series attracted large numbers of Chinese people wanting to learn English. Through this program, Chinese people were able to learn about the ordinary life of British people for the first time.

The 1982 curriculum had two specific aims: to correct the orientation of the previous curriculum, which was viewed as problematic; and to prepare the educated elite to play a pioneering role in economic modernisation in the context of the Open Door Policy (Adamson, 2004, p.150). The political content of the previous series of textbooks was evidently unsuitable for the strong economic orientation. The series of textbooks accompanying this curriculum featured weak presentation of political messages and strong presentation of moral messages, largely through traditional fables such as *The Monkey and the Crocodile*, *The Cock and the Fox*, and *The Fishman and the Genie*.

Another syllabus, which appeared in 1986, was an enhancement of the 1982 curriculum against the background of Deng Xiaoping’s significant statement of China’s three education orientations (towards modernisation, the outside world and the future).
However, there were some technical innovations, with a greater array of components complementing the textbook resources (Adamson, 2004. p. 156). These resources included teachers’ books, cassette tapes of the reading passages and pattern drills. These extra resources reflected greater attention to the development of students’ listening and speaking skills and to providing pedagogical support to the teachers.

As Adamson notes (p. 166), in the series of textbooks for the 1986 curriculum, there were very few passages that gave a bad impression of foreign countries. Instead, there were several passages that contained a positive portrayal of other countries and their people. For instance, ‘My Family’ (PEP, 1986) described a happy, hard-working family from England. As Adamson says (p. 167), the low political content and the positive portrayal of foreigners corresponded with the economic orientation of the nation at that time.

Eleven years later, in 1993, another curriculum appeared which reflected a large-scale revision. The status of English had significantly increased as a result of China’s economic development and internationalisation. Increased communication with foreigners was a further boost to the status and role of English. Beyond job needs, English learning also became a form of entertainment, popularised by the increased access to electronic goods and the various forms of mass media in English, produced either domestically or imported from overseas. There were more opportunities for foreign travel for business, study and tourism purposes. More educational institutions were able to bring in native English speakers as teachers. After the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, the central government launched campaigns to resist westernisation; however, the English teaching
reform, which stressed pedagogical development and communicative competence, was not stopped by the political turmoil.

One stimulus for this large-scale curriculum reform came from a national survey of secondary school students carried out by the State Education Commission (SEdC) in 1986 (Adamson, 2004, p. 170). The survey revealed many serious problems: the grammar–translation method; out-of-date language material; and the shortage of qualified teachers and appropriate equipment. A further stimulus was the promise of funding from the United Nations Development Program (Adamson, 2004, p. 171).

In this curriculum, the objectives of English teaching were stated as enabling students to gain a basic knowledge of English and communicative competence through training in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Moreover, non-linguistic objectives were also stated, such as teaching students moral character, patriotism and socialism and promoting their understanding of the country whose language is being learned (MoE, 1993, p. 3).

In order to improve the technical quality of the series of textbooks in this curriculum, the SEdC set up a joint venture with Longman International and appointed overseas consultants. A more communicative approach was seen in the textbooks: as Liu, the Deputy Chief Editor of the PEP, said, “It is the first time in the history of EFL in China that the actual use of the language for communication should be placed in such a prominent position” (cited in Adamson, 2004, p. 172). However, despite the involvement of a foreign publisher, the design of the textbooks was not a direct transfer of Western
pedagogy (p. 181). Instead, the overall design of the curriculum and the textbooks was a marriage of Western pedagogies and the Chinese context.

In this series, the political passages were very mild, being mainly related to positive portrayals of China and information about foreign cultures. This curriculum can be considered a breakthrough in terms of culture teaching (Xiao, 2001, p. 144). For instance, an article on “Good Manners” included politeness to others and orderly behaviour, such as queuing for a bus. Another section points out cultural differences:

Ideas of what are good manners are not always the same in different countries. For example, in Britain or America it is not polite to ask people how much money they get in their jobs. People don’t like talking about the cost of things around the home, though in America they don’t mind so much. But in both Britain and America it is not polite to ask people how old they are. There are other interesting differences between China and foreign countries. In China, if someone says something good about you, it is polite to answer “No, not at all.” In Britain or America, a person answers “Thank you!” with a big smile. This may be bad manners in China, but good manners in Britain or America. (PEP) (Cited in Adamson, 2004, p. 190)

Again in the context of globalisation, the curriculum was revised in 1996. This version highlighted the development of students’ intercultural communicative competence as one of the main goals. Although culture teaching was not explicitly identified in the syllabus, the implication of intercultural communicative competence drew more attention in the English teaching area. Some educators and teachers performed research studies to find
out how Chinese teachers’ and students’ sociocultural competence related to their linguistic competence (Lei, 1996; Wang, 1994; Yang, 1997). Their findings showed that the Chinese teachers’ and students’ cultural competence was far behind their linguistic competence. However, the same research found that the concept of integrating culture into English teaching was accepted by the majority of teachers. The integration seemed to be undertaken unsystematically, with little theoretical framework for guidance and sometimes even without any realisation that this was, in fact, what was being done.

In 2001, the New Standard was launched. For the first time, culture teaching was a required teaching component of high school English teaching. Many extra-linguistic goals (Hu, 2002, p. 7) can be found in the Standard. For example, one goal is to instil in students a respect for meritorious cultural traditions of other nations and an understanding of, as well as love for, Chinese culture. Other goals are to develop students’ ability to think independently and actively, to expand their cultural and scientific knowledge, to enrich their cultural experience, to refine their ideology and morality, and to prepare them for the needs of China’s social, economic and scientific development. A series of textbooks has been produced and piloted to the Standard. The textbooks of *New Standard English* are used in the city of Tianjin, where this study is based. The principles of this series of textbooks are stated in the accompanying Teacher’s Book:

- The fundamental role of *New Standard English* is to organise a course of English instruction for both the teacher and the students. It does so by adopting a multi-syllabus course design which reflects the full extent and true nature of the language which a learner needs to acquire in Chinese high
schools, and by dividing this body of language into manageable learning chunks.

- The *New Standard English* course also respects different learning and teaching styles of the users, both students and teachers. It must provide a meaningful and motivational context for effective learning to take place, both in its presentation of new linguistic information, and in the careful selection of topics designed to interest the learners. This content may exploit not only the current knowledge of the learners, but also present general knowledge of the world around us. It will include new information about contemporary ideas as well as knowledge more specifically related to all aspects of the school curriculum.

- At best, the *New Standard English* course has a responsibility towards the dissemination of new ideas and the principles of best practice in all aspects of teacher training and teacher development. Good teaching resources and teacher development should promote good learning and good teaching. Good teaching resources are designed to be a support and guidance to both experienced and less experienced teachers, as well as their students. They should reflect teachers’ expectations as well as interpret and adapt new theories for classroom use. They should not be viewed as a restriction on creative teaching.

Since the implementation of the Standard and the textbooks, cultural knowledge, cultural awareness and intercultural communicative awareness have become high-frequency
terms in articles on secondary English teaching. Many of these articles are written by in-service teachers and published either in journals or on-line. They focus mainly on the authors’ classroom methods for integrating a certain cultural topic with language teaching. The researcher of this thesis searched for “culture in secondary school English teaching” (in Chinese characters) on the Google website. Among the 150 related articles (the first 10 pages of the search results), 115 articles are about the authors’ methods of introducing target culture (mainly American and British culture) into their English teaching; nine articles discuss the teachers’ management of Chinese culture in introducing target culture; five articles discuss teachers’ individual development in updating culture knowledge; six articles are on the theme of pragmatics in English teaching from the perspective of cultural differences; twelve articles analyse the cultural differences demonstrated in the selected texts in the textbooks; and three articles discuss the significance of culture teaching in the context of China’s general education.

The description above shows that the English language curriculum for secondary schools in China is a product of a navigation process through political, socioeconomic and educational currents. The cultural dimension has been increasingly and more explicitly highlighted during this process. Despite the occasional, and generally ineffective, campaigns to control the diffusion of Western thought, mores and cultural artefacts such as pop music, films and websites have surged into China with irresistible force. Like many other nations, China is facing the dilemma posed by endeavouring to merge with international cultures while maintaining its own identity. “To be world Chinese” and “It is more of the nation in the world” are common statements in China. These statements
indicate that China is making every effort to become a constructive member of the international community and also demonstrate the increasingly intercultural nature of global communication.

Education always occurs within a particular social context. Every aspect of education, from the design of the curriculum to the teaching materials, school management and teacher development, reflects a society’s development. Education serves a particular type of society. In China, English is not only a school subject that aims to develop students’ linguistic skills; it is also a part of humanities education (Renwen Jiaoyu), for English carries the cultures of the people who speak the language. The teachers implement the same curriculum and use the same textbooks; however, different teachers may hold different attitudes and perceptions and demonstrate different behaviours. Teachers are both participants in, and the implementers of, education. In traditional Chinese ideology, teachers are regarded as knowledge imparters, skills trainers and moral enlighteners. What teachers believe, think, know and do will influence the quality of education. Thus, it is necessary to investigate teachers’ knowledge and beliefs in relation to English language teaching in China. This study limits its contextual focus to culture teaching in language classes in high school.

3.4 Cultural dimension in the New Standard and textbooks

As noted in the introduction chapter, the Standard consists of four parts: introduction, objectives, content and assessment, and implementation suggestions. The introduction defines the nature of English as a compulsory subject: English learning is a two-fold
process. In one process, students gradually master English knowledge and skills and increase their competence in pragmatic use of the language. In the other process, students achieve personality cultivation, horizon broadening, thinking development and humanistic quality growth.

The introduction also describes the primary aims of English teaching as follows: to motivate and develop students’ interest in learning English; to build up self-confidence in learning English, thus forming good learning habits and effective learning strategies; to develop autonomous learning competence and collaborative learning awareness; to ensure students master a certain level of English knowledge and skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing, thus forming a certain level of comprehensive language competence; to develop students’ abilities in observing, memorising, thinking and imagining, as well as enhancing creativity; to help students know about the world and differences between Eastern culture and Western culture, thus broadening their view; to foster patriotism and a healthy view of life; and to pave the way for their life-long learning and development.

The second part of the Standard describes objectives on the basis of nine levels. The Standard adopts the international system, according to which English language education is divided into nine levels. Chinese high schools run for six years from Year 7 to Year 12. However, the Standard establishes a new nine-level English proficiency assessment. After Year 6 (the last year of primary school) they should reach level two, and after Year 9, level five. Students finishing year 12 should have reached level eight, while those from foreign language high schools or schools with foreign language specialties should have
reached level nine. Other levels are treated as bridging benchmarks. At the moment, this level of assessment is being piloted in primary schools. As far as high school is concerned, the assessment is still carried out in the traditional way, involving two mid-term exams and two final-term exams each year. The Junior Graduate Exam at the end of Year 9, and the National College Entrance Exam at the end of Year 12, which are commonly considered to be the two critical steps in a student’s life, still dominate the lives of teachers, students and parents. Therefore, the level objectives in teaching practice need to be investigated.

The third part of the Standard illustrates five teaching content and assessment areas, namely, language skills, language knowledge, emotion and attitude, learning strategies and cultural awareness. As far as the cultural dimension is concerned, firstly, the Standard defines culture as history, geography, customs and traditions, living styles, literature and arts, norms of behaviour and ideological values. It is stated that exposure to and understanding of the cultures of English-speaking countries helps to enhance the understanding and usage of English as well as the development of intercultural communicative competence. Also the Standard defines the cultural awareness objectives (Table 3.1) for Levels two, five, seven and eight. As can be seen from the table, the cultural awareness objectives are not very clearly presented and the objectives of Level 7 and 8 contain the same content. This is how the Standard explained cultural awareness objectives and some of which will be referred to by the participants of the interview of this study in Chapter Five.
Table 3.1: Cultural awareness objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Objective descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Understanding basic English expressions to address, greet and farewell;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2. Replying to compliments and requests appropriately;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Knowing major entertainment and sports in the world;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Knowing the English terms for the common drinks and food in English-speaking countries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Knowing the capitals and national flags of the main English-speaking countries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Knowing the major landmarks of the main English-speaking countries, e.g. Big Ben in UK; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Knowing the major festivals and holidays of the main English-speaking countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Knowing the commonly-used body language in English;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2. Using the expressions to address, greet and farewell appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Knowing ways of address between family members in the main English-speaking countries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Knowing the dress customs in the main English-speaking countries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Knowing how to make compliments and requests appropriately in English;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Having a basic knowledge of the geography, climate and history of the main English-speaking countries;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Knowing the cultural connotations of common plants and animals in English;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Knowing the possible cultural implications of natural phenomenon in the English language; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Deepening the understanding of Chinese culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Objective descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7     | 1. Basic understanding of the relationship between English language and English cultures (e.g. relationship between some words and their cultural implications);  
       | 2. Finding attitudes toward foreign cultures implied in language use (e.g. cultural worship or cultural discrimination);  
       | 3. Objective understanding the English language and the peoples and cultures of English-speaking countries;  
       | 4. Understanding the most outstanding cultural characteristics of English-speaking countries;  
       | 5. Basic understanding of the origins of important historic and cultural phenomena; and  
       | 6. Basic understanding of the embodiment of cultures of English-speaking countries in daily life and values. |
| 8     | 1. Basic understanding of the relationship between English language and English cultures (e.g. relations between some words and their cultural implications);  
       | 2. Finding attitudes toward foreign cultures implied in language use (e.g. cultural worship or cultural discrimination);  
       | 3. Objective understanding the English language and the peoples and cultures of English-speaking countries;  
       | 4. Understanding the most outstanding cultural characteristics of English-speaking countries;  
       | 5. Basic understanding of the origins of important historic and cultural phenomena; and  
       | 6. Basic understanding of the embodiment of cultures of English-speaking countries in daily life and values. |

The fourth part of the Standard provides teachers with implementation suggestions, summarised as follows: (1) take every individual student into consideration in syllabus design, and encourage students to develop comprehensive competence through activities such as participating, practising, discussing, cooperating, exploring, etc.; (2) pay attention to students’ emotions and make a relaxed, equal and harmonious teaching/learning environment; (3) practise task-based teaching methods; (4) provide guidance for the student in learning strategies and set foundations for their life-long learning; (5) broaden students’ culture view and develop their intercultural awareness and competence. Teachers should deal well with the interrelationship between language and culture and lead students to gain knowledge about foreign cultures, in particular, the cultures of English-speaking countries. At the same time, teachers should educate students to have a good understanding of Chinese culture; (6) apply modern teaching technologies and explore teaching resources; (7) organise active and diversified extra-curricular activities to promote English learning; (8) update knowledge structure and familiarise themselves with English subject knowledge demanded by the social development; and (9) assure teaching quality and efficacy within the allocated teaching time. Basically it is suggested that high school students should have at least four periods of English (45 minutes per period) every week.

In addition, this part of the Standard provides five teaching case examples. Two cases are presented as follows. The comments presented at the end of each case are quoted from the Standard instead of the researcher’s comments on the two cases.
**Case 1**

*Activity objectives*: students gain information from advertisements, learn some advertising terms and try to design and perform advertisements.

*Adapt to*: Levels 3–6.

*Teaching procedure*:

1. Teacher collects some food or stationery advertisements.
2. Students brainstorm these advertisements and discuss why they are impressive.
3. Teacher presents some English advertisements and guides students through an analysis of the lexical and syntactic features of the language of advertising.
4. Group work: design word or image advertisements for some objects offered by teacher or students.
5. Group presentation of their advertisements.

*Comment*: This activity is designed to promote students’ thinking ability and to facilitate the development of their abilities in observing, imagining, creating and cooperating. Students are encouraged to present other talents whilst learning English.

**Case 2**

*Activity objectives*: organise English salon to promote students’ English learning interest and pragmatic language competence.

*Adapt to*: Level 6–9.

*Teaching procedure*:

1. Teacher organises English culture salon and students volunteer to participate.
2. Teacher and students mutually decide on some appropriate salon topics, for example, the Olympic Games, football in China, or environment protection.

3. Group work: students collect and sort information from libraries or websites, and then present it.

4. Collate students’ works into a collection.

Comment: This activity encourages students’ interest in after-class English learning, develops their research competence and offers them an opportunity to practise their English.

As can been seen from the two cases, culture teaching was advocated by the Standard to be included into English classroom teaching but the explanation in this sense was not clear enough for the teachers to follow. The implementation suggestions also include evaluation, the heart of the curriculum process (Lovat & Smith, 2003, p.169). It is proposed that evaluation should be student-oriented and comprise both formative and summative evaluation. The formative evaluation is to evaluate students’ regular performance as well as the development of their emotions, attitudes and strategies reflected through their performance. The formative evaluation encourages the involvement of multiple participants such as students, teachers, peers and parents. In addition, it is suggested that the formative evaluation take multiple forms, including class learning activities, competitions, self-evaluations of learning efficacy, learning profiles, questionnaires, interviews, parents’ feedback and comments on student learning and quizzes.
Summative evaluation mainly refers to final term and graduation exams. Summative evaluation should include oral, listening comprehension and written exams. Items for listening comprehension and written exams should be set in context, rather than separated into phonetic knowledge and grammar knowledge.

Finally, the Standard explicates curriculum resources. While English textbooks are the core resource, teachers are encouraged to explore other resources, including broadcast/TV programs, video/audio resources and newspapers and magazines. The use of information technologies such as various media resources on the Internet, including school English teaching and learning websites and network courses is also encouraged.

It is broadly acknowledged in the field of high school English teaching that the textbooks are paid the most attention, as they are the predominant authorities for the exams. All the high schools in the city of Tianjin that participated in this study are using a unified series of textbooks, which served as the main teaching material and the basis for testing. The Senior High School English series provides an example. This series consists of 11 books; however, the Standard requires the completion of a minimum of eight books before the College Entrance Exams at the end of Year 12 (the last year of senior school education). The last three books are available for situations where the teachers think their students have the capacity to learn more. Among the 14 participating schools, only two municipal key schools deal with Book 11 in Year 12. The other schools, including the district key and ordinary schools, normally finish Books 1 to 8 before the start of Year 12 (September)
and spend the 10 months until the College Entrance exams in June on a comprehensive review.

With regard to the cultures of the main English speaking countries and Chinese culture, the participants’ clarification was found to be in line with the findings of this question in the questionnaire (see Chapter Four for details). British, American and Chinese cultures were far better dealt with than the cultures of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. According to the participants, not every passage was obviously culturally loaded; it was not necessary to integrate culture to the same extent with all passages. Teachers designed culture teaching depending on particular topics of particular modules. For the purpose of verifying the opinion of the participants on this question, the topics of 48 modules in eight books were listed and analysed as references (Appendix 1).

Each book consists of six modules. Each module consists of five sections. As an example, the sections comprising Module one in Book five are shown in Table 3.2. Book five was being used by six participants at the time of the intensive investigation. This book is used in the first semester of Year 11. The content marked with asterisks are the two reading passages in this module, sharing a common topic. The listing of the topics and tasks provided the researcher with ample messages in terms of the participants’ answer verification and as a useful reference for the next chapter of discussion.

The Standard embodies the ideologies of the English curriculum reform. Firstly, the comprehensive development of students becomes the reform priority, and students are
taken as the focus in all reform measures, including teaching content, teaching approaches and evaluation. Secondly, considering the disparity within Chinese regional development, a 9-level evaluation is suggested, thus making the Standard more flexible and open in terms of implementation.

Table 3.2 Sections constituting Module One Book Five

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Topic and Task</td>
<td>Topic: British and American English*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task: Identifying a variety of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Grammar/Functions</td>
<td>Grammar: Review of verb forms (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present simple, present continuous, present perfect and future reference; for and since with present perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Function: Giving reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Skills</td>
<td>Reading: Comparing texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening: Listening for main ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing: Writing about the Chinese language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaking: Talking about varieties of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Vocabulary/Everyday English</td>
<td>Vocabulary: British and American English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Everyday English:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How are you getting on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t get it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Get used to do something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That’s a good point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make a fuss of someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Culture/</td>
<td>Cultural corner:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to learn</td>
<td>The Man Who Made Spelling Simple*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning to learn:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English on the Internet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As far as the cultural dimension is concerned, the Standard makes high demands on teachers and challenges them to think more about culture teaching than before. Firstly, the Standard introduces the concept of culture by listing the following areas of cultural content: history, geography, customs and traditions, living styles, literature and arts, norms of behaviour and ideological values, etc. As a basic understanding of the concept of culture is the prerequisite for teaching culture, and the Standard is the key teaching guide, it is essential to determine whether this content list provides an adequate basis for teachers to be able to define and understand culture. Secondly, the Standard states that teachers should gradually expand the content and range of cultural knowledge as the age and cognitive ability of students increase. At the same time, teachers should help students increase their sensitivity to the similarities and differences between their native culture and foreign cultures in order to establish a good foundation for their intercultural communicative competence. In achieving these goals, teachers are expected to have three domains of knowledge, namely, the understanding of students, knowledge of the native and target culture, and knowledge of intercultural communicative competence. Thirdly, how to include their individual knowledge in the above domains into their English teaching is another concern.

3.5 Summary

The study of this thesis focuses on the investigation of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the cultural dimension in secondary school English teaching in the Chinese context. As a background to this study, this chapter has reviewed Chinese secondary education in general, and English teaching as well as culture teaching in particular. Finally, this
chapter focussed on the explication of the cultural dimension in the Standard, as this document is recognised as the most direct impetus for and entry point to this study.

Firstly, modern secondary education in China was briefly reviewed, in order to contextualise the issue of English teaching. In brief, during the period between the founding of the PRC in 1949 and the present day, education in China has been influenced and manipulated by political factors. The current basic education reform began in 2001. It was heralded as a comprehensive reform, shifting the emphasis from teaching ideology to teaching methods. Macro politics also dictated that English teaching be incorporated into the general curriculum. In this current reform, the role of teachers was placed at centre stage, and their creativity was called for in curriculum implementation. Secondly, an overview of English teaching in China was provided. In addition, the features of current high school English teaching were introduced from four aspects, namely, school system, teaching approach, evaluation system and teacher education. Thirdly, as a sensitive dimension in English teaching, culture teaching in different historical periods was also reviewed. Finally, this section explored and illustrated the culture dimension as explicated in the Standard from three perspectives: the objectives of culture teaching in general; cultural awareness objectives listed in the Standard; and implementation suggestions. Most parts of the illustration entailed discussion were based on the researcher’s translation of the Chinese version of the Standard. This translation aimed to provide background for the research questions in this study. The discussion was conducted from three perspectives namely, the objectives of culture teaching in general, the listed cultural awareness objectives and suggestions for implementation.
Chapter 4 Research design and methodology

4.0 Introduction

Chapter Two reviewed the literature relating to the establishment of the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter Three explained the Chinese education context, English teaching and culture teaching. Based on the theoretical framework and the situation of the Chinese teaching context, the following research questions for this study were formulated: (1) To what extent are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching congruent with the relevant objectives presented in the Standard? and (2) To what extent can the culture objectives stated in the Standard be achieved within the current Chinese educational environment?

In order to respond to these research questions, the researcher invited a cohort of teachers to participate in research. In order to address the research questions, this investigation utilised multiple methods of data collection, namely, questionnaires, interviews and classroom observation. The data collected through these instruments enabled the weaving together of meaning, description and interpretation. After the data was collected and analysed, the researcher was able to return to the literature to juxtapose findings and discuss the contributions that this study provided, indicating that the basic process of this study was inductive rather than deductive and used the interpretive paradigm.

This chapter describes the research design and methodology of this study. Section 4.1 explains the rationale for the interpretive paradigm that the study followed. Section 4.2
details participant recruitment and the role of the researcher. Section 4.3 describes the research instruments employed in this study. Section 4.4 explains issues of data analysis and triangulation as well as the methodological limitations of the investigation. Finally, a summary of this chapter is provided in section 4.5.

4.1 Rationale for applying the interpretive paradigm to this study

Cohen, Lawrence and Morrison state that educational research has concomitantly absorbed two competing views of the social sciences: the established, traditional view and a more recent interpretive view (2000, p.5). The authors explain that the former view holds that the social sciences are essentially the same as the natural sciences and are therefore concerned with discovering natural and universal laws regulating and determining individual and social behaviour. The latter view, however, while sharing the rigor of the natural sciences and the same concerns of traditional social science to describe and explain human behaviour, emphasises how people differ from inanimate natural phenomena and, indeed, from each other. The authors contend that the two different views of social science represent strikingly different ways of looking at social reality and are constructed on correspondingly different ways of interpreting it (2000, p.5).

The same authors explain three assumptions that have direct implications for the methodological concerns of researchers (Cohen, Lawrence & Morrison., 2000, pp.5-8). First, there are assumptions of an ontological kind—assumption that concern the very nature or essence of the social phenomena being investigated. The second set of
assumptions is of an epistemological kind. These concern the very bases of knowledge—
its nature and forms, how it can be acquired, and how it is communicated to other human
beings. The third set of assumptions concerns human nature and, in particular, the
relationship between human beings and their environment. Two images of human beings
emerge from such assumptions — the one portrays them as responding mechanically to
their environment; the other, as initiators of their own actions. The authors (Cohen et al.,
2000) note that the contrasting ontologies, epistemologies and models of human beings
will in turn demand different research methods. Investigators adopting an objectivist (or
positivist) approach to the social world, and who treat it like the world of natural
phenomena as being hard, real and external to the individual, will chose from a range of
traditional options—surveys, experiments and the like. Others favouring the more
subjectivist (anti-positivist) approach, and who view the social world as being of a much
softer, personal and humanly created kind, will select from a comparable range of recent
and emerging techniques—accounts, participant observation and personal constructs, for
example.

After reviewing the relevant literature and research conducted in Western contexts, it was
acknowledged that the realities of the Chinese social environment and education system
differ greatly from that of the West (see chapter 3). Thus, the “world” of English teachers
in China might be different from that of their counterparts in the West. In addition, like
teachers in all contexts, although teachers in China share the same social and educational
context, they, as professional individuals, might think differently about culture and
culture teaching. These hypothetical orientations informed the present study and required
that participants’ attitudes and beliefs be investigated using multiple instruments to elicit what teachers think of English and culture teaching.

Ontology concerns “my world”, “her world” or “your world”, rather than being about “the world” in general (Carspecken, 1996, p. 70). This idea was applied to this study because it investigates the participants’ attitudes and beliefs and assumes that the participants have different beliefs. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about culture and culture teaching, a “thick” description was required. A thick description has the following features: (a) It gives the context of an action; (b) It states the intentions and meanings that organise the action; (c) It traces the evolution and development of the action; and (d) It presents the action as a text that can then be interpreted (Denzin, 2001, pp.53-54).

Thus, this study aligns with the interpretivist paradigm, rather than with a positivist paradigm. According to Denzin (1989, p.49), positivism refers to a set of propositions that are interrelated in an ordered fashion such that some may be able to be deduced from others, thus permitting an explanation to be developed for the phenomenon under consideration. The ultimate goal of this form of theorising is to develop universal laws of human behaviour and societal functioning (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.19).

Glaser & Strauss (1967) criticise the positivists’ conventional deductive approach to research, opposing the focus on verification for theory development and the a priori definition of concepts and hypotheses. In The Discovery of Grounded Theory, they
propose an inductive strategy whereby the researcher discovers concepts and hypotheses through constant comparative analysis. They advocate theory generation through discovery, and call the results “grounded theory”. However, they also accept the positivists’ position that the ultimate function of theory is explanation and prediction (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p.19).

Interpretivists such as Geertz (1973) and Denzin (1989) offer a further understanding of theory, which is neither explanation nor prediction. It is interpretation, or the act of making sense out of a social interaction (Glesne & Peshkin, p.39). Theory building proceeds by thick description (Geertz, 1973), defined as [the] description that goes beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act (thin description), but describes and probes the intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances of action (Denzin, 1989, p.39). In Glesne & Peshkin’s words, interpretivists portray a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing (1992, p.6).

Interpretivists see the goal of theorising as providing and understanding of direct lived experience instead of abstract generalisations. Originating in phenomenology, lived experience stresses that experience is not just cognitive, but also includes emotions. Interpretive scholars consider that every human situation is novel, emergent, and filled with multiple, often conflicting meanings and interpretations (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, pp.19-20). Interpretivists attempt to capture the core of these meanings and contradictions (Denzin, 1989, p.18). Denzin further contends that the qualitative researcher is not an objective, politically neutral observer who stands outside and above the study of the
social world. Rather, the researcher is historically and locally situated within the very processes being studied (2001, p.3). This perspective directed the choices made by researcher of this study throughout, from conceptualising the research context and questions to designing and conducting the investigation and analysing and interpreting the data results. The researcher’s role in this study is explicated in section 4.2.

This study did not stop at the description of what the participant teachers claimed to believe about culture and culture teaching but also described and analysed the teachers’ classroom behaviour observed by the researcher. Patterns and attributes of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs were explored and relationships between their thoughts and behaviour were identified and interpreted. Thus, this study followed the interpretive paradigm. Contextualisation permeated the whole process of this study, from the formulation of research questions to the interpretation of findings. In other words, the researcher developed research questions based on the context where the question was being asked, then located and conducted intensive investigations with the participants, and finally returned to the context to interpret the resulting data.

This study followed the interpretative paradigm and much of the research has a qualitative orientation. However, quantitative data analysis was applied where needed. In other words, multiple investigation instruments were applied. This is because mixed instruments provide more comprehensive evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone (Creswell & Clark, 2007, pp.9-10). As Shulman (1988, p.5) suggested, a major reason why research methodology in education is
so exciting is that education is not itself a discipline but a field of study, a locus containing phenomena, events, institutions, problems, persons, and processes, which themselves constitute the raw material for inquiries of many kinds. Furthermore, the advantage of adopting mixed methods was that they enhance the validity of quantitative data and the trustworthiness of qualitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Denzin, 1989; Fielding & Fielding, 1986). Details of data collection methods are presented in section 4.4. Issues of data validity, reliability and triangulation are explained in section 4.5.

4.2 Participant recruitment and the researcher’s role

Participant recruitment

The investigation of this study employed three instruments, namely, a questionnaire, interviews and classroom observation. A pilot study was conducted six months prior to the main study. Six months was an ideal interval for three reasons. Firstly, the researcher had the time to reflect on the questions and items as well as the procedures of the pilot study and apply the observations to the development of the main study. Secondly, the interval increased reliability. A number of the participants in the pilot study were recruited to participate in the main study, and the longer the interval between the two, the less likely it was that they would remember the questions and answers. Finally, the researcher needed time to recruit more participants and establish rapport for the main investigation. All the participants signed consent forms. The procedures for the recruitment and selection of participants in the pilot study and the main study are explained below.
Pilot study

A questionnaire was the first instrument used in the pilot study, followed by classroom observation and interviews. The questionnaire was completed by 45 participants. The 45 participants were located in two ways. The researcher of this study graduated from and then worked as a teacher of English in Tianjin Normal University before undertaking the PhD project in Brisbane. Many of the researchers’ former schoolmates are teaching in high schools. The first way to locate teachers to participate in the questionnaire was through these schoolmates and their professional networks. Thirty of the 45 teachers were located in this way. Colleagues of the researcher from Tianjin Normal University introduced the remaining 15 teachers. The teachers were undertaking in-service training courses with those colleagues. The researcher asked her colleagues to provide the contact details of those trainee teachers, rather than asking her colleagues to hand the questionnaires to them. The researcher was given more than 30 contacts. Of the thirty teachers contacted, twenty agreed to answer the questionnaire and fifteen returned answers.

After analysing the 45 questionnaires and developing interview questions, the researcher arranged with five of the participating teachers to take part in classroom observations and interviews. As the arrangements took nearly a month to organise, the pilot interviews and classroom observations were conducted a month after the questionnaires were administered. The five participants were drawn from the 45 questionnaire participants. Three factors influenced the selection of these five participants. The first factor was the need for representative distribution, namely that the five participants should represent the
distribution tendency of the 45 participants, in terms of their gender, age, the schools in which they taught and their educational qualifications. Teachers’ interest in participating and their work schedules were the other decisive factors. By balancing these factors, five participants were selected to take part in the pilot interviews and classroom observations. One of the five was from a municipal key school. Two were from the district key schools and two from the ordinary schools. One was male and four were female. They were all between the ages of 25 and 45. Three held Bachelor degrees and two had completed their Masters degree. Two of the five had overseas experience.

Main study
The 45 teachers who participated in the pilot study were asked to introduce more teachers to the researcher. Altogether 44 teachers were introduced. Six months after administering the pilot questionnaire, the researcher sent the main questionnaire, together with a project statement and a consent form via email to each of the 98 teachers recruited. In doing so, the researcher expected to present a kind of “netiquette”, to facilitate subsequent communication, and to initiate rapport for potential sub-samples. Sixty-six teachers emailed back their answers. The response rate was 67.3%. Thirty-nine of these 66 teachers had participated in the pilot questionnaire.

The 66 teachers were from 15 high schools in Tianjin. The 15 schools include two municipal key schools and 13 schools from the six districts. Of the 13 schools, seven were district key schools and six were ordinary schools. The constitution of the 15 schools is shown in Figure 4.1. In brackets are the numbers of participants.
Figure 4.1 Demographic profile of the 66 questionnaire participants

The district map is presented in Appendix 2. Three of the six metropolitan districts, namely Heping, Hexi and Nankai, are considered to offer high quality education. The five municipal key schools are all located in these three districts. The three districts are non-industrial areas in Tianjin. Roughly speaking, the population living in these three districts consists mainly of professionals, because of the attractive surroundings and high-quality facilities. Many universities and research institutes are located in these three districts. Another two districts, Hongqiao and Hedong, are considered to offer low quality education, mainly because they are industrial areas where many factories are located. The last district, Hebei, is between the two extremes. Another difference is the percentage of people with a college education in the different districts of Tianjin. (See Appendix 3.) Of the 66 questionnaire participants, two were from the municipal key school and the rest were from the key and ordinary schools of the six districts. The distribution of the 66 teachers is presented in Table 4.1 below.
Table 4.1 Distribution of the 66 questionnaire participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District and school types</th>
<th>Num of par.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>municipal key school</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heping District key school / ordinary school</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexi District key school / ordinary school</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nankai District key school / ordinary school</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedong District key school / ordinary school</td>
<td>5/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongqiao District key school / ordinary school</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebei District key school / ordinary school</td>
<td>6/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total key school / ordinary school</td>
<td>34/34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sub-sample

Fourteen teachers out of the 66 were invited by the researcher to form a sub-sample for eliciting in-depth qualitative data through interview and classroom observation. Two out of the 14 participants were from two municipal key schools. The remaining participants were from the 12 key schools and ordinary schools in the six districts. In other words, every school had at least one participant.

This selection was based on two considerations. The first consideration was the distribution of different types of schools and the districts in which they are located (as can been seen from Table 4.1). The second consideration was teachers’ interest in this project and their consent to participate in the in-depth investigation. The 14 interviewees consisted of three males and 11 females. Their average age was 35, the youngest aged 25
and the oldest 46. Two participants had completed a Masters degree and 12 had completed BA degrees in English; however, eight of the 12 were doing Masters coursework when the investigation was being conducted. Six of them had overseas experience. Two were teaching at Year 12, seven at Year 11 and five at Year 10.

After selecting participants and obtaining their consent, the researcher kept in touch with these participants at every stage of in-depth data collection and analysis. This issue is related to data collection methods, which are explained in detail in section 4.3.

**Researcher’s role**

This study explores teachers’ attitudes and beliefs. Calderhead (1987, p.183) states that it has become increasingly recognised that much of teachers’ professional activity is cognitive in nature, and that a large proportion of the teachers’ classroom behaviour is the product or accomplishment of some form of thinking. Within a context of organisational and curricular constraints, teachers make decisions about what to teach and how they plan work; and they identify and find solutions or compromises to a regular flow of classroom problems. Any adequate account of teaching processes must clearly encompass such cognitive acts. With the aim of gaining an insight into the teachers’ real work, a range of verbal reporting procedures were employed. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 18) explain, words are the way that most people come to understand their situation. The task of the qualitative researcher is to find patterns within those words (and actions) and to present those patterns for others to inspect.
The researcher in this study had studied in the same Bachelor program in China in English Education as the majority of high school English teachers did; therefore, she had a good understanding of the situation in formal pre-service education. Many of the researcher’s schoolmates were working as English teachers in high schools. From them, the researcher was able to gain ample information about their teaching situations. Moreover, the researcher herself had been a university English teacher for 13 years in Tianjin Normal University before undertaking her PhD studies, and she also had experience in training high school in-service teachers. The researcher’s educational and work experience set the foundation for the establishment of rapport between her and the participants. Therefore, the researcher’s familiarity with high school English teaching and teacher training programs made it possible for her to conduct an emic investigation, in other words, to use thick description to pursue meanings from inside (Denzin, 1989, p.200).

Although the researcher’s background facilitated the development of the investigation questions and enabled her to capture the essence of the participants’ answers, she was aware of the possibility that she had pre-conceived notions of some of the factors involved in the investigation, such as different school environments and the participants’ educational background. As Gillham (2000, p. 3) explains, pre-conceived notions in a research interview are as much a danger as in a medical interview. To avoid this danger, the researcher followed Gillham’s advice and applied a kind of expert openness to the investigation by decentring herself and focussing on the participants being interviewed.
and observed. This entailed paying close attention to speakers and developing certain qualities in interpersonal relationships, such as trust and respect.

Gillham (p.37) suggests that an interviewer needs a comprehensive and analytical self-awareness. As the researcher shared the same culture as the participants and was familiar with their ways of thinking, she was clear about the questions she would ask. Some topics were useful as preliminary and warm-up questions. For example, talking about overseas experience or teaching issues was welcomed by the participants. Personal questions, such as those relating to age, family and education or work background, seem to be private and avoided in many cultures, particularly among people who are not well acquainted. However, in Chinese culture, they are good topics for initiating communication. Depending on her perception of the individual participants, the researcher occasionally used such topics to open up conversation.

The similarities of the researcher’s background to that of the participants and her determination to avoid bias by using investigation skills was also essential and valuable in terms of comprehending and interpreting participants’ answers. The interviews in this study were conducted in the Chinese language. All participants were teachers of English; however, it was difficult for them to communicate comfortably in English. Interviewing in Chinese enhanced the possibility of gaining good data. However, the meanings of Chinese words can be sometimes elusive, and defining and translating words is not only an academic activity but a political activity. The researcher explored the meanings which lay behind teachers’ speech patterns and classroom practices in order to make
implications clear. It was a time-consuming and energy-consuming task to interpret some of the meanings when interviewees expressed themselves vaguely. From time to time, clarification was sought through email or telephone to ascertain the correct interpretation.

In brief, the researcher aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the behaviour and the reasons that governed the behaviour of the participants. The researcher’s overview of this study and of the relevant literature, her knowledge of the culture of the participants and their teaching context, her disposition and social competence were important factors in ensuring that meaningful data was collected. She had to know how to adapt to different participants in order to create a comfortable interview environment. In addition, she had to possess the talent for noticing things not just as observation, but as evidence (Lindlof, 2011, p.138). Furthermore, the rapport initiated by the researcher facilitated the management of the external verification in the process of analysing and interpreting the data.

4.3 Instrumentation

To reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, researchers tend to use multiple procedures. The main instruments employed to collect data for this study were, as suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) and Maykut & Morehouse (1994), questionnaire, interview and classroom observation. Questionnaire is regarded as the exclusive instrument for the investigation of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs. Interview and classroom observation are usually used jointly to get teachers to talk about their work (Zeichner et al., 1987, p.22). The reasons for the choice of these instruments will be
explained in detail in Sections 4.3.2, 4.3.3 and 4.3.4. As mentioned in the section of the participant recruitment, the pilot study was conducted prior to the main study. The functions of the pilot study will be explained below in Section 4.3.1.

4.3.1 The pilot study

The pilot study was conducted to prepare the researcher for gathering data for the main study. As Glesne & Peshkin (1992, p.30) suggest, researchers should enter the pilot study in a different frame of mind from the one they would employ during the main study. The idea is not to get data per se, but to learn about the research process, interview schedule, observation techniques, and oneself. The study of this thesis applied three instruments in both the pilot study and the main study, namely, questionnaire, interview and classroom observation. The pilot study served as the groundwork for the development and revision of the main study. In addition, the researcher established sound relationships with the teachers who participated in the pilot study and these teachers helped the researcher recruit some of the participants in the main study.

As explained in Section 4.2, 45 participants answered the pilot questionnaire. The researcher had already established clear foci for what she intended to ask in the pilot questionnaire based on the findings in the relevant literature, and addressing the gaps between the existing literature and the research questions formulated in this study. The pilot questionnaire consisted of both closed and open questions. The 45 questionnaires were analysed using the same method followed in the analysis of the main questionnaire,
which will be explained in Section 4.4. In light of the results, analysed with the help of the SPSS program, some items were adjusted and modified in the main questionnaire.

Five of the 45 participants who completed the questionnaires were invited to take part in both the pilot interviews and classroom observation. As explained in Section 4.2, these five teachers were selected through balancing a number of factors such as gender, educational background, the schools in which they taught, their interest in participating and their time availability. The pilot interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis. The purpose of doing so was to make sure that the researcher could verify whether her understanding of the questions was consistent with the participants’ interpretation of the questions. In addition, as the main questionnaire had to be answered onscreen and then sent back to the researcher via email, the formatting had to be clear and easy to read. The five participants provided practical suggestions on these two concerns. This job of refinement on the basis of the pilot questionnaire analysis and the suggestions of the five pilot interview/classroom observation participants ensured the quality of the main questionnaire.

The interviews in the pilot study were individually conducted with five participants before and after the classroom observation. The contents of the interviews before the classroom observations consisted of two parts. The first part focused on the explanation of the questionnaire responses and suggestions about the questionnaire content and format. The second part focused on the brief explanation of the classes to be observed. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The length of the interviews ranged
from 1 to 1.5 hours. The researcher designed questions as guidelines and maximised the interviewees’ opportunities to talk. The process of transcription, analysis and reflection started with the first interview. The pilot interview assisted in the development of the main study as described below.

Firstly, the pilot interview familiarised the researcher with the use of the digital voice recorder. Techniques were learned to make the participants feel comfortable in the presence of the voice recorder and to obtain a high quality recording. Secondly, the pilot study enabled the researcher to make adjustments to ensure efficient planning and an effective interview schedule. The scheduling of interviews immediately after the classroom observation turned out to be unsatisfactory. The application of the method of stimulated recall posed the greatest challenge. The adjustment of the camcorder, however infrequent, would challenge the researcher’s concentration in observing, taking notes and selecting the clips used as stimuli for the interviewees to think aloud. For the main study, interviews were scheduled for the day following the class observation, rather than immediately after the observation.

In order to identify the disparities between what people claim and their actual behaviour, the researcher also conducted classroom observations rather than relying just on the questionnaire and interviews. The pilot classroom observation helped the researcher to design an observation sheet and to record and analyse data. The pilot classroom observation familiarised the researcher with the use of the camcorder. When videotaping a class, the ideal is to capture both the teacher’s teaching and the teacher-student
interaction without disturbing either the teacher or the students. China’s high school classes normally comprise more than 50 students. Students are traditionally seated in rows with as much space between desks as possible. Different locations within the classroom were tested, and the back of the classroom turned out to be the most appropriate and workable place to set up the camcorder. Videoing from the back of classroom minimised the need to adjust the camcorder to track the teachers’ movements and therefore reduced interruptions to the class. This testing provided the researcher with insights for the shaping of the main observation. In brief, the pilot study trained the researcher in the procedure of the investigation and established the groundwork for the revision and refinement of the main study. The rationale for the application of the three instruments and the procedures to use them will be explained in the following sections.

4.3.2 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are widely used to investigate participants’ attitude and motivation as well as their personal background (Liu, 1999, p. 88). Questionnaires are economical as they can be distributed to many people at the same time and can be replied to at high speed. As well, questionnaires are convenient to analyse because of consistent formatting. The questionnaire was administered prior to the interview and classroom observation. The questionnaire in this study not only served as one of the methods of collecting data *per se* for the overall analysis, but also informed the design of interviews and classroom observation.
The questionnaire used in this study was semi-structured. According to Schuman (1970, p.240), important sociological analysis is often based on a small number of closed survey questions. The closed questions in this study focussed mainly on the participants’ personal background and their thinking about culture-teaching related issues. As the participants could only answer the closed questions in a predefined way, the responses tended to be quicker to code and administer than the responses to the open questions. An attitude scale was devised, consisting of a number of statements to which the participant was asked to express his or her degree of agreement or disagreement. Depending on the participant’s endorsement of each statement, a particular score is delivered to present the participant’s degree of attitude from least favourable to most favourable. The rating scale constructed for this study followed the Likert techniques of scale construction. The Likert-type scale is the most widely used method of scale construction because of its relative ease of construction, its use of fewer statistical assumptions, and the fact that, in contrast to other scaling techniques, no judges are required (Karavas, 1996, p.194).

However, whereas the closed questions played an important role and had their own advantages in drawing out data, they carried the risk of stifling responses and possibly making the participants feel that they were unable to speak their mind. In addition, to the research analyst, and perhaps even more to the non-survey-oriented sociologist, doubts sometimes arise about whether a question carries the same meaning for respondents as for the social scientist who constructed it. Although it is true that the process of analysis itself is intended to elucidate the sense of data, there is often a need on the part of both investigator and reader to hear the respondent’s own voice, and this is doubtless an
important reason why surveys make use of open-ended questions and why free responses often make up a significant part of survey reports (Schuman, 1970, p.240). On the one hand, the researcher of this study hoped to find out participants’ personal background and attitudes, in a way that could be scaled by statistical tools; on the other hand, the researcher used open and word-based questions to “capture the specificity of a particular situation” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 255).

4.3.3 Interview

Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem to be at first. The spoken or written word always has a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers. Yet interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 645). In addition, interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering, but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results (p.646). As well, Fontana and Frey note that reality is an ongoing, interpretive accomplishment and an interview is a practical production, the meaning of which is accomplished at the intersection of the interaction between interviewer and respondent (pp. 663-664).

Denzin (2001, p.52) addresses both the significance of the interpretations that people bring to the events that have been recorded and the meanings that inform and structure the participants’ experiences. Thus, the interviews in this study were a critical means of tapping into the participants’ knowledge and beliefs of culture and culture teaching and
investigating their teaching context. Therefore, every participant was vital in enabling the researcher to gaining insight into and understanding of the research questions of this study.

Compared to questionnaires, an intensive qualitative investigation involves much more individual communication between the researcher and the participants. Many issues intertwined to directly or indirectly influence the conduct and quality of interviews. These issues generally included the interview schedule, equipment preparation and use, and interview techniques.

Like the pilot interview, the main interview was divided into a pre-interview and a post-interview. The pre-interview was conducted after the analysis of individual questionnaires and before classroom observation, via telephone/email. The post-interview was conducted after the classroom observation. It was found from the pilot study that an interview and stimulated recall session lasting 90 minutes was inconvenient for the participants. Although participants were willing to cooperate, their work load and busy schedules tended to interrupt the interviews.

There are a number of reasons for this situation. A teacher is usually in charge of teaching two English classes. Each class of students has four periods of English lessons (45 minutes for one period) every week. So, on average, a particular teacher has two periods of lessons every day for four days a week. The only free day (usually Wednesday in the investigated city) is called research day, when teachers usually attend out-of–
school research meetings held by the district education authority or part-time training courses. Furthermore, many interviewees were in charge of student management as well as subject teaching. Also teachers have other routine work such as peer evaluation, classroom observation, staff meetings and meeting with parents, etc. Therefore, it could not be guaranteed that the 90-minute interview would not be interrupted. Due to these circumstances, the face-to-face interview in the main study was shortened to a maximum of one hour.

Because of the need to shorten the face-to-face interview time, telephone/email interviews were conducted after the questionnaire analysis and before the classroom observation and follow-up interview. The researcher made phone calls from Brisbane to the interviewees in Tianjin. Telephone interviews were conducted using the hands free function and tape-recorded. Email interviews were conducted with two of the 14 interviewees at their request. Interviews were conducted in Chinese and the emails were printed out.

According to Lavrakas (1993, p.5), telephone surveying is a methodology that has achieved a respected status as a valid means of gathering information to aid effective decision making in both the public and private sectors. The telephone interview focussed mainly on the interviewees’ clarification of questionnaire answers. According to Denzin (2001, P.66), the researcher must alter the phrasing of the questions and the order in which they are asked to suit each individual interviewed. The interviewer must be a skilled questioner as well as a skilled listener. Considering the balance between the
consistency of interview questions and differences in teaching contexts, the researcher developed core questions in advance but adapted the questions for each interviewee.

Another purpose of the telephone/email interview was to discuss the management of classroom observation and post-interview. The negotiation of observation and interview time was an important part of the schedule management of the investigation. Normally, a teacher spends four to five periods covering one teaching module of a textbook, including vocabulary, grammar, passage explanation and exercises. The period to be observed was decided by the participants on the basis of convenience and which lesson they thought might best embody their thinking about teaching culture. In addition, exams play a significant role in the teaching plan of the participants. There are normally three exams in a 20-week semester, namely, monthly exams, mid-term exams and final exams. Other than these exams, frequent quizzes and exercises occupy lesson time. Once the class to be observed was decided, the researcher viewed the relevant teaching materials and adapted interview questions before proceeding with observation and interview.

The advantages offered by telephone/email interviews in this study were high efficiency and flexibility. Participants were free to choose whichever form they preferred or found to be convenient. The researcher transcribed the telephone interviews, reviewed the transcripts and rang the participants to ascertain whether she had correctly interpreted their responses. Email exchanges further facilitated this process as the responses were in writing. In addition, the telephone/email interviews functioned as an effective induction for the face-to-face interview. Basic information about the purpose of the research project
and the interviews and about the researcher herself could be easily provided. This communication not only enhanced the efficiency of the fact-to-face interview, but also, and more importantly, conveyed the message that the researcher took the interview seriously, appreciated the participants’ cooperation and respected the rights and feelings of each participant. This established a good rapport between the participants and the researcher before the post-interview.

The post-interviews were conducted face-to-face on the day following the classroom observation. They varied in length from 30 minutes to one hour, depending on how much the participants had said in their telephone/email interviews. This interview included two chunks of content. Firstly, questions developed from individuals’ telephone/email interviews were posed to the participants. Typical questions are listed in Table 4.2. Many interviewees said they mainly dealt with culture teaching in the “Cultural corner” section of the textbook. This question (question #1) was added to the post-interview. Many interviewees talked about exams hindering culture teaching. Many of them agreed that recent exams showed a tendency to test pragmatic use of English. This question (question #2) was brought into the post-interview, and posed, in particular, to those interviewees who did not mention exams in the telephone/email interview. Peer support in culture teaching seemed to be a critical concern reflected in the questionnaire and telephone/email interview, so two relevant questions (question #3 and #4) were added to the post-interview. It was found that teachers who attended textbook training and those who did not presented different opinions on the cultural dimension of the textbook. This question (question #5) was raised with all interviewees in the post-interview.
Table 4.2 Additional themes and questions in the main interview developed from the questionnaire items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture teaching</td>
<td>1. How do you deal with ‘Cultural corner’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Recent exams showed the tendency of pragmatic use of English. How do you deal with this tendency?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. In what way do teachers discuss culture teaching?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. What do you think of your disadvantages and advantages in culture teaching, being a teacher who has the same linguistic and cultural background as the students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The textbook</td>
<td>5. Did you receive any training before using this textbook? What do you think of the training, in particular, of the cultural dimension?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, the post-interview involved the participants explaining their teaching practices by using the technique of stimulated recall. According to Gass and Mackey (2000, p1), stimulated recall is one subset of a range of introspective methods that represent a means of eliciting data about thought processes involved in carrying out a task or activity. The assumption underlying introspection is that it is possible to observe internal processes in much the same way as one can observe external real-world events. Another assumption is that humans have access to their internal thought processes at some level and can verbalise those processes.

Shulman (1986, p.23) notes that to understand adequately the choices teachers make in classrooms, the grounds for their decisions and judgments about pupils, and the cognitive
processes through which they select and sequence the actions they have learned to take while teaching, we must study their thought processes before, during, and after teaching. According to Gass and Mackey (2000, p.17), stimulated recall methodology can be used to prompt participants to recall thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event. It is assumed that some tangible (perhaps visual or aural) reminder of an event will stimulate recall of the mental processes in operation during the event itself. In other words, the theoretical foundation for stimulated recall relies on an information-processing approach whereby the use of and access to memory structures are enhanced, if not guaranteed, by a prompt that aids in the recall of information.

Before the classroom observation, each participant was required to provide the researcher with a copy of the lesson plan. The researcher then entered the classroom with the participant to observe his/her class. The lesson was videotaped. The researcher took notes in class. The researcher had three reasons for conducting the stimulated recall next day rather than immediately after the observation. Firstly, the pilot study showed that interview time could not be too long if it was not to be interrupted. Secondly, the researcher needed time to review the video and observation notes in order to select interview segments as stimuli and to address individual interview questions. As suggested by Gass and Mackey (2000, p.57), a detailed protocol helps the researcher to anticipate problems in advance while also acting as a checklist for the many variables and factors the researcher needs to consider and balance while carrying out the procedure. Finally, the researcher intended to give participants time to reflect on their classroom behaviour before the interview. Bloom (cited in Gass & Mackey 2000, p.17) found that if the recalls
were prompted a short period of time after the event (generally 48 hours), recall was 95% accurate. Bloom also notes that accuracy declined as a function of the intervening time between the event and the recall. Hence, Bloom makes the assumption that the recall of one’s own private, conscious thoughts approximates the recall of the overt, observable events.

When conducting the stimulated recall, the researcher played the videotape for the participant and paused at the selected segments. Specific questions were posed to the participant after he/she watched each segment. However, slight variations were made to suit different individuals and their teaching content. Also, participants were encouraged to pause at any particular segment to recall their thoughts at the time when the original task was undertaken. These recall sessions were voice recorded for coding and analysis. Chapter five will present the findings of the interviews.

4.3.4 Classroom observation

Other than the questionnaire and the interview, this study also employed observation to collect information and validate data. Classroom observation provides the opportunity to gather live data from live situations (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 305), that is, from what was actually happening in the classroom. Observation has been characterised as the fundamental base of all research methods in the social and behavioural sciences (Adler & Adler, 1994, p.389). Even studies based on direct interviews employ observational techniques to note body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the participants being interviewed. Social scientists are observers of both human
activities and of the physical settings in which such activities take place (Angrosino & de Pérez, 2000, p.673).

As described in the sub-section with the tile of sub-sample (section 4.2), fourteen teachers were invited to participate into the classroom observation and interview. Each of the fourteen teachers was videoed for one class period which was 45 minutes. As described in section 4.3.3, the researcher conducted interviews with these 14 teachers before she went to their classrooms to video their classes. The interview before the classroom observation focussed on the responses of the teachers to the questionnaire which enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of the teachers’ thinking about English instruction and culture teaching. The teachers were asked to provide the researcher with teaching plans for the classes to be observed so that the researcher could have an idea about the teaching content and teaching methods. On the basis of the teaching plans and the videos, every one of the 14 teachers was interviewed for the stimulated recall. The researcher asked the participants to choose the class for observation that they thought could illustrate their ideas about culture teaching. In addition, as can be seen from the description of Chinese high school teaching in Section 3.1, exams play a large part in school teaching, so much class teaching time is devoted to exams and exam preparations. It could be argued that a single class may be insufficient to give a good representation of teachers’ beliefs and behaviours. However, due to constraints in the participants’ teaching arrangements only one class per participant was observed.
The purpose of using observation in this study was two-fold. Firstly, observation gave the researcher access to the general practices of culture teaching used by the participants. Secondly, classroom observation helped to compare the real situation of what participants claimed to think and what they actually practised. Observation in this study was used in conjunction with the interviews. The classroom observation was conducted on the 14 teachers after the pre-interview and before the post-interview. That is, the researcher observed classes and took notes as well as videotaping the session. Notes were taken in a standard format. The format was developed on the basis of Shulman’s categories of teacher’s knowledge and Chism’s peer observation format (2007, p.105; pp.110-116). The notes taken by the researcher served as insights for formulating interview questions for the stimulated recall and as a record of the session so she could compare the participant’s behaviour and espoused thoughts.

4.4 Data analysis, triangulation and methodological limitations

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p.6), qualitative researchers deal with multiple, socially constructed realities or qualities that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables. They regard their research task as coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them. To elicit their interpretations, the researchers must gain access to the participants’ multiple perspectives. Their study designs, therefore, generally focus on in-depth, long-term interaction with relevant participants in one or several sites. The researcher becomes the main research instrument as he or she observes, asks questions, and interacts with research participants. The researcher in this study committed herself to logic and methods of triangulation.
throughout the study. Basically, this process involved formulating and deconstructing the research questions, contextualising instances, exploring and capturing information, examining context and interpreting information and presenting an interpretive analysis.

The data collected using the three investigation instruments were both qualitative and quantitative, thus requiring the researcher to conduct both discourse analysis and relevant quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis in this study mainly referred to the analysis of the closed questions of the questionnaire. The closed questions used a Likert-type scale to investigate the participants’ opinions on questions related to the teaching of culture. The data obtained were analysed using the SPSS program. Percentages of the participants’ opinions on the closed questions were generated by the SPSS program and represented in graphs. These individual and situational variables were treated as demographic predictors and their effect on teachers’ attitudes examined in relation to each of six Likert-type scale questions by performing a series of Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs) to examine scale scores, followed by a series of Kruskal-Wallis Tests (KW tests) to examine the items comprising those scale scores. In addition, ANOVA tests were conducted to examine the factors that would influence the participants’ attitudes through the questionnaire. In addition to the application of the SPSS program, some figures related to the participants’ personal profiles were included and calculated manually.

In addition to the quantitative data, large amounts of the data collected were words expressed by the participants through the interviews before and after the classroom observation. According to Denzin (1989, p.246), single-method studies are no longer
defensible in the social sciences. A multi-method approach facilitates a holistic understanding of the research problem. In fact, research increasingly shows that quantitative and qualitative approaches are complementary in providing a theoretical framework, validating data, interpreting relationships and deciphering puzzling responses, etc. (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Denzin, 1989; Eisner, 1981; Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Howe, 1988;). For example, what do participants mean when they select “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree”, “frequently” or “seldom” as a response to some items in the questionnaire? Probing in depth with the sub-samples who explained what they meant when they disagreed or agreed may indicate whether different participants perceived the question in reasonably similar terms, as well as what underpinned their reactions to it. To give another example, what participants said in interviews before and after classroom observation could be compared with their videoed behaviour in class. The researcher took data analysis into consideration when planning for data collection. This consideration was based on two questions suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p.77): (1) what needs to be done with the data when they have been collected and how will they be processed and analysed? And (2) how will the results of the analysis be verified, cross-checked and validated?

Discourse analysis was used to report the participants’ words. The questions that were asked in the interviews were strategically designed based on the research questions and the researchers’ knowledge about the participants’ teaching situations. The understanding of culture and culture teaching were the core questions in the interviews. The questions generated by these two core questions were talked about between the researchers and the
participants. The analysis was conducted on the basis of the themes that were generated from the responses of the participants. In the interviews, participants were asked only one question regarding their understanding of the concept of culture, namely, “What do you think culture is?” This question played a preliminary role in the development of the research questions of this study. This question provided a point of departure for participants to elucidate their understandings about the concept of culture and provided an important basis for the researcher’s understanding and analysis of the teachers’ attitudes towards culture teaching.

What teachers think culture teaching is was a core question leading in the exploration of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about this area of teaching content. This question assisted the investigation of the participants’ teaching contexts. It would not have been helpful to try and gain in-depth insights by simply posing this question to teachers. Based on China’s teaching reality and the critical review of the relevant literature, the researcher designed research questions related to this core question. More questions were developed on themes that emerged from answers provided in the pilot study and the main questionnaire. These questions were brought into the main interview after being sorted and integrated. New themes appeared from the participants’ responses. These themes were synthesised into three questions that will be presented in detail in Chapter Five.

Concerns about data triangulation were addressed in the process of designing and conducting the investigation. Firstly, the questionnaire was written in English, as the linguistic competence of the participants would be sufficiently high for reading and
answering the questionnaires in English. However, the interviews were conducted in Chinese as the researcher did not want the participants’ English speaking ability to hinder the expression of their ideas. It is a well known fact that English speaking ability is generally much lower than reading ability for Chinese English learners, including teachers. Apart from encouraging teachers to express their ideas freely, the researcher wanted to verify teachers’ understanding and their responses to the questionnaire by comparing their responses to the questionnaires with their responses to the interview questions. The participants’ responses to the interview questions were tape-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were sent to the interviewed participants to check, thus enhancing the reliability of the data. In addition, the researcher kept in contact with the participants for any information she needed in the process of data analysis, such as the analysis of the categorising of the culture content of the textbook as detailed on p.175 of this thesis. Thus, the researcher stayed in contact with the participants throughout the study, which enhances what is traditionally defined as “external validity” (Merriam, 1998, p. 164).

Despite the researcher’s attempts to collect valid and reliable data, methodological limitations can still be identified. Due to the restricted time that participants gave the researcher to conduct the interviews and classroom observations, the data collected were not as thick as this type of belief/attitude investigation requires. As described in Section 4.3.4, only one class per participant was observed. To compensate for this weakness, the researcher kept in touch with the observed teachers via email and phone during the
processes of interview transcriptions, data analysis and writing up of the thesis. However, future studies should increase the number of observations, in order to obtain thick data.

4.5 Summary

This chapter presented a detailed account of the research methods employed in this study. Firstly, this chapter justified the paradigm of this study as an interpretative study. Secondly, accounts of participant recruitment were provided. Thirdly, the researcher’s role in this study and the investigation was made clear. Fourthly, instrumentation was described. Finally, this chapter explained the issue of data analysis and triangulation and identified the limitation of this study.

After clarifying the research questions of this study and developing the theoretical framework, this study employed multiple instruments in collecting data; these instruments were complementary. Each instrument contributed to building a whole picture of the phenomenon being studied. Examination of data collected from these instruments enhanced the trustworthiness of this study. Also, analysis of these data became an interesting and meaningful act, thus making the interpretative task more significant and more solid.
Chapter 5 Findings

5.0 Introduction

This chapter reports the results of the data collected in the main study using the instruments of questionnaire, interview and classroom observation. Based on the research questions, data are analysed and findings are presented. Section 5.1 presents the data and findings of the participants’ answers to the 22 questions in the questionnaire. Section 5.2 deals with the data drawn from the classroom observation and interviews. Section 5.3 concludes this chapter.

5.1 Data from the questionnaire

As explained in the introduction to the research methodology in Chapter Four, both the pilot study and the main study involved the instrument of questionnaire. The pilot questionnaire provided a solid foundation for the main questionnaire, enabling the researcher to make improvements and to draw opinions from the participants. The following presentation of the data results relates only to the main questionnaire. Firstly, the questionnaire investigated the participants’ personal background as it relates to the research questions. Secondly, the questionnaire included questions seeking to identify teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching. Thirdly, it included questions investigating teachers’ understanding of the account of the cultural dimension in the Standard and of the presentation of the cultural dimension in the textbook. Accordingly, the analysis and presentation of the data are conducted in this sequence.
The questionnaire consists of three sections and 22 questions (Appendix 4). Section one (Questions 1 to 10) investigates the participants’ personal background, including their gender, age, education qualification, school in which they teach, and overseas experience. Section two (Questions 11 to 18) investigates the participants’ attitudes and beliefs about English teaching, culture teaching and the situation of their culture teaching activities. Section three (Questions 19 to 22) investigates what participants think of the account of the cultural dimension in the Standard and the presentation of culture in the textbook. The data analysis is conducted in two parts. The first part (5.1.1) presents the result for every question responded to by the whole group of participants and reveals the general trend of their attitudes. The second part (5.1.2) examines the results in terms of the demographic profile of the participants using variables of gender, age, educational qualification, school in which they teach and overseas experience. This part examines factors influencing the participants’ attitudes.

5.1.1 Results of the whole group of 66 teachers

As illustrated in Figure 5.1, the 66 participants included 11 (16.7%) male teachers and 55 (83.3%) female teachers. Their average age was 37, with 15 (22.7%) teachers above the age of 37 and 51 (77.3%) teachers below the age of 37. The average number of teaching years was 9.76 years, with a range of 1–32 years.
Twenty-two teachers (one-third of the 66 participants) had been to English speaking countries, namely Australia, Canada, the UK and the US, either for sight-seeing or to attend short-term courses. The length of their courses and stay in these countries varied according to the different projects they were sent on. The most common programs were between four and six weeks in duration and involved teaching methodology courses. The details are shown in Table 5.1.

The work files of the participants and the information about their personal background played an important role in subsequent data gathering and analysis. For instance, the information on overseas experience triggered questions in the follow-up qualitative interviews with the sub-sample participants, such as a question about the impact their overseas experience had had on their culture teaching. The participants were from different generations/age groups and had experienced different stages of China’s social
development, thus raising the question of whether the differences in their ways of thinking about and their practice of English teaching and culture teaching are due to age differences.

Table 5.1 Participants with overseas experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To country</th>
<th>Stay time (weeks)</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Activities abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sight-seeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Attending courses in teaching methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Attending courses in teacher training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Working in boarding schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sight-seeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Attending courses in teaching methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attending courses in teaching methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Working in boarding schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Attending courses in teaching methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teaching Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sight-seeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Attending courses in teaching methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Attending courses in TESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teaching Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section two (Questions 11-18) of the questionnaire investigated participants’ thinking and practice regarding culture teaching. Question 11 investigated the participants’ thinking concerning the objectives of culture teaching. The participants were asked to
rate each question on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The purpose of eliciting this information was to find out what the participants considered to be the objectives of culture teaching. The objectives used in this question were mostly the statements in the Standard (Section 3.4), except for objectives two and five.

While learning for exams was not referred to in the Standard, four out of the five pilot interviewees mentioned the problem of exams. So teaching culture for exams was added to this question in the main questionnaire as objective two. In terms of developing open mindedness in students, the Standard did not particularly refer to having an open mind to foreign culture, but rather to an open world view. The Standard also stated the need to develop in students a tolerant attitude towards and respect for foreign cultures. In the pilot questionnaire, the issue of attitude to foreign culture was stated as ”To develop students’ respect and tolerant attitude towards foreign culture”. Of the 45 participants in the pilot questionnaire who answered this question, 39 (86.7%) chose “strongly agree” and three chose “agree”. The tendency was so clear that the researcher was convinced that it was a widely accepted attitude towards foreign culture for which the teachers thought the teaching of culture to be aiming. However, one of the five pilot interviewees mentioned the need to develop in students’ an open mind to foreign culture. This answer inspired the researcher to change this question in the main questionnaire to “To develop students’ open mind to foreign culture”. The reason for the change was that the researcher wanted to see whether the change in the words from “respect and tolerant attitude” to “open mind” resulted in different answers. This is objective five. Apart from objectives two and five, the remaining objectives were explicitly stated in the Standard
and remained unchanged from the pilot to the main questionnaire. The results of the responses are shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Percent of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing (Percent agreement) with each of seven statements.

As illustrated in Figure 5.2, participants were most likely to agree (70.8%) that they sought to acquire a level of English proficiency that would allow them to use it in their life. They were least likely to agree (24.6%) that they sought to promote an open mind towards foreign culture.
Question 12 was a yes/no question: Do you integrate any dimensions of the target culture into English teaching? It showed that five out of the 66 participants did not integrate a cultural dimension into their English teaching. The five participants who ticked “no” in this question were all from the ordinary schools. One participant was a male teacher. Two participants were younger than 37. One held a Bachelor’s degree. Four participants did not have overseas experience. Also none of these five participants answered questions 13, 14, 16 and 17.

Question 13 asked the participants to indicate the frequency with which they presented each of the six cultural dimensions in their teaching practice\(^6\). The cultural dimensions that were listed in this question were mainly sourced from the objectives of cultural awareness as defined in the Standard. Also the researcher’s contacts teaching in high schools provided suggestions on the basis of their understanding of culture and their teaching contexts. All the dimensions referred to are those of the target culture(s). The results are illustrated in Figure 5.3 which indicates that participants were most likely to report geography and history as a high frequency cultural dimension (100%). In contrast, less than 50% reported values, beliefs and behaviour, traditions and customs, or society, politics and religion as high frequency cultural dimensions. As can be seen from the results, the main focus of culture teaching was on culture as product rather than process.

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\(^6\) Frequency in the study questionnaire is indicated as “frequently”, “often”, “sometimes” and “seldom” (or “never”). In the Likert scales “often” and “frequently” are in fact quite similar in terms of the dimension expressed, but the choice to use frequently vs. often and sometimes vs. seldom was based on contextual considerations, that is, the kinds of questions being asked. In the context of this study, the frequency was examined from the participants’ perspective rather than the researcher’s.
This finding needed to be verified and clarified through the analysis of the data collected from the interviews and classroom observations.

Figure 5.3 Percent of participants responding “sometimes” or “frequently” (Percent higher frequency) to each of six cultural dimensions

With the intention of eliciting the correlation between teachers’ practices and their familiarity with these cultural dimensions, question 14 asked the participants to rate the same six dimensions on a scale ranging from “not at all” to “very familiar”. As illustrated in Figure 5.4, participants were most likely to report being familiar or very familiar (Percent familiarity) with the cultural dimension of geography and history. In contrast, less than 50% reported being familiar or very familiar with tradition and custom. The
results of this question were consistent with the results of Question 13, that is, the cultural dimensions that the participants dealt with frequently were generally the dimensions that they felt they were familiar with.

Figure 5.4 Percent of participants responding “familiar” or “very familiar” (Percent familiarity) to each of the six cultural dimensions

Following this question about familiarity with the cultural dimensions was an open-ended response question (question 15): How do you update your cultural knowledge?
The researcher predicted when designing this question that this open question would be a simple way to enlist potential answers, rather than to fully recognise teachers’ sources of cultural knowledge. However, the findings were expected to facilitate the generation of themes for further investigation and analysis. Fifty-five participants submitted their answers.

With the help of a KWIC Concordance program, the frequency of ways of updating cultural knowledge was generated. The results are shown in Table 5.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of updating cultural knowledge (keyword)</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie/film/DVD/Video</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreigners/native speakers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course/college study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio/ VOA &amp; BBC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ book</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers with overseas experience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was found that books, the Internet, movies and magazines are the most common ways for the teachers to gain cultural knowledge. These answers provided a general overview but were still insufficient for the researcher to reach any conclusion. The participants were again asked to clarify their answers to this question in the interviews.
Following the inquiry into the teaching of cultural dimensions, question 16 investigated which English culture participants usually deal with. The first intention of this question was to find out what cultural representations were included in the textbooks as they serve as the main resource for culture teaching. The second intention of this question was to find out if participants included Chinese culture when they dealt with target cultures and how often they included it. The motivation for this question stemmed from the Standard, which states that one of the objectives of culture teaching is to develop students’ awareness of Chinese culture and Chinese identity. As illustrated in Figure 5.5, participants’ textbooks most frequently dealt with representations of American (85%), Australian (85%) and NZ (79%) cultures. The textbooks much less frequently dealt with representations of Chinese (25%), Canadian (28%) or British (18%) cultures. The finding that Chinese culture was less frequently included as part of culture teaching content was unexpected, as it contradicts the objectives listed in the Standard. This finding needed to be verified through the analysis of the interview data.
Figure 5.5 Percent of participants responding “often” or “frequently” (Percent high frequency) to dealing with each of six cultures

Question 17 asked the participants about cultural teaching activities. These activities were listed on the basis of the researcher’s knowledge about China’s conventional classroom activities and her consultation with contacts working in high schools. As illustrated in Figure 5.6, participants were most likely to report the Internet (71%) and least likely to report direct communication with native speakers (23%) or CDROMs, videos and movies (33%). In what ways that the participants used these activities and what caused them to choose the activities deserved investigation and the results of their answers will be presented in the data findings of the interview in Section 5.2.
Figure 5.6 Percent of participants responding “often” or “frequently” (Percent high frequency) to dealing with each of six cultural activities

In addition to this closed response question, the questionnaire asked the participants to list activities that they use but which were not included in the closed question (question 18). Only seven out of the 66 participants offered answers and these are listed below:

- I tried to find time in class for my students to practise situational dialogues;
- I asked my students to do readings about the differences between Eastern and Western cultures. My students often presented problems about their understanding of cultural difference in their writing and translation practice. These were good opportunities for me to teach culture.
I showed my students the photos and videos I took overseas and shared with them interesting stories I heard.

I recommended Western stories for my students to read. The stories I chose were within the scope of their linguistic and cognitive ability, and I believed they would be interested.

I encouraged my students to read more on certain topics in the textbooks.

I printed reading materials so my students could do extensive reading in class. The materials were usually related to certain topics we studied in the textbooks.

I sometimes played English songs and gave students brief introductions regarding the background, the singer and the content of the songs.

As can be seen from Figure 5.6, the Internet was the most frequently used activity according to the participants, followed by discussion and debate and CD-Rom, video and movie. Direct communication with native speakers and role-plays were the least frequently used activities. Similar frequencies were reported with all other activities. The seven participants who responded to the open question focussed on encouraging their students to have more access to reading and listening materials to expand their cultural knowledge. These responses had to be verified and clarified through the interviews and classroom observations.

Section three consists of four questions. Questions 19 and 20 asked participants what textbook and teachers’ book they were using. The participants gave the same reply and confirmed the reality that all participants were using New Standard English as the textbook together with the matching teachers’ book (published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press). Question 21 inquired about participant attitudes towards the account of culture teaching in the Standard. Like Question 11, this question involves
rating attitudes on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). As illustrated in Figure 5.7, participants were most likely to agree (88%) that it is a correct decision to explicitly state that culture is a content teaching area. They were least likely to agree (33%) that the Standard provides sufficient instructions for them to practise culture teaching. These results seemed contradictory. It would be reasonable that the Standard should have provided teachers with sufficient instruction to practise culture teaching, given that it is explicitly stated in the Standard that culture teaching is a part of the teaching content. If this contradiction exists, it was possible that the Standard failed to offer sufficient information about culture teaching, or that teachers failed to comprehend the information offered in the Standard. In fact, the answer was obtained through the interview data and the result will be presented in Section 5.2.

The textbooks being used by the participants were designed to match the requirements of the educational reform and the Standard. Question 22 investigated participants’ attitudes to the presentation of culture in the textbook by way of Likert-type scaling. As illustrated in Figure 5.8, participants were most likely to express agreement (60.5%: somewhat or strongly agree) that the cultural content in the textbook is useful for developing students’ positive attitudes and tolerance to foreign cultures. They were least likely to agree (27.3%) that the textbook presents sufficient Chinese culture. This result was consistent with the finding of Question 16 that Chinese culture was much less touched upon.
Figure 5.7 Percent of participants responding that they somewhat or strongly agree (Percent agreement) with seven accounts of teaching in the Standard.
Figure 5.8 Percent of participants responding that they somewhat or strongly agree (Percent agreement) with culture presentation of the textbooks

15.8

5.1.2 Variables influencing the participants’ attitudes

The literature on the concept of attitude reviewed in Section 2.3 showed that people’s attitude towards the same object may vary according to their individual and situational differences. In this questionnaire analysis, the differences are embodied in the group. These individual and situational variables are treated by the researcher as demographic predictors and their effect on the teachers’ attitudes examined in relation to each of seven scales (Questions 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 21 & 22) by performing a series of Analysis of
Variance (ANOVARs) to examine scale scores, followed by a series of Kruskal-Wallis Tests (KW tests) to examine the items comprising those scale scores.

Of the seven sets of scalable items, all but one could be used to form a scale. The Cronbach’s Alpha statistic for Question 22 (the participants’ attitudes toward the cultural content of the textbooks) was low enough to indicate that these items did not form a scale. In the case of Question 11, the items could be scaled after excluding items 5 & 6. Items were added and then divided by the number of items to produce average scale scores.

The effect of demographic predictors including gender, age, educational qualification, and whether the participant had overseas experience was examined in relation to each of the six scale scores by performing a series of univariate analyses of variance (ANOVARs).

ANOVAR tests

Univariate analyses were undertaken because, while multivariate analyses would have been more economical, these outcome variables were not highly correlated. A Bonferonni family-wise correction needs to be made when conducting multiple analyses such that the overall probability at which one decides that the group difference is statistically significant remains set at, say, 0.05. Based on that, and with only statistically significant outcomes with p<.009 (0.05/6=0.009) reported, it turned out that responses to the Question 17 scale score are predicted by overseas experience (F=12.608(1,59),p=0.001) such that those with overseas experience responded more positively.
As illustrated in Figure 5.9, the main effect for type of school predicted scores at a statistically significant level (p<0.009) for all scale scores except Question 22 such that participants at key schools obtained higher scores than those at ordinary schools. The result implied that the type of school is a predominant influencing factor on teachers’ thinking about culture teaching.

Figure 5.9. Mean scales scores (standard errors shown) by type of school (key, ordinary)

Kruskal-Wallis tests

A series of Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric tests were conducted to assess the extent to which gender, age group, educational qualifications, type of school and overseas
experience predicted responses to the five statements listed as part of Question 20 (as previously, significance was set as less than p=.009).

Gender and age group do not predict responses to any of the Question 21 items at statistically significant levels. However educational qualifications predict responses to Question 21_2 (The explanations about culture teaching in the Standard are clear and sufficient) such that those with higher educational qualifications on average responded more positively to this statement. Also, type of school predicted the positivity of responses to Question 21_2 and Question 21_3 such that those in key schools responded more positively to these statements. Finally, overseas experience predicted the response to Question 21_2 such that those with overseas experience responded more positively to this statement.

After a Bonferronni family-wise correction was made such that only statistically significant outcomes with p<.009 (0.05/6=0.009) were reported, the variables of ‘educational qualification’, ‘overseas experience’ and ‘school where they teach’ were found to predict responses to some of the items investigated in the questionnaire but the variables of gender and age did not influence responses to any of the questions. Also, educational qualification and overseas experience were found to predict responses to Question 21_2. (The explanations about culture teaching in the Standard are clear and sufficient) such that those with higher educational qualifications and overseas experience on average responded more positively to this statement. Overseas experience was found to predict responses to Question 17_1 & 3 (Role-play & discussion/debate as culture
teaching activities) such that those teachers with overseas experience tended to report their use of these activities more often than those without overseas experience.

The variable of ‘school where they teach’ was found to predict positive responses to nine items, as shown in Table 5.3. More specifically, compared to other English teaching objectives, teachers from key schools appeared to hold more favourable attitudes towards the development of their students’ interest in learning English, their pragmatic use of English and the development of cross-disciplinary skills and abilities. In teaching culture, daily life and routine were the content most frequently dealt with by the teachers from key schools. In addition, Chinese culture was given a great deal of attention by this group of teachers. In relation to culture teaching activities, teachers from key schools tended to use more role-play and to have more opportunities to have native English speakers communicate with their students than those teachers from ordinary schools. Finally, the teachers from key schools seemed to respond more positively towards the statement ‘Explanations about culture teaching in the Standard are clear and sufficient’. These outcomes of the KW analysis illustrated the influence of the variables on the teachers’ attitudes and prompted the researcher to carry out verification through analysis of interviews and classroom observations.
Table 5.3 The items predicted at a statistically significant level by ‘school where they teach’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Content of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English teaching objectives</td>
<td>Q11_1</td>
<td>To motivate my students to learn English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q11_3</td>
<td>To enhance students’ English language proficiency so they can use English pragmatically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q11_7</td>
<td>To acquire skills such as observing, memorising, imagining and thinking critically etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching of the cultural dimensions</td>
<td>Q13_3</td>
<td>Daily life &amp; routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with cultures of main English speaking countries and Chinese culture</td>
<td>Q16_6</td>
<td>Chinese culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture teaching activities</td>
<td>Q17_1</td>
<td>Role-play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q17_2</td>
<td>Direct communication with native English speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes towards the account of culture teaching in the Standard</td>
<td>Q20-2</td>
<td>The explanations about culture teaching goals in the Standard are clear and sufficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q20-3</td>
<td>The objectives of cultural awareness are easy to understand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the questionnaire data analysis, participants tended to agree with the integration of culture teaching into English instruction, and most participants claimed that they taught culture in their English classrooms. The cultural content areas that the participants mainly dealt with tended to be cultural products such as geography, history, daily life and literature and arts. It seemed that culture as process was not paid much attention by the participants. However, this finding had to be verified with the follow up interview and classroom observation data analysis.
It can been seen that the participants from the key schools were more positive about culture teaching and applied various methods to teach culture than those from the ordinary schools. Apart from the type of school, overseas experience was also an identified factor influencing the participants’ attitude to culture teaching and the application of teaching methods.

5.2 Data from the interview and classroom observation

The data collection of this study applied multiple instruments. The questionnaire was mainly quantitative, which provided, in Glesne & Peshkin’s terms, observable and measureable facts (1992, p.5). The qualitative investigation with the participants was carried out through classroom observations and interviews. The interviews and classroom observations were conducted with 14 participants. As explained in Chapter 4, section 4.2, the 14 participants were invited on the basis of two considerations. Firstly, the distribution of different types of schools and the districts in which they are located were considered (see Table 4.1 in Chapter 4). The second consideration was teachers’ interest in this project and their preparedness to consent to participating in the in-depth investigation. The demography of the 14 participants is shown in Figure 5.10 below.
After selecting teachers and obtaining their consent, the researcher maintained contact with these participants throughout the in-depth data collection and analysis process. This issue is related to data collection methods, and is explained in detail in Chapter 4, section 4.3. The answers of the 14 participants to the questions in the questionnaire were recorded in the profiles that the researcher had set up for individual participants before the interviews. The profiles were referred to by the researcher and the participants during the telephone/face-to-face interviews and the classroom observations. The interview questions were centred on the research questions of this thesis, such as the participants’ understanding of the concept of culture and of culture teaching in high school English education. Related topics in the questionnaire were integrated into discussions about culture and culture teaching. In this way, the participants’ responses to the items in the questions were clarified, their teaching practices observed and their teaching environments revealed.
The interviews were conducted in Chinese, the participants’ native language, in order to maximise the teachers’ freedom of expression. Their responses were recorded, transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. When conducting the discourse analysis of the transcripts, main themes were identified. These themes were then organised according to the research questions. Based on the categorised themes, findings are presented by combining the researcher’s general statements and the quotes from the interviewees. The quotes are provided in order to illustrate the influences that certain variables had on the teachers’ attitudes and beliefs. The general statements served the purpose of indicating themes found in particular data. Furthermore, the general statements presented the researcher’s thinking about particular content in the transcribed data and served as the clues for the later data interpretation and discussion. In Hatch’s words (2002, p.159), expressing findings in a generalised way provides a syntactic device for ensuring that what has been found can be communicated to others. At the same time, according to Gillham (2000, p.11), one positive feature of the interview is the richness and vividness of the material it provides. Gillham (p.11) also notes that general statements, no matter how well written, can convey less, and with less impact, than a direct quotation from an interview. Therefore, the participants’ illustrative quotes and the researcher’s generalisations will appear interactively in the presentation of the findings from the qualitative data of this study.

Section 5.2.1 reports what participants think of the concept of culture and culture teaching in English teaching. Section 5.2.2 presents the data about the teachers’ thinking about the account of the cultural dimension in the Standard and the cultural presentation
of the textbooks. Section 5.2.3 reveals the researcher’s findings on the relationship between teachers’ responses to the investigation and their observed classroom practice in terms of culture teaching. Section 5.2.4 presents the participants’ opinions concerning their development as teachers of culture. Section 5.3 summarises the chapter.

5.2.1 Participants’ thinking about culture and culture teaching

Culture

In the teachers’ responses to the understanding of the concept of culture, some common features of culture were mentioned, for example, that culture is inclusive and that culture is developed in a particular group of people. Some participants listed particular aspects of culture. Cultural aspects such as traditions, customs, geography, history and literature were largely mentioned by the participants. None of the participants related culture to human communication and cultural communication or any dynamic features of culture but rather perceived culture as something static. The responses to this question from the participants are consistent with the findings from the questionnaire that culture as process did not receive much attention from the participants.

Culture teaching

What teachers think culture teaching is was a core question leading in the exploration of teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about this area of teaching content. Based on China’s teaching reality and the critical review of the relevant literature, the researcher designed research questions related to this core question. More questions were developed on themes that emerged from answers provided in the pilot study and the main questionnaire.
These questions were brought into the main interview after being sorted and integrated. New themes appeared from interview answers. These themes were synthesised into the following three questions:

- Why integrate culture into English teaching?
- Which culture should be integrated?
- What activities should be used?

*Why integrate culture into English teaching*

The 14 participants all agreed in their responses to the questionnaire that they taught culture in English teaching. When interviewed, they revealed their different thoughts as to why they teach culture. Six of the 14 participants’ answers focused on the development of students’ appreciation of and respect for other cultures. The six participants who claimed this focus differed in age, educational qualification and overseas experience, but five of them shared one characteristic: they worked in key schools. This finding implies that the teachers teaching in key schools tended to take into consideration the development of students’ appreciation and respect for other cultures in their English teaching more than their counterparts teaching in ordinary schools. For them, English teaching included a commitment to developing students’ cultural awareness.

These five teachers from the key schools also expressed a similar idea that culture teaching was a part of humanistic education and a way to develop students’ cultural awareness both of foreign culture and native culture. Their answers revealed a sense of
commitment, as educators, to the young people they were educating. It was found that the teachers were attempting to cultivate in students a global view by teaching and comparing foreign and native cultures. These participants emphasised the significant role of culture teaching in the process of improving and sharpening students’ cultural thinking ability, which would benefit their lifelong autonomous learning. One of the five participants said that English teaching should develop students’ cultural understandings, with the aim of broadening their perspective and sharpening their thinking. Another participant related culture teaching to humanistic education by saying that the comparison and appreciation of cultures would enable students to improve their personal quality, which should be the core of humanistic education to which teachers need to commit. These thoughts (above) about English/culture teaching in fact are consistent with what the Standard said about the ultimate goal of English instruction and the goal of culture teaching advocated by many scholars, as discussed in Section 2.2.

It is noticeable that, regardless of their age, or whether they have a Master’s degree, all five teachers teach in key schools and have overseas experience. It also impressed the researcher that these teachers showed significant enthusiasm for talking about culture teaching. The two who teach in municipal key schools emphatically stated that developing students’ cross-cultural communicative competence is the most important objective of their English teaching. They consider that culture teaching plays an important role in achieving the pragmatic goals of English teaching. This finding is consistent with that of the questionnaire data analysis that the participants from the key
schools presented more positive attitudes towards culture teaching. One of these teachers presented this point below.

The main purpose of learning English is to master the language as a tool. This tool helps students to acquire information and communicate in their future careers and studies. The pragmatic use of English should be the priority of teaching. Culture plays a significant role in pragmatic language learning and use.

Four of the 14 participants agreed on the importance of integrating culture into English teaching to help students develop cross-culture communicative competence, but they also mentioned that exams could not be ignored as one teaching goal, as one of the four participants presented this point below. These teachers varied in terms of gender, age, educational qualification, type of school and overseas experience.

Culture teaching should be integrated into English teaching. English teaching should not only be aiming at lifting students’ exam scores, but also at offering a tool for students to master and use in their future career and life. This tool enables students to access more knowledge and culture, and provides them with another channel of communication.

It is worth noting that although they stressed English as a tool for gaining information and for communication, these teachers used a “not only…but also…” structure when talking about this English teaching objective. This convinced the researcher that although these teachers attached significance to the teaching of English as a communicative tool,
they still rated this objective somewhat below the objective of lifting students’ test results. This teacher’s perspective was quite representative:

*Culture teaching facilitates the understanding of language and might provide the reading passages on the exam papers with a particular context, but I still feel the NEMT has tended to focus on the testing of students’ linguistic knowledge.*

All the participants agreed that English classes have advantages in teaching culture, because culture is related to language. They said that as English classes deal with both language and culture, they provide students with a different level of access to culture than other channels, such as other subjects or public media. The participants also said that language and culture can be mutually enhanced in the English class. However, there is a conflict between the short term goal of lifting students’ test results and the long term goal of developing students’ pragmatic use of the language according to the participants. This conflict affects teaching and creates a dilemma for the teachers in terms of dealing with teaching content and choosing teaching pedagogies. In fact, all the teachers mentioned this conflict, but their attitudes reflected different shades and degrees of concern. Most teachers agreed that culture teaching had a positive role to play in their English teaching. As one of the teachers said:

*I think that learning a language is not only about learning a language itself, but its culture as well. When language learning is boring, students won’t be interested in learning. When I teach them culture, my students can learn the language at the same*
time, that is to say, language teaching and culture teaching can be done at the same time.

Four of the 14 participants were adamantly of the opinion that culture teaching is of little use in their students in terms of helping them to understand language, as their students have very limited linguistic knowledge in terms of vocabulary and grammar. These four teachers differ in age, gender, educational qualification but they all teach in ordinary school and none of them has overseas experience. The impression the researcher received was that, for these teachers, culture teaching is not necessarily an essential and indispensable part of their English teaching. Two of these four teachers were frank about the emphasis they place on the objective of teaching English for exams. One teacher said:

*I think the main purpose of students’ learning English is for exams. It is sure that not every student would be using English in their later development and career. English is a compulsory school subject and the students have no choice but to learn and to take exams.*

Another teacher explained:

*The main task of English teachers in our school is to ask students to memorise vocabulary and drill sentences for the purpose of exams. Learning culture is too difficult for my students. They did not learn much culture in their previous years, so I have no idea where to start and how to practise it.*
As can be seen from the above excerpts, reflecting participants’ responses to culture teaching, the teachers from key schools appeared to have more favourable attitudes towards the teaching of culture than those from ordinary schools. In particular, the two teachers from the municipal key schools expressed strongly positive attitudes towards the development of their students’ pragmatic use of English and cultural awareness as the priorities of English teaching. Other teachers from the district key schools and some of the teachers from ordinary schools also held positive attitudes towards culture teaching, but they expressed different degrees of concern about the balance they were struggling to maintain between the long-term goal of communicative competence development and the short-term goal of improving their students’ linguistic abilities. Some of the teachers from ordinary schools actually expressed a negative attitude towards culture teaching and expressed doubts about their students’ linguistic proficiency and their own capacity to teach culture.

*What culture to integrate*

There are many ways of categorising culture depending on various definitions and features of this concept. The investigation of this study looked at culture in terms of target culture and Chinese culture, and the cultural dimensions listed as items in Question 13 in the main questionnaire. Target culture largely refers to the cultures of the main English speaking countries. The cultural dimensions used in the investigation embody culture as product as well as process.
Section 3.4 of this thesis gave a brief description of the textbook design as regards culture. As can be seen from the description, almost every module involves cultural content. The balance between the target culture and Chinese culture is noticeable. In other words, two reading passages in a particular module are provided so that one contains the target culture and the other contains Chinese culture. On other occasions, when reading passages in a particular module involve target culture, the suggested tasks tend to involve Chinese culture.

In order to determine the extent to which each of the cultures of the main English countries was covered in the textbook, the researcher read the content of these passages instead of just examining the titles and tasks. It was found that the majority of topics related to American culture. Topics relating to Australian culture were next in prevalence. Canada and New Zealand were rarely involved in the content of the reading passages. The weight that the textbooks placed on these different cultures and cultural dimensions was largely reflected in the participants’ responses in the questionnaire. Moreover, the responses gained verification in the interviews. All the participants agreed that they dealt with cultural varieties and dimensions according to the topics presented in the textbook.

Question 13 in the main questionnaire asked the teachers to indicate the frequencies with which the six cultural dimensions were presented in their teaching practice. The six dimensions are geography and history, traditions and customs, daily life and routine, literature and art, society, politics and religion, and values, beliefs and behaviour. For the purpose of examining the proportional presentation of these dimensions in the 48
modules, the researcher categorised the topics and tasks in the 48 modules. The categorisation was cross-checked with three participants through email and telephone. This exchange of ideas between the researcher and the three participants focussed mainly on negotiations regarding the overlapping dimensions for a particular module. The most apparent dimension for each module was the decision of the researcher. The results are presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Cultural dimensions in the 48 modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural dimensions</th>
<th>Number &amp; percentage of modules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>geography and history</td>
<td>9 (18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradition and customs</td>
<td>3 (6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daily life and routine</td>
<td>16 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literature and art</td>
<td>13 (27.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>society, politics and religion</td>
<td>5 (10.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value, belief and behaviour</td>
<td>2 (4.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results reflect a slightly different tendency in response from the ones that the participants presented in the questionnaire. According to the questionnaire data analysis, geography and history gained the highest mean value, but the textbook analysis presented a high percentage of daily life and routine. Moreover, geography and history are the dimensions that the participants stated they were most familiar with in the questionnaire. Daily life and routine gained a very high percentage of presentation according to the textbook analysis, but this dimension ranked second to geography and history in the questionnaire analysis. Interestingly, daily life and routine gained only an intermediate
mean value on the investigation of the teachers’ familiarity with the cultural dimensions. Literature and art did not gain a low percentage in the textbook analysis, but this cluster of dimensions evoked a very negative response in the familiarity investigation in Question 14 of the questionnaire. Other than these three clusters of the dimensions, the teachers’ responses to their frequency of dealing with and their familiarity with the cultural dimensions are compatible to the proportions of these dimensions presented in the textbooks.

In the interviews, the researcher asked the teachers to explain how they selected and used the cultural content in the textbooks. All the teachers said they needed to adjust the cultural content. Their adjustment mainly involved rearranging the order of sections in particular modules, and deleting or adding reading passages. The integration basically took into account the teachers’ knowledge about their students, the teachers’ knowledge about topics, the teachers’ English proficiency and the teaching time available.

All the participants expressed concerns about the students’ interest in particular topics and cultural dimensions. At the same time, the participants showed adequate confidence in their knowledge about students’ cultural interests and level of linguistic skill. One of the participants said that teachers need to identify different areas of cultural content and select topics that are in tune with students’ language proficiency and cognitive capacity.

Although all the participants agreed that they tended to integrate the cultural content and select what most interested their students and what accommodated their students’ linguistic abilities, different teachers undertook the selection and integration process in
different ways. The two teachers from the municipal key schools said they could deal with almost all the reading passages in the textbooks through various teaching and learning activities and could also manage to add a lot of extra reading materials on some of the cultural topics they believed would benefit or interest the students. While almost all the teachers from the district key schools agreed that their students showed an interest in the majority of the cultural content of the textbooks, they tended to disregard or just briefly deal with some of the reading passages that they believed students might struggle with or find boring. The teachers from the ordinary schools expressed very negative attitudes towards their students’ interest in culture and doubted their students’ enthusiasm for acquiring cultural understanding. As one of the teachers said, it was difficult to find what might interest the students as the students are already struggling to understand the vocabulary and grammar.

Besides expressing their confidence or lack of confidence in their students’ linguistic abilities and cognitive capacities, 10 of the 14 teachers across all the variable groups, expressed uncertainty and lack of confidence in their own cultural knowledge and language proficiency. Two typical instances of opinion are presented below:

*I do not have much knowledge in areas such as society, values, religions and politics.*

*Also, my English proficiency hinders me from managing topics of this kind. In addition, the limited teaching time makes it difficult to deal with such big topics, which usually are not easy to explain and discuss in simple words.*
Other than the content presented by the reading passages in the textbooks, I cannot teach more, as I do not have any personal experience of living in a foreign country or of communicating with a native English speaker. I am confident in teaching facts about geography, history and literature, as I can search for information on the Internet, but I have no confidence in dealing with topics like people’s lives, values and beliefs.

Except for the two teachers from the municipal key schools and two from the district key schools, it was found that these concerns were distributed in every variable group, that is, no obvious evidence could be found that a particular group(s) of participants had these concerns. In other words, linguistic proficiency and cultural knowledge were major concerns for the majority of the teachers. In other words, the relationship between the participants’ confidence in their linguistic proficiency/cultural knowledge and their attitude to culture teaching was hard to identify. Those teachers who presented positive attitudes to cultural teaching in the questionnaire and the interviews also said that they lacked confidence. More evidence needed to be gathered through classroom observation.

In addition to teachers’ knowledge about the target culture and Chinese culture, as explained above, the English language proficiency of the teachers and students was also a concern expressed by the majority of participants. This proficiency mainly referred to English oral skills. The only two participants who expressed confidence in their own and their students’ linguistic proficiencies were from the two municipal key schools. Other participants all mentioned that their students’ English listening and speaking abilities prevented the teachers from conducting more in-depth discussions of culture and involving students in classroom activities. These teachers also expressed a lack of
confidence in their own oral proficiency and they believed that their English oral skills limited their capacity to deal with many cultural topics in the way that they felt was appropriate or desirable. These participants could not be identified as belonging to particular sub-groups as defined by age, gender, educational qualification and overseas experience.

What activities to use
Table 5.5 presents the module content of Book One of the English textbook the participants were using. The complete contents of the eight volumes of the textbook can be found in Appendix 1. There are six modules in every volume and each module consists of two reading passages. The first reading passage is in the section called “topic & task” and the second passage is in the section called “cultural corner”. As can be seen from Table 5.5, tasks were suggested for the two reading passages, such as writing, presentation and discussion, etc.. Participants said that they normally spent four periods on the first four sections and one period on the cultural corner section. In other words, the first passage was allocated more teaching time than the second. When asked about cultural teaching activities during the interviews, the majority of participants across the variable groups made a common complaint about the teaching time. They complained that the limited teaching time made it difficult if not impossible for them to be able to organise and carry out suitable activities both in class and after class. In addition, participants’ noted that the pressure on teaching time largely came from subjects other than English. The teachers expressed a great deal of sympathy towards their students, acknowledging the pressure they were under. They said it seemed that all school subjects
demanded a share of students’ time every day. Students stayed at school for eight to ten hours and, on average, and had to spend another four hours a day on assignments. Many teaching activities required students’ involvement and time commitment. Some participants said they surrendered to this teaching reality by limiting their use of student-involved classroom activities.

Table 5.5 Modules of Book One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book/Module</th>
<th>Topic &amp; Task</th>
<th>Cultural Corner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>My First Day at Senior School Task: Writing a brochure about your school</td>
<td>A Letter from a Senior High Student Task: Read the letter from a Senior High student in the US. What’s similar and what’s different in the American and Chinese school systems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>My New Teachers Task: Setting criteria for a good teacher</td>
<td>Different Countries, Different Schools Task: Read the passage and answer these questions: What kind of differences in schools does this passage describe? What’s the relationship between students and teachers in China?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>My First Ride on a Train Task: Talking about a trip you made to a tourist spot</td>
<td>The Maglev-the fastest Train in the World Task: What are the main differences between a magnetically levitated train and an ordinary train? What are the advantages of travelling on a Maglev train?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>A Social Survey - My Neighbourhood Task: Planning a presentation to give a brief report of your neighbourhood</td>
<td>Read about the problems of some villages in western Europe. Answer these questions. What are these problems? Do villages in your area have similar problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>A Lesson in a lab Task: Preparing a report on a simple scientific experiment</td>
<td>Mark Kendon is a Canadian student at Senior High school. Read his description of science teaching in his school. Answer these questions. Why has Mark become more interested in science? Do you enjoy studying science? Explain why or why not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>The Internet and Telecommunications Task: Preparing a poster showing the uses of the Internet</td>
<td>Read the passage and answer these questions. Why do people use text messages and emoticons? Do mobile phone users in China send text messages and use emoticons?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, the availability of teaching equipment in schools played an important role in the teachers’ selection and use of some activities. Although the concerns described above were common to most teachers, the degree of concern varied according to their teaching environment. All the participants from the ordinary schools said that they rarely used any media equipment in the classrooms as their schools were not as well equipped as the key schools. Apart from the equipment available in the ordinary school, the participants said they also rarely used any other activities mentioned in the questionnaire due to the limited linguistic proficiency of their students. These teachers said the main focus of their English teaching was to help their students to pass the exams and that developing their cultural awareness and communicative competence could hardly be considered a priority. Of the eight teachers from the key schools, six said that they managed to use some classroom activities to enhance the students’ interest in and efficacy in learning English. In other words, although these teachers also experienced the time stress factors, they managed to include activities to enhance teaching and learning wherever possible. The following paragraphs explain what activities are favoured by the teachers and why.

The results of Question17 of the questionnaire regarding teaching activities were verified through the participants’ explanations in the interviews. The most favoured activity revealed by the questionnaire was the use of the Internet. Before the interviews, the researcher was curious about the ways in which participants use the Internet. The Internet has enabled many on-line activities, such as BBS, email, e-chatting, distance learning, web classroom, etc. During the interviews, the researcher found that all the teachers said they used the Internet to assist their teaching, but only to search for information. They
never used this technology to do any other type of student-centred, computer-assisted language learning, such as establishing student communication networks. It was found that the teachers searched for information on the Internet mainly to assist them with the use of the CD-ROMs.

The CD-ROMs that the teachers were using are provided with the textbook as editable courseware. Videos and movies were not provided with the textbooks, but normally prepared by the teachers themselves. All 14 participants said they used these materials, and it was found that most teachers from the key schools used these materials quite often, and that of the three sorts of materials, CD-ROM was the most commonly used one. All the teachers from the key schools said they normally used CD-ROM for every module where they thought the contents and modes of the materials on the CD-ROM were suitable for the students and would facilitate teaching. Videos and movies were normally downloaded by the teachers from the Internet if needed. These quotes from two teachers are representative of how and why the teachers used these materials. These teachers preferred the flexible use of the courseware to accommodate students’ interests and needs.

_I always search for more teaching materials other than those in the textbook and then integrate all the sources according to my students’ capabilities and needs. For example, we covered one module on the topic of ‘D-day’ by watching the movie Saving Private Ryan and listening to Churchill’s speech. These materials are very informative in terms of content and they are quite authentic materials for learning English._
The use of CD-Rom and video depends on teaching content. I basically use the Internet to search for relevant information and materials. Sometimes I ask my students to do the search as a group. When the students do not have much time, I have to do all the work myself. For example, for the topic [about music] I taught today, I edited new materials to the courseware provided by the textbook.

The teachers from the ordinary schools expressed very negative attitudes towards the use of CD-ROM, videos and movies. This is due in part to the lack of technical equipment as explained before and partly to the low language proficiency of the students. One of the participants working in an ordinary school said that she had to select the English video materials with Chinese subscription as her students had much difficulty in understanding the English of the materials.

As can be seen from the responses of the teachers from the ordinary schools, students’ involvement was low and students tended to be passive in their English classroom. However, it was found that the participants from key schools attached more importance to student involvement. One teacher explained that the students’ involvement helped them to learn about culture because they could explore a topic in greater depth by doing research than by just reading the passages in the modules. Moreover, activities such as presentations, discussions and debate were found to be used more often by the teachers from the key schools. Two teachers provided examples of how they usually apply these activities.
One module in Book 1 is about education in particular English-speaking countries; however, there is not adequate information in the section of ‘cultural corner’. I asked my students to collect relevant information about secondary education in different countries. Students researched lots of materials on the Internet and in the library, mainly about education in Australia, the UK, the US, Canada and Singapore. Then students did PowerPoint presentations to share information with the class.

Normally I do group discussion. Debating is normally used in developing material for a writing task, which is one of the exercises in many modules. In order to train students’ thinking ability, I usually transform the writing tasks into debating topics. Students are encouraged to freely express their ideas after discussing and debating with each other. Then students are required to develop their ideas in a written assignment. However, this activity is not often used because of the limited time.

Direct communication with native English speakers and role play were rarely used, according to the 14 participants. The majority of the 14 schools had foreign teachers. Usually students met their foreign teacher once a week, for one class. However, foreign teachers and English teachers had little communication about their teaching. Role play was not regarded as a suitable and practical activity by the participants, though it was suggested as a task by the textbook in some modules. Large class size and limited teaching time were generally thought to be the hindrances to the practice of role play, as one participant simply explained: “I seldom use role play and I don’t know how to use it.”
In conclusion, the first research question of this study explored teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the concept of culture and their thinking about teaching culture in English instruction. The participants expressed their ideas about the concept of culture. All the participants agreed that culture teaching was an integral part of English instruction, but there were differences in the degree and significance they attributed to culture teaching. Some regarded culture teaching as an important part of humanistic education. Some viewed culture as a way to arouse students’ interest in learning English. As to the specifics of culture teaching practice, the participants expressed different ideas and concerns, depending on their teaching contexts. The participants’ interview responses were found to be consistent with the findings of the questionnaire analysis. The participants who were teaching in key schools presented more positive attitudes to culture teaching and acknowledged the development of students’ communicative competence as an important English teaching goal. These positive responses also match the requirements of the Standard and the role of culture teaching in foreign language instruction as discussed in Section 2.2.

5.2.2 The participants’ thinking about the Standard and textbooks
The participants presented their understandings of culture and culture teaching and described their different teaching realities. Through the interviews they were also asked about their understandings of the account of culture teaching in the Standard and its presentation in the textbooks. The Standard defines the goals of culture teaching and the objectives of cultural awareness for English proficiency levels. The textbooks are the main teaching materials, compiled to match these goals and objectives. As discussed in
the literature review, teachers play a significant role in the implementation of the
Standard, based on their individual attitudes and beliefs about teaching and their teaching
contexts.

The Standard

The analysis of Question 18 in the questionnaire showed that many participants tended to
agree with the Standard’s explicit recognition of culture as an area of teaching content,
but few of them agreed that the Standard provided sufficient instruction on its
implementation. The interview invited the participants to clarify their answers.

The participants shared a common positive attitude towards the integration of culture into
English teaching as revealed by the questionnaire analysis. All the participants agreed
that it is a vital sign of progress in China’s English teaching that the curriculum explicitly
defines culture as one component of the teaching content. It shows that English teaching
is tending to develop into a component of humanistic education, rather than being seen as
just skill-training.

As can be seen from the description of the Standard in Section 3.4, the Standard provides
suggestions on the management of the relationship between the target culture and the
native culture. English teaching aims to help students know about the world and the
differences between Eastern culture and Western culture, and thus to broaden their view,
to foster patriotism and a healthy view of life. The participants supported this objective.
The participants agreed that learning about the target culture is inseparable from students’
pragmatic learning and use of the English language, and important in terms of opening windows on the others’ world. At the same time, the participants emphasised the importance of Chinese culture in students’ overall education and in English language learning. According to the participants, this importance was seen as three-fold. Firstly, for Chinese students, as well as teachers, the biggest difficulty in learning English are the differences in linguistic expressions between English and Chinese languages. This difference depends on cultural rather than linguistic features. Integrating and comparing target cultures and Chinese culture facilitates the development of students’ English language awareness. Secondly, China’s communication and exchange with the rest of the world is increasing. English serves as the language of communication as well as the tool for accessing foreign cultures and communicating Chinese culture to the rest of the world. Students are supposed to know how to express Chinese culture in English. Thirdly, the integration of Chinese culture and development of students’ Chinese identity are two of the objectives of general education.

Furthermore, most participants agreed that the emphasis on the pragmatic and communicative use of English is demonstrated in the College Entrance Exam, where the testing of vocabulary and grammar is done within context, rather than in isolation. By including more cultural content in modules, culture teaching serves this form of assessment, as it can offer context for a particular reading passage, or facilitate the understanding of a particular word. For instance, when students read a passage about Thanksgiving, they will be able to make associations, such as turkey and pumpkin pie. Apart from the clarification of the participants’ understanding of culture teaching goals in
the Standard, their understanding of the objectives of cultural awareness were also investigated. The teachers who expressed the above positive attitude towards the supportive role of the Standard in terms of culture teaching are mostly from the key schools, as one of the participants said that she often referred to the Standard for the account of the cultural awareness objectives as she thought she cannot deviate from those objectives in either her teaching philosophy or practice.

At the same time, many participants revealed confusion about the objectives and the stress to achieve the objectives. These teachers did not show up as being a clear variable group, but were represented in all groups, such as in educational qualification, the school where they taught and in overseas experience. As explained in Section 3.4, the objectives of cultural awareness in the Standard were phrased according to the nine English proficiency levels. However, the nine levels did not necessarily match the students’ school year level. The participants commented that they could only use these objectives selectively according to their students’ English proficiency and cognitive level. The details of these objectives also led to confusion on the part of participants. This is an example provided by a participant:

*The objective of ‘knowing the possible cultural implications of a natural phenomenon in main English language’ is listed in Level five. However, I have no idea what natural phenomenon the objective refers to and what phenomenon I should teach. There are topics in the textbook, such as earthquake, hurricane and tornado. But I do not know what special cultural implication they have in the English language. I think they are what all mankind faces no matter what culture they belong to.*
It was found that many participants recognised the challenges that teachers are faced with, but they did not believe that the Standard provided practical instructions. One typical comment was:

*The Standard gave an account of culture teaching in terms of many objectives. As a matter of fact, we would like this account to provide greater detail. I think most teachers already know why culture teaching should be integrated. What we want to know is how to select and apply relevant materials in teaching. Also we want to know what the criteria are for testing those objectives. Finally we want to be given guidance and methods for teaching culture; to put it differently, we want to be given advice and examples for integrating a particular cultural topic into our four teaching classes.*

Nevertheless, the two participants from the municipal key schools and one teacher from a district key school expressed sufficient confidence in their understanding and application of the objectives in their teaching practice below.

*The Standard is designed for use nationwide. It cannot be detailed in every aspect; instead, teachers should use the Standard flexibly according to their teaching reality. These objectives are presented in the textbooks. If a teacher has deep understanding of the reading passages, these objectives could be achieved to some extent.*

*The Standard sets the goals of English teaching and these goals orient teachers’ ideology. This is the main function of the Standard. I have confidence in my students’ language proficiency, cultural awareness, learning strategies and cognitive level.*
teach culture in the hope that my students gain joy from cross-cultural experience. This experience is not that of physically living in an English-speaking country, instead, it takes place in students’ minds inspired by dialogue, and reflection. As a matter of fact, I had already integrated lots of cultural content before the Standard said to do so.

How to evaluate students’ learning is always a main concern for teachers when practising their teaching. As for the relationship between culture teaching and the criteria for evaluating students’ cultural awareness, three opinions were found. The first opinion was expressed by five of the 14 participants. They argued that the Standard did not set any criteria for the evaluation of students’ cultural awareness, which made them feel confused as to how they should deal with teaching content and testing it. The second opinion came from the two participants from the municipal key schools. They agreed that the objectives should be comprehended and used as guidance in a flexible fashion. Both in theory and in practice, it was unlikely that the objectives could be achieved one by one as they are in grammar teaching. They believed that teachers should refer to the objectives basically as guidance in their teaching pedagogy and as criteria for teaching and learning. They strongly believed that the learning objective for their students was not the College Entrance Exam, but their future life. The two participants argued that criteria for cultural awareness needed to be synthesised by teachers according to the objectives in the Standard and the objectives of general education on the Chinese context. The third opinion was expressed by the remaining five participants. They tended to agree that cultural awareness lay in students’ minds and that there was currently no available means of testing this awareness in the way that the learning of vocabulary and grammar is tested. The development of cultural awareness depended on the progressive teaching and
educating methods of the teacher. However, they said that the Standard should introduce culture teaching theories and ideas. The theories and ideas could be from both overseas and from China.

In short, the participants shared the same positive attitude with the Standard that culture should be integrated into English teaching and that communicative competence should be the ultimate goal of teaching. However, the participants’ comments on the Standard also implied a conflict between the Standard’s explicit objectives and the resources it provides to enable teachers to achieve these objectives. The conflicts focussed on many facets of culture teaching, such as the criteria for testing students’ learning and practical methods of integrating culture teaching into English teaching. In short, while the Standard was seen as a very welcome advancement in English teaching, there are many gaps in participants’ understanding of what is entailed in teaching culture and how to teach it.

Participants’ thinking about the textbook, as the main teaching resources and the embodiment of the Standard, was also investigated.

The textbook
All the 14 participants agreed that the goals of English teaching and the objectives of cultural awareness were embodied in the textbook. This presentation included various cultural dimensions. The balance between the target culture and Chinese culture was also reasonable. This feedback was consistent with the answers to the relevant questions in the questionnaire. Two comments are presented below.
I appreciate the effort that the textbooks make in the presentation of the cultural dimensions. The cultural dimensions are inclusive. Also many topics showed humanistic appeal, such as the topics of cloning and climate change.

Many Chinese youth are crazy about celebrating Western festivals, in particular, Christmas, Halloween, Thanksgiving Day and Easter. However, I do not think students are clear about the history or background of these festivals. Festivals in a particular culture must have their historical origin, which are ignored by many Chinese youth when they are having fun on these special days. I even think they do not know much about Chinese festivals. The textbooks do a very good job on this issue. We are provided with content on such things as the Dragon Boat Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival. I appreciate the comparison of cultures in this fashion. Chinese culture should not be forgotten in English class. The purpose of this comparison is not to say one culture is better than the other, but to make students develop an awareness that cultures are diverse and humans should understand and respect each other.

When showing this appreciation for diversified culture content, all the 14 participants acknowledged the challenges facing both teachers and students. The inclusion of cultural dimensions was demanding in terms of both teachers’ linguistic ability and cultural knowledge. Moreover, all the participants agreed that the textbook contained a huge amount of vocabulary and too much teaching content and that the topics incorporated too many disciplines. Every module involves a new topic. Teachers complained that they were unfamiliar with too many cultural topics, such as music, mythology and literature, and constantly had to acquire new knowledge to meet their teaching requirements, both linguistically and culturally.
As to the question of the relationship between the cultural content and students’ English proficiency and cognitive ability, the questionnaire analysis showed similar findings of positive and negative opinions. The interview found that the disparity in opinion basically stemmed from the participants’ perceptions of their students’ capabilities.

A few participants from the ordinary schools argued that their students’ English proficiency could not meet the demands of reading “behind” a passage and understanding cultural connotations. They complained that their students faced reading barriers due to their limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge and skills. In addition, these participants believed that a majority of their students possessed lower cognitive abilities than their counterparts in the key schools. These participants apologised for evaluating their students in this way, but said that, regrettably, these were the facts and realities they had confronted. They believed that their students’ cognitive ability hindered their learning in every school subject and in the development of learning motivation and learning strategies. This situation forced the teachers to weight their teaching content and method in favour of improving students’ exam results, and led them to focus on the teaching of vocabulary and grammar and ignore much of the content of the module topics. While these participants acknowledged that the textbook was well designed in terms of cultural content and dimensions, they felt it was too demanding for their students. One participant commented that:

*I admit that this series of textbooks is rationally designed and consistent with social development. But it does not suit my students. I have to select materials that suit my students’ interest, cognition and language proficiency, which means I have to give up*
the rest. For example, I have to give up content such as oral practice, role-play and
discussion on culture, because they are not assessed in the exams.

The participants from the key schools basically agreed that the textbook design in terms
of culture was in tune with their students’ English proficiency and cognitive ability. They
found that the topics close to their students’ life experience gained more interest,
regardless of whether these involved Chinese culture or target culture. Some participants
explained this notion below by describing the real classes they taught.

Students are interested in short stories, like biographies and anecdotes. But it seems
that they do not like those materials where the content tends to be classic and far from
their life experience, for instance, the poetry in Year 12’s textbook. Chinese poetry and
their English versions differ so much in taste and mood, and vice versa. In addition, the
language of poetry is too hard for the students to understand. This type of topic just
does not make any sense to high school students.

It is right to integrate culture. The first purpose of learning English is to communicate
and the language carries culture. However, I still insist that students’ level should be
taken into consideration when we integrate culture. The topics should be close to
students’ life experience. For example, we learned about the American Civil War,
Confucius and Meng Zi. Not many students were interested because these topics are far
from their life experience.

Two participants from the municipal key schools and two from the district key schools
also pointed to this tendency for students to show more interest in topics close to their life
experience. One of them said that her students showed more interest in the topics that
they were familiar with or some of the topics that they learned in other subjects; in some cases, she could learn from her students.

At the same time, these two participants believed that their students understood the significance of learning about culture and its place in classroom presentations. However, these participants pointed out two problems with the textbook. They thought some reading passages were not authentic in terms of language and culture. They also complained that some of the content in the textbook appeared to have been compiled by Chinese writers, which made the language and culture less authentic and useful to read. They found that the texts in the books for Year 12 tended to be more authentic and that the cultural content was enhanced. This was understandable and logical, as students in Year 12 are supposed to have a high level of English proficiency and well developed cognitive abilities. However, one participant from a municipal key school explained that Year 12 is typically the critical and focal year for teachers and students pay more attention and allocate more time to preparing for the College Entrance Exams. This participant felt it was regrettable that as consequence of this focus on exams, many excellent materials are not used in teaching, and that therefore the objectives cannot be completely achieved.

During the interviews, all the participants admitted that the diverse cultural topics in the textbook expanded and updated their cultural knowledge and that the extensive coverage of cultural content in the textbooks reflects the significance placed on culture teaching in the Standard. The theme-based design of the textbook enabled teachers and students to
become familiar with the cultural topics covered in the textbooks covered. The “Cultural Corner” section that is included in every module of the textbooks used is a pioneering concept according to all the participants. The Teacher’s Book illustrates the design of this section as follows:

The *Cultural Corner* section contains a reading passage which provides further opportunities to explore the module theme. It focuses on news, events, information, etc. from around the world, rather than from inside China. Simple exercises ensure that learners have understood the main ideas of the passage and have the opportunity to compare the information in the passage with their own experiences. The intention of this section is to develop socio-cultural awareness (Teachers’ Book, p.v)

As can be seen from the principles of the textbooks and the presentation of the modules in Appendix 1, culture as an explicit teaching focus has undoubtedly been given much greater attention than in the past. Moreover, the suggestions for teaching activities in every module were provided in the textbooks as well as in the Teacher’s Book. In brief, the textbook provided teachers with ample assistance with culture teaching. This was acknowledged by all the participants.

The Teacher’s Book was claimed to be of assistance to teachers in carrying out the multi-syllabus course design in their daily teaching (Teacher’s Book, 2006, p.i). In the Teacher’s Book, the objectives of cultural awareness are briefly listed in every module.

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Tasks about teaching culture are suggested in the “Cultural Corner” section. Cultural background and topic materials are provided. But the questionnaire feedback showed that only one participant mentioned the Teacher’s Book as a means of updating cultural knowledge. In the interviews, the researcher asked participants about their use of the Teacher’s Book for culture teaching. The feedback indicated that the understanding and use of the Teacher’s Book depended on the extent to which teachers integrated culture into their teaching. Teachers who attached importance to culture teaching would explore more hints and content from the Teacher’s Book than those who did not. This exploration included gaining ideas from the objectives of cultural awareness and tasks. As shown in Section 5.2.1 and the previous part of this section, the teachers who paid attention to culture teaching are mostly from key schools. However, few of these teachers agreed that the tasks suggested in the Teacher’s Book were practical. They had to design their own tasks according to their teaching realities. In addition, the participants complained that the cultural background of and materials for topics provided in the Teacher’s Book did not always work for them. Some of these materials are in Chinese and some are in English, which makes their application less straightforward for the teachers. Under these circumstances, many participants suggested that the Teacher’s Book should provide references, such as more relevant websites and materials. They also proposed that the Teacher’s Book should provide sources for teaching theory and method, in terms of culture teaching. They believed such sources would be more useful for teachers in terms of teaching practice and subject knowledge development.
Apart from the participants’ attitudes towards the guidance offered by the textbook, different attitudes towards the diversity of the cultural topics presented in the textbook were found through the interviews. In general, the difference relates in part to the teachers’ knowledge about their own students. All the participants from the ordinary schools and two from the district key schools believed that the cultural topics were too diverse for their students to cope with. These teachers argued that the more topics there were, the more vocabulary there would be, and that this would place a burden on the students to gain sufficient understanding of the vocabulary and to gain enough time to practise the usage before moving onto the next module and a new topic. The rest of the participants also recognised the existence of this problem; however, they had a positive attitude towards using the texts. They believed that it took time for the students to understand the linguistic features of the language and that the multiple contexts would help students to understand the language. These teachers also stated that they were intentionally integrating previously learned vocabulary into the teaching of new content in order to increase the frequency of usage. In addition, the suggested teaching activities in the modules attracted different responses from the participants. Activities such as classroom presentation and role play elicited a collective uncertainty among the participants, as they were regarded as the most difficult and unrealistic activities to handle in a class of 50 students.

To summarise the participants’ interview responses to the account of culture teaching provided in the Standard and the culture presentation of the textbooks, the participants observed that the Standard stated more about the teaching of English as a humanistic
pursuit than any curricula in the past, and that the cultural dimension within English teaching also attracted more attention. In addition, the teaching of English as a subject and as a part of school education made sense to the participants if the ultimate goal was to develop a healthy open world view and cultural awareness. However, the majority of the participants showed less satisfaction with the practical and specific guidance offered by the Standard in terms of the teaching of culture, than with the overall teaching goals. In addition, participants suggested that the Standard should provide ideas and guidance on studies of culture teaching and relevant research findings.

The participants were basically positive towards the textbooks, especially the way in which they embodied the orientation and requirements of the Standard. The many and diverse cultural topics were seen as both a practical challenge and as motivation for professional development. However, the participants had differing opinions about the applicability of the textbooks to their own students. Their different perspectives were reflected in their classroom practice, which will be explained in the next section.

5.2.3 The relationship between teachers’ attitudes/beliefs and their classroom behaviour

Fourteen of the participants’ classes were observed and the teachers’ recall subsequently stimulated with the video clips, as described in Section 4.3.3. The recalls focussed on the teachers’ explanations of their course of action in class. It was observed that the extent of teachers’ integration of culture teaching and the activities they used were consistent with their stated attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching in general. However,
inconsistencies were found during some classroom observations between the participants espoused attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching and their actual teaching method. The participants’ explanations of their course of action included reference to the cultural content they were teaching, the activities they were using and their interaction with the students. The participants were asked to invite the researcher to a class that they believed would best embody their attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching. Five participants dealt with the first reading passage and the rest of the participants with the second passage, from the “Cultural Corner” section of the textbook.

Little culture teaching was found to be incorporated in the classes of five of the participants. Whether they dealt with the first or the second passage, they basically applied the traditional grammar–translation method. Some of them read over the passage paragraph by paragraph, stopping to explain vocabulary and grammar, either in English or in Chinese. One participant explained her use of Chinese as follows:

My students’ attentiveness in class is already very good. I do not want to discourage them by limiting my teaching to English. In order to give the students as much information as possible and keep their interest and attention in English class, I have to use Chinese.

An extreme example was found in one participant’s class. That class was dealing with a passage about musicians, such as Mozart and Beethoven. This participant translated every sentence into Chinese and even pronounced these musicians’ names in Chinese,
rather than in English. When interviewed, the teacher said she did not think that the
students could understand and pronounce the names in English.

Others made the students take turns in reading the passage and answering questions. The
questions involved translating sentences and making sentences with given words or
phrases. Basically, these teachers paid no attention to the content of the passage. The
students were observed to be taking notes about vocabulary and grammar. The only time
the students were more actively involved was when they were asked by the teacher to
make sentences using particular vocabulary and phrases they had learned. The
participants explained during the stimulated recall that they acknowledged the rather
passive nature of the students’ involvement in this mode of teaching. However, they
believed that their students were familiar this mode of learning and that it helped them to
cope with what they needed to master for exams. They were trying to hold the students’
attention by making sentences with topics that would interest them. This teacher
explained her course of action as follows:

*I try to get the students to make sentences using familiar celebrities or life experiences.*

*On the one hand, this method facilitates their understanding of the usage of certain
words or phrases. On the other hand, I believe this method automatically and gradually
influences the students’ awareness of English as a tool for describing what is around us,
and thus arouses their learning interest.*

Similarities were observed in the classes of another two participants. Coincidently, the
two participants were dealing with the same module, but with different passages. The
topic of the module was about jobs. Neither of them used new technologies, only the blackboard and textbook. Both of them explained the vocabulary and grammar contained in the passages before dealing with the content. This explanation was mostly conducted in Chinese. Then the teachers led a short discussion to introduce the main points of the passages. As the first passage was normally allocated more teaching time, the teacher spent time on group discussion. The whole class worked on the same discussion questions posed by the teacher. The teacher conducted this section in English. Ten minutes later, the teacher asked the students to present their ideas on the discussion questions. This section was mostly conducted in Chinese. The teachers explained in the stimulated recall as follows.

*My students have no ability to discuss such a difficult topic in English. I asked them to search on the Internet for occupations for which there is a growing demand in China and in the rest of the world. From their feedback, I knew that only a few of them had done this. I did it beforehand and I had to give them my answers. Also I knew if I gave them my answers in English only, much of the information would be lost. The main objective of this module is to let students know jobs are changing with the social development. I believe as long as I deliver this message to the students, this objective could be viewed as having been achieved.*

The students were observed to show active involvement in the discussion. The teacher claimed that they would have stayed silent if they had been forced to use English. After the discussion, the teacher moved on to the explanation of the passage. The method was translation oriented. The explanation of the passage was not completed in the observed
class, and the teacher told the researcher that it would take one more class, using the same teaching method, to finish the task.

Another participant dealt with the second passage in a similar fashion. The discussion time was shortened, as the passage, from the “Cultural Corner” was supposed to be finished within one class. This teacher explained her course of action for the teacher-dominated discussion as follows.

*I basically use the Internet to search for resources when I encounter something I do not know about, in particular culture. Sometimes I ask my students to find relevant information on the Internet, but not often. Using the Internet costs students lots of time after school, and parents do not necessarily support this type of learning activity. Moreover, students are already very stressed, as they have to learn so many subjects at the same time. They have lots of assignments on different subjects every day. Many students are really bad at English and they prefer to work harder on subjects they are good at for better results in exams. I try to expand the students’ view by providing more information than is contained in the passages. Under the current circumstance, I have to do it almost all myself, both after class and in class.*

The rest of the participants used the CD-ROMs with their own revisions. These teachers were similar in that they paid lots of attention to the content of the reading passages and they mainly taught in English. The interview after classroom observation focused on the participants’ explanation. The participants agreed that every passage inevitably contained and transmitted one or more aspects of cultural information, because culture penetrated
every aspect of human life. Whether it used for skill training or as a part of humanistic
education, the teaching of English should not ignore the content of the reading passages.
On the one hand, a reading passage provides a particular context in which a particular
body of vocabulary and sentence structures are used; the understanding of the language
used and the context in which it is used enhance each other. On the other hand, every
reading passage provides access for the students to learn about an aspect of the world and
triggers or develops their awareness. One typical opinion goes:

*I love teaching passages full of cultural messages, because culture activates language.
Dealing with cultural messages, rather than just explaining vocabulary and grammar,
made me an educator rather than a skill trainer. I absolutely do not ignore this part in
my teaching.*

In addition, it was observed that these participants rarely explained vocabulary and
grammar during the process of dealing with the content of the passages. The interviews
that followed the observations disclosed the points of consensus. They avoided frequent
stops to explain vocabulary and grammar as this interrupted the flow of students’
understanding and appreciation of a particular text. They chose to explain vocabulary and
grammar before or after dealing with passages, depending on the extent to which the
vocabulary and grammar hindered the students from comprehending the passages. Their
choices basically relied on the integration of their understanding of their students, the
textbook and the exam requirements.
It was notable that these participants made revisions to the CD-ROMs or designed their own course tools with some of the materials on the CD-ROMs and additional resources. As to this activity, the stimulated recall focussed on the exploration of the criteria used by participants to select the materials they require for culture teaching.

In short, it was found the participants who were teaching in key schools tended to deal with more discourse analysis of the reading passages in their textbooks than the teachers from ordinary schools. In order to ensure that their students understood cultural messages, those participants who showed positive attitudes towards their students’ abilities tended to apply more classroom activities that suited their teaching contexts. These included teaching with the assistance of pictures and posters or PPT documents and organising discussions, debates or student presentations. In using these activities, the teachers maintained an active relationship and interaction with their students. On the other hand, those participants who paid a great deal of attention to the development of linguistic skills tended to dominate the class with the traditional grammar–translation teaching method and to focus more on training the students to memorise vocabulary and practise grammar drills. In doing so, they were inclined to disregard the cultural messages that the reading passages transmitted.

In addition, the interviews after the classroom observations showed that participants selected cultural materials based on three considerations. Firstly, the cultural materials should be closely related to a teaching topic and characterise the content of a particular passage. Secondly, the materials should accommodate the students’ interests. Thirdly, the
materials should embody the objectives of cultural awareness defined in a particular module. In the two examples below, one participant explains how he used materials.

*This reading passage is a review of the film Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon. The cultural awareness objective defined in the Teacher’s Book is to develop a general knowledge of the main situation, features and styles of films in China and Western countries. Of course, the objective is too broad and unlikely to be achieved through the two reading passages in this module. The second passage introduces Steven Spielberg. By putting these two passages in the one module teachers are prompted to involve relevant information about films in China and the West. My main aim when I am planning my teaching and designing the slides is to arouse students’ interest and give them as much information as possible within the limited teaching time.*

As for the topic itself, I think students are more familiar with Chinese films than foreign ones, so I went over the first passage very briefly and then put more time into Spielberg. However, there is not enough relevant information on the CD-Rom and I had to find it on my own. I put some posters of Spielberg’s movies and pictures of him getting awards on the slides. Due to the limited time, I gave a brief introduction to these pictures. I hoped this introduction would arouse the students’ interest in seeing some of his films in their spare time.

A few of the participants expressed their awareness of being one of the teaching resources themselves. They expressed the notion that they were taking responsibility in selecting additional materials. As school educators, they oriented students towards learning about and appreciating others’ culture and helped them to form a healthy world
view and also develop their Chinese identity. This orientation should be in tune with the general objectives of education. Teachers also have their own knowledge of and belief about a particular cultural topic. The additional materials they integrate reflected their personal preferences, as well as their strengths and limitations in terms of their knowledge about particular cultural topics. Two of the participants’ stimulated recalls on their course of action in the integration of additional materials are presented below.

This passage is about the different connotations of the dragon in Chinese and Western cultures. The meaning of dragon in Chinese culture is not new to the students; however, only one short paragraph of the passage is about its meaning in the West. I had to add materials because I believed its meanings in the West would interest the students and be more supportive in terms of raising awareness of cultural difference. So I added more connotations of dragon in Chinese and English, together with different images. We could see that the students showed great interest and they were very attentive to this part. Moreover, I expanded this topic to other animals such as dog, owl, bat and ox. With more examples, students could possibly gain an awareness of the relationship between language and culture.

This short passage talks about garbage classification in Germany. Its moral message would be environmental protection. I am not familiar with the German situation; however, I stayed in Australia for several months and I took lots of pictures. So I showed these pictures and described Australia’s way of dealing with garbage. I believed these pictures of the clean streets and beautiful scenery plus my personal experience were more convincing to the students.
These participants delivered their classes mostly in English, with occasional explanations in Chinese. The students showed active involvement in these classes. The majority of the students listened to the teachers attentively and gave appropriate feedback by way of asking or answering questions and participating in short discussions.

In brief, the attitudes and beliefs the participants revealed in the questionnaires and the interviews were generally consistent with their observed classroom practice. One clear finding is that the participants from key schools tended to express a positive attitude towards culture teaching and they were observed to include cultural dimensions in their classroom teaching. In fact, most participants showed their support for this research by telling the researcher that they were honest in their answers to the questionnaire and in the interviews. The participants also said that they would like the researcher to observe their normal classes, rather than those classes specially prepared for observation. On the other hand, the participants who were teaching in ordinary schools seemed to include much less cultural content than their counterparts in key schools. They attributed this to the many constraints of their teaching realities.

The researcher found that classroom observation was very rewarding, as this investigation instrument played a very significant role in testing the findings obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews. Moreover, the teaching realities described by the individual participants in the interviews were vividly illustrated in the classroom. The participants welcomed the researcher’s observation of their teaching and classroom practice. In return, the participants’ uncertainty constantly emphasised the significance of
this study. The participants agreed that the local education authorities had a good understanding of the teaching realities. However, they offered little guidance in terms of culture teaching. It seemed to the participants that the study of culture teaching in high school had not yet attracted sufficient attention.

5.2.4 Teachers’ development in culture teaching

As educators, the participants claimed that they had a good knowledge of the general goals of basic education in China, which gave them guidance and ideas for dealing with target and Chinese culture. However, as subject teachers, almost all the participants showed uncertainty about their knowledge of many cultural topics in the textbooks. The inadequacy they felt was not only in the target culture but also in Chinese culture. The participants related this inadequacy to the teacher development programs available to them such as pre-service education, in-service teacher education and overseas experience.

As explained in Chapter Four, the overwhelming majority of high school English teachers received their Bachelor’s degree majoring in English or English teaching after finishing four years of university education. This is the main pathway of pre-service education in China. The in-service development programs are usually conducted part-time in universities and in workplaces by way of jiaoyanshi (teaching and research group) and classroom observation. In addition, some teachers gained access to short-term overseas training through particular exchange programs. What these ways of development contributed in terms of culture and culture teaching was one important
factor in the exploration of the research questions. The interviewer in this study asked this question of the 14 participants.

Firstly, the situation of pre-service education was addressed. The participants agreed that they gained some cultural knowledge at university through courses such as “Brief Introduction to the UK and the US”, “British and American Literature” and “Selected Readings on Drama and Poetry”. These courses provide basic information on a few cultural facets of the US and UK, normally including the geography, history, political system, economy, literature and religions. They also learned about foreign culture, mainly British and American, through skill training courses in listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, it seemed to the participants that the cultural knowledge they gained at that time was a by-product of English language skill training. Besides, many participants admitted that they hadn’t thought about these kinds of issues when they took their university courses. No particular subgroup(s) of the participants could be identified as being affected this situation. In other words, this phenomenon commonly existed in pre-service education programs. One participant described this typical situation as follows.

There is a gap between what I learned and what I can use in my current teaching practice. The reason is twofold. On the one hand, I did not have a clear awareness of the relationship between language and culture at the time when I was an English major in university. On the other hand, I did not have in mind a clear career goal of becoming a high school teacher at that time, so I had little consciousness of the need to pay attention to the link between learning and teaching in university. When I realised this
gap and started to think about this relationship in my teaching, I found I had forgotten a
great deal of cultural knowledge. It’s very depressing.

In relation to the issue of Chinese culture, all the participants mentioned that they felt
somewhat embarrassed that they had to do background research on many topics about
Chinese culture. The sources used for research were mostly the Internet and fellow
teachers of other subjects. The 14 participants were educated at secondary and tertiary
levels, in the 60s and 70s (16%), 80s and 90s (68%) and around the turn of the century
(16%). As explained in Chapter Two, during these decades there were different political
and economic changes in China. Education was unavoidably affected by these changes.
The 60s and 70s were a cultural desert for Chinese youth. Foreign culture was forbidden
and traditional Chinese culture was criticised. Instead, revolutionary ideology pervaded
these two decades. With the Open Door policy and the economic reconstruction,
manpower was in high demand, and in order to equip young people with appropriate
skills as quickly as possible, exam-oriented education came into being and is still
dominating the education system in many ways. The most fundamental problem with an
exam-oriented education system is that examinations distort students’ motivation and
learning by over-emphasising the importance of exam scores as outcomes and measures
element in teaching in favour of reciting facts. Students’ critical thinking ability, curiosity
and creativity were ignored. Moreover, it became a common experience for Chinese
students that what they recited for taking tests tended to be forgotten quickly afterwards.
In high school, Chinese students learned Chinese culture mainly through arts subjects
such as Chinese, history and geography. Most participants said that they felt regretful that
what they learned in high school had been all but forgotten. English majors in university did not usually take Chinese culture courses. Most participants (10 out of the 14) mentioned that they had little awareness of the need or motivation to learn about Chinese culture in university as they concentrated on English skill training. These participants could not be identified as belonging to a particular sub-group/s, so it can be said that this is a common situation. Moreover, learning is different from teaching in many ways. So when the teachers encountered Chinese cultural content in English teaching, they tended to check their relevant existing knowledge and find out more via such sources as the textbooks, the Internet and fellow subject teachers.

The second situation described by many participants related to in-service teacher development programs. Some of the participants took part-time, in-service teacher development programs at university. Culture was covered in sociolinguistic courses. This kind of course provides the participants with a theoretical understanding of the relationship between language and culture. Courses aimed at developing teaching skills usually involve teaching methodology and textbook evaluation. However, in terms of culture teaching, very few participants thought they received any guidance or instruction from such courses. One of the participants made the following representative statement:

*I designed and conducted culture teaching all on the basis of my own teaching beliefs and experience. Teachers had almost no training and guidance in terms of culture teaching in either pre- or in-service education. It seems that culture teaching is not paid enough attention in teacher education. I have very little idea about how to teach English in a communicative way.*
Only two of the 14 participants expressed a positive attitude towards what they learned in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. These two teachers are young and they have both finished their Master’s degree. They believe they gained a wide range of cultural knowledge through courses such as sociolinguistics and “British and American Culture”. They agreed that they covered teaching methodology in their training, which briefly involved culture teaching. They argued that it was unlikely for any training courses to specifically teach culture and culture teaching, because compared to other aspects of English language skills and English teaching, culture and culture teaching still occupy a minor status. What teachers needed to do, these two participants said, was to practise and conduct action research and to have more discussion with their peer teachers in terms of culture teaching based on specific modules. These two participants belonged to different subgroups of age, educational qualification and overseas experience, and the only shared characteristic was that both of them taught in key schools, one at a municipal key school and the other at a district key school.

_Jiaoynshi_ is a main vehicle for teachers’ workplace development. As for teacher collaboration and the role of _jiaoynshi_ in terms of culture teaching, two different answers were given in the interviews. Firstly, most participants said that they rarely discussed culture teaching in the meetings of _jiaoynshi_. Three typical situations are presented below. The first situation is represented by the following quotes, and all the teachers from ordinary schools and two from key schools expressed similar opinions.

_In a teacher group, we rarely exchange ideas on how to teach culture. Occasionally we put our heads together to figure out some cultural content we are not familiar with. We never discuss the ideology of culture teaching or relevant academic research. Culture
and culture teaching might be research interests for university teachers, but they are far-fetched topics for us high school teachers.

As to teachers exchanging views on culture teaching, as far as I know, most teachers have very limited knowledge about culture and culture teaching, so there is no way to have deeper discussion.

We usually focus on the discussion of methods for improving students’ listening, reading and writing competence, which are directly related to improving students’ test scores.

The second situation is represented by statements from two participants from the municipal key schools. They were satisfied with their jiaoyanshi meetings in terms of culture teaching. They agreed that they always had discussions on syllabus design with regards to culture teaching. In addition, the teachers who taught the same grades always collaborated in the search for relevant teaching materials, and prepared course materials collectively.

Comparing the two situations above, the main impression the researcher received was that key schools, the municipal key schools, in particular, provided a very favourable environment for teachers to discuss culture teaching and to share teaching resources. On the other hand, in some district key schools and ordinary schools, the teachers lacked this favourable environment and the priority for these teachers was to develop their students’ linguistic skills in order to improve their exam results.
Classroom observation is seen as another school-based vehicle for teacher development. The researcher raised the question of classroom observation with the participants. Two main types of classroom observation were mentioned by the teachers. The first type is called a “demonstration lesson”. Unlike a lesson that is conducted as part of an interview by a potential employer; instead, a demonstration lesson is usually conducted by expert teachers or teachers specialising in a particular teaching method. A demonstration lesson might be held for a city-wide, district-wide or school-wide audience. This type of demonstration lesson aims to explore creative teaching; however, most participants called this type of lesson a “do show”. As one of these teachers stated:

I admit that this type of demonstration lesson usually looks perfect. The teacher organises the lesson in a creative way, with a number of classroom activities and sufficient extra materials. Culture teaching is often emphasised to make the class environment active and attractive. Multimedia technology is definitely used. The students demonstrate satisfactory involvement. However, everyone knows how much they rehearsed beforehand. It’s not workable at all in everyday teaching.

A number of participants agreed that the teaching mode presented in this type of demonstration lesson is not workable in daily teaching. However, they acknowledged that usually this type of lesson demonstrated some new teaching ideas that the teacher observers could apply or use as reference material according to their own teaching contexts.
Another type of classroom observation mentioned by the participants is peer observation in a school or jiaoyanshi. This type of observation is usually arranged by the school administrators and jiaoyanshi leaders. The aim is to enhance the opportunities for the teachers to learn from each other and to exchange ideas. This type of class tends to be like daily teaching. However, as far as the teaching of culture is concerned, few participants agreed that this type of observation provided them with ideas or reference materials.

In addition to exploring these regular ways of pre-service and in-service teacher development, the researcher also investigated whether the participants undertook any form of training specifically related to the Standard and the textbooks. It was found that the Foreign Teaching and Research Press, which published the textbooks, sponsored training in different forms when the textbooks first came into use. Some teachers from high schools and researchers from the local education bureau took part in training directly delivered by the Press. Some of the Standard designers and policy makers delivered speeches on the ideology and implementation suggestions of the Standard and textbooks. But compared to the huge number of front line teachers, the proportion of teachers who had the chance to take part in this form of training was very small. Of the 14 participants in this study, only one participant from a municipal key school took part in this training. This teacher agreed that she benefited a lot from the training, especially in relation to integrating culture into English teaching. However, she pointed out that although the training was most welcome it was beneficial in terms of theory rather than practice. Accordingly, there was still a gap between the ideology expressed in the Standard and its
practical implementation in terms of culture teaching. Although the teachers and researchers from the local education bureau took on the task of imparting what they had learned from the training to their fellow teachers, usually in the form of seminars and Jiaoyanshi meeting, according to the participants, these seminars and meetings involved little discussion of culture teaching.

The last method of teacher development mentioned by the participants is overseas short-term teacher development programs. Nearly one third of the participants had been exposed to the culture of the main English-speaking countries. Those participants with overseas experience agreed that their understanding and awareness of the English language was somewhat enhanced by direct exposure to the authentic linguistic environment. They gained first-hand cultural experience in the foreign countries, which gave them more confidence in introducing the foreign culture to their students. Those teachers who gained personal experience of a foreign culture and brought it back to their classrooms believed that their students placed greater confidence in the authenticity of the culture that was presented to them. Conversely, participants without any overseas experience tended to view this as a weakness in their teaching of foreign culture.

A strong agreement was reached by all the participants that overseas experience helped to increase their knowledge of foreign culture and deepened their understandings of the language–culture relationship. Most of the overseas training courses did not involve culture teaching; however, three of these teachers said they learned a lot from the direct contact with native English speakers in English speaking countries.
Overseas experience gave me lots of impressions of English speaking countries, such as Canada and Australia. At least I experienced physical contact with these countries and came to know what Western cities are like and what shopping centres and houses are like. I took many pictures in these countries and felt more confident when relating my overseas experience to my students.

I stayed in Melbourne for half a year and worked in a high school there. I learned a lot about high school education in Australia. I made some Australian friends. We frequently exchange emails. Most of them were my colleagues in Melbourne. I am also partly in charge of my school’s international teacher exchange program. Through these programs I have come to know many foreign teachers. Through my communication with these foreigners, I have really learned a lot about Western culture.

The overseas courses basically provided us with guidance on syllabus design and classroom activities. Theories on culture and culture teaching were rarely touched upon. However, the trainers introduced us to some facets of American culture with videos. I lived with a local home stay, which enabled me to learn lots about the local culture. This knowledge broadened my view and gave me some inspiration to think about culture and culture teaching.

Teachers who did not have overseas experience believed that those teachers who have been to English speaking countries might have access to more materials and have greater confidence in terms of culture teaching.
5.3 Summary

This chapter presented findings from the analysis of the main questionnaire, interviews and classroom observations that were used as the research instruments of this study. The questionnaire provided both data *per se* and the grounds for classroom observation and interviews. The questionnaire answers from the 66 participants were analysed and the results of each question were presented. A sub-sample of 14 of the 66 participants verified and explained their answers to the questionnaire in the pre-interviews. These 14 participants also invited the researcher to observe their classes and participated in the stimulated recall afterwards. It was found that the participants’ espoused attitudes and beliefs about culture and culture teaching were largely in tune with what the researcher observed in their classes.

The significance of culture teaching in the enhancement of students’ English learning was acknowledged by a majority of the participants. Many agreed with the notion that culture teaching within English teaching was integral to the humanistic approach to education that the current education reform advocates. Both Chinese culture and target culture were emphasised in the Standard and taken into account in the design of the textbooks, and also by teachers. However, discrepancies were found in participants’ practices of culture teaching influenced by their different knowledge base, beliefs about their teaching contexts and their perceptions of their students’ capabilities. Basically, the participants teaching in the key schools held more positive attitudes towards their teaching environment and were willing to explore ways of integrating culture into English
teaching. The participants from the ordinary schools tended to worry more about their students’ English language proficiency and cognitive ability and thus presented a negative attitude towards culture teaching.

Some participants expressed confusion about the explanation of the cultural awareness objectives in the Standard. Others felt confident in elucidating and getting ideas from the explanation as well as in integrating these objectives into their classroom teaching. The participants agreed that the cultural presentation of the textbook was challenging in terms the teachers’ cultural and pedagogic knowledge. Faced with these challenges, many of them repeatedly expressed their uncertainty and confusion about culture teaching. On the one hand, they felt compelled to rise to the challenge. On the other, they admitted that they were confused and uncertain about how to find a balance between their beliefs about culture teaching and their teaching reality. In addition, many felt their cultural knowledge was inadequate. Culture teaching, according to the participants, has usually been ignored in every type of teacher development program. They were looking for some kind of effective instruction and guidance.

In short, the investigation of this study provided the researcher with ample data to answer the research questions. On the one hand, the data and findings presented the teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching and revealed their teaching realities in the context of high school English teaching in China. On the other hand, these results and findings need to be interpreted, synthesised and contextualised to generate implications
and recommendations concerning culture teaching in the context of high school English teaching.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.0 Introduction

As described in Section 3.2, English education in China nowadays is paid an unprecedented amount of attention both in schools and in the general community. English has become an increasingly important tool for China’s communication with the rest of the world. Since the adoption of the Open Door policy in the early 1980s, Chinese students have been expected to know about foreign culture, and this subject has been included in every English curriculum. Over the last two decades, foreign cultures have begun to penetrate into China and to have a great impact on Chinese culture. With the implementation of the Standard during the most recent educational reform, the need to know about teachers’ thoughts with respect to the content of this curriculum has become even more urgent. According to the Standard, the ultimate goal of the integration of culture into English teaching is to develop students’ intercultural awareness. This goal demands many changes, ranging from teachers’ beliefs to their teaching content and methods. Gaining an understanding of these attitudes and beliefs is vital if we are to better understand the problems of the stakeholders involved in culture teaching. It is therefore regrettable that no scholarly literature was found relating to the investigation of teachers’ thoughts about culture teaching in English teaching. This gap in understanding provided the basis for the empirical investigation in this thesis.
To address this gap, this study constructed research questions and designed investigations using multiple research instruments. This study aimed to find out to what extent teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the teaching of culture are congruent with the relevant objectives presented in the Standard, and to what extent the culture objectives stated in the Standard can be achieved within the current Chinese educational environment. The main finding of the investigation is that there is a significant gap between what is expected of teachers in the Standard and what is achievable in the classroom. This chapter examines the factors that contribute to this difference, one of which is the conflict between the current exam-oriented culture and the requirements of the Standard, which emphasises inquiry and process-oriented educational practices. The two main findings were: the conflict between what is expected in the Standard and what teachers are trained to teach, and the conflict between the lip-service given to culture teaching in the Standard and the assessment requirements that drive curriculum decisions. A conflict was also found between teachers’ perceptions of culture, the content they actually teach and the way they are supposed to conceptualise culture if their teaching goal is to develop students’ intercultural awareness. These conflicts impacted upon every research participant, but to varying degrees depending on their individual differences and the situations in which they practise.

The discussion in this chapter is carried out by synthesising the review of the relevant literature in Chapter Two with the relevant findings and the discussion of the two main areas of conflict (sections 6.1 & 6.2). Chapter Two set out the theoretical framework for this study, and this guides the discussion. Chapter Three introduced the context for
English teaching in China. It was within this context that the study was conducted, and to this context that the study aimed to contribute. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary.

6.1 The conflict between the exam-oriented culture and the process-oriented educational practices required by the Standard

One conflict clearly identified in the study of this thesis is the one that exists between the overall educational culture in China today and the intercultural awareness goals advocated by the educational reform and clearly stated in the Standard. English teaching in China is currently outcomes-oriented, and the reality of learning for exams encourages a utilitarian approach to teaching. In other words, English teaching has been driven by an exam-oriented culture, as can be seen throughout this thesis (such as sections 3.1, 5.2.1 and 5.2.2). On the other hand, the latest educational reform aimed at developing young people with comprehensive competence and a healthy world view, in which the development of students’ intercultural awareness became a key component and goal of English teaching. This aim basically emphasises inquiry and requires a process-oriented teaching approach. The two different approaches made the majority of the research participants feel frustrated and stressed when they tried to implement the requirements of the Standard. The only two teachers who expressed satisfaction with their teaching environment and indicated less frustration are both teaching in municipal key schools where the students’ overall quality and the teaching facilities largely surpass those in other schools. Municipal key schools are a very small proportion of the total number of schools in the city where the research was conducted, so it can be safely assumed that a
large number of the teachers from the district key schools and ordinary schools are facing the same dilemma. Basically, two conflicts are found to contribute to this dilemma. The first is the conflict between what is expected in the Standard and how teachers are trained to teach. The second is the conflict between the lip service paid to culture teaching in the Standard and the assessment requirements that drive curriculum decisions. The remainder of this section will discuss these two conflicts.

The conflict between what is expected in the Standard and how teachers are trained to teach

The Standard serves to guide English teaching, and at the same time it is a part of a wider educational reform. One striking feature of the reform in general is that it requires a change of pedagogy in terms of teaching practices and teachers’ professional development. Apart from adding culture to the teaching content, the Standard actually demands many other changes. For example, the Standard suggests teaching grammar in an inductive way, which is in opposition to the traditional deductive approach. The textbook is also designed on this basis. The relevant theory and practice are totally new to the overwhelming majority of teachers. In other words, the Standard and the reform both demand that teachers be learners, researchers and practitioners all at the same time. Wei (2004, p.352) points out that it is of vital importance for the success of the reform that teachers break the dependence on the curriculum that they developed in past teaching practices. This dependence mainly developed from the authoritative pattern of education that has been dominant in China. Teachers are accustomed to implementing the curriculum passively instead of teaching with initiative as participants and researchers in
curriculum development. The latter two roles are exactly the ones the Standard requires teachers to play in the implementation of the current reform, which has been implemented against the background of globalisation and defines the teachers’ mission as the development of comprehensive talents. In other words, great importance is attached to the development of students’ cross-disciplinary knowledge/skills and their creativity. This education and teaching orientation requires teachers to teach in a cross-disciplinary and creative way. The Standard also requires them to develop appropriate approaches and methods for cultivating comprehensive abilities and autonomous learning skills in their students (Section 3.4 of this thesis).

The Standard is nationally applied, and given many regional discrepancies such as economic and educational situations, it is supposed to be used flexibly in order to provide guidance in accordance with different teaching realities. Moreover, both the Standard and the reforms encourage teachers to create and develop their own teaching methods. What is implied by this encouragement is that what teachers need to know about is beyond the scope of the Standard and teachers are expected to find out for themselves. In relating these demands and challenges to teachers’ interpretation and implementation of the Standard in terms of culture teaching, it can be seen that teachers are expected to make changes and improvements in two basic ways.

Teachers are required by the educational authorities to consider relating the statements in the Standard to English education as a whole and to every aspect of teaching as well. In other words, teachers are required not only to understand, but also to synthesise the
Standard. The Standard explicitly explains the significance and objectives of culture teaching. Many participants complained that few practical instructions were provided (Section 5.2.2 of this thesis). In reality, the Standard provides nine implementation suggestions in one section (Section 3.4 of this thesis). The suggestions are about English teaching in general. However, many ideas could be applied to help teachers to be creative in the teaching of culture, such as the idea of taking every individual student into consideration in syllabus design, practising task-based teaching methods, providing students with guidance on learning strategies and setting a foundation for their life-long learning, applying modern teaching technologies and exploring teaching resources, organising active and diversified extra-curricular activities, and so on. All of these suggestions in the Standard embody the “constructive” belief in teaching that is characterised by a view of the teacher as a facilitator of learning who gives more autonomy to students (OECD, 2009, p.92). In reality, the participants’ current ways of teaching in general reflected the transmission of a belief system in which the teachers are to act as instructors who provide information and demonstrate solutions. These two different belief systems demand different pedagogical knowledge and instructional actions. The findings gained through the interviews and classroom observation presented in Chapter Five revealed the teaching situation of the teachers and their attitudes towards their teaching situation as well as their rationales for their individual practices. To facilitate the discussion on the gap between these two teaching/learning belief systems, significant findings will be reiterated.
All the participants were in agreement with the Standard’s general objectives of integrating culture into their English teaching. These objectives can be basically interpreted on three levels: to develop knowledge about the interconnection between language and culture; to develop intercultural communicative competence; and to develop cultural awareness and a healthy world view. However, taking their individual teaching realities into account, the participants expressed different beliefs about culture and how to teach it.

It can be seen from the findings in Chapter Five that the participants saw the reform in the Standard as both a challenge and an opportunity. The teaching of culture brought them stress and the diverse cultural topics in the textbooks expanded and updated their cultural knowledge (p.179 of the thesis). However, the participants from the key schools and their counterparts from the ordinary schools made quite different comments about their particular groups of students in relation to their linguistic proficiency and cognitive capacity. The participants from key schools tended to be positive about their students’ cognitive development capacity and English language proficiency, while the teachers from ordinary schools appeared to hold a very pessimistic view of their students’ capabilities in these two areas. The different attitudes of the participants towards their students were one factor that influenced the teachers’ decision making, not only in terms of the extent to which they included a cultural dimension in their teaching, but also in terms of how they practised teaching.
The different ways in which participants dealt with the cultural content of the textbook reflected their different attitudes towards their individual groups of students. Richards (1998, p.126) describes the striking features of the foreign language textbook in the current global context. He says that efforts have been made to avoid social bias and ethnocentrism and to reflect universal human concerns, needs, and feelings in the content of the books. For both teachers and learners, the textbook provides a map that lays out the general content of lessons and a sense of structure that gives coherence to both individual lessons as well as an entire course. Richards also states that the textbook serves as an authoritative and accessible tool that can both facilitate learning and make it more enjoyable (p.130). Richards’ ideas reflect the situation relating to English teaching textbooks in China. The textbooks were designed and compiled to match the English teaching reform as a part of the overall school curriculum reform. The textbook design, in terms of principles, teaching methodologies and content must correspond to the requirements of English teaching as a subject as well as to the ideals of curriculum reform (See discussion in Section 3.4).

Different attitudes towards the textbooks on the aspect of culture teaching were found among the participants as presented in Section 5.2.3. The differences again relate to the participants’ individual teaching situations. The participants from key schools largely showed favourable attitudes towards the diversity of the cultural topics presented in the textbooks and also agreed with the guidance offered in the Teachers’ Book in terms of suggestions for cultural topics and teaching activities. The participants from the ordinary
schools showed great concern as to their students’ capacity to absorb such diverse cultural topics in terms of their linguistic ability and cognitive capacity.

In addition to the participants’ understandings about their students in terms of their cognitive development capacity and linguistic skills, another factor that influenced the extent to which the participants dealt with culture teaching was the personal inadequacy the participants felt in relation to the cultural topics in the textbooks. As presented in Section 5.2.1, most teachers expressed their lack of confidence in their own knowledge of target and native cultures and in their English oral skills when it came to dealing with more complex or “in-depth” cultural topics. However, based on the classroom observation and the post-interviews, the participants showed different perceptions as to what constituted “in-depth” cultural topics. Some participants perceived religion and literature to be “in-depth” topics, while others said topics like daily life and people’s values/beliefs were what they felt less confident to deal with. It can be generally observed that concerns regarding their own abilities and those of their students with respect to linguistic skill and their limitations in terms of culture teaching, appeared to be more conspicuous among the teachers in ordinary schools than among their counterparts in key schools (See Section 5.2.1). In other words, the participants showed different levels of confidence in their efficacy in terms of culture teaching and they behaved differently in their teaching on the basis of their different perceptions of their efficacies. Bandura (1997, p.241) notes that teachers’ beliefs in their efficacy affect their general orientation toward the educational process as well as their specific instructional activities. This point was supported in this study as different classroom performance was observed among those
teachers who presented different attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching and English teaching.

The allocated teaching time was another concern for almost all the participants. On the one hand, teachers had to allocate more time to the content that was more visibly featured in exams, usually, vocabulary and grammar. However, except for the two participants from the municipal key schools, the participants agreed that, while in theory culture may enhance the students learning and understanding of the English language, in practical terms, the contribution of culture to the learning of language is difficult to separate and assess through standardised tests of vocabulary and grammar (as can be seen in Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3). In addition, team teaching is a common practice in China’s high schools. Teachers who are in charge of the same year’s English teaching form a teaching group (Jiaoyanshi). The teachers in a particular group usually discuss teaching and prepare the teaching plan and the exercises paper collectively. In the interviews, few participants stated that the Jiaoyanshi meeting discussed the teaching of culture (see Section 5.2.4). According to the majority of the participants, the content of the reading passages in the textbooks could not be dealt with and explored in depth, and had to give way to the explanation and practice of vocabulary and grammar to different extents. In brief, the short term goal of English teaching tended to be achieving good test results, while the long term goal was to develop the students’ intercultural awareness and communicative competence. Given the limited teaching time, the majority of participants struggled to achieve a sound balance in terms of teaching content and teaching methods and therefore experienced difficulty in meeting both these goals.
With the limited teaching time available and usually a big class with too many students to handle, most teachers tended to dominate the class. This is a common and mainstream practice and teachers with different groups of students dominated the class to different extents, as can be seen from the findings of classroom observation in Section 5.2.3 of this thesis. Classroom observation showed that the more the participants claimed that their students were low in developmental capacity and linguistic skills, the more the teachers tended to dominate the class and hence the less the students were actively involved. Teaching methods such as discussions and student oral presentations might be used, but the time spent on such activities took up a very small proportion of a particular lesson. Teachers used PowerPoint presentations to assist their teaching in some classrooms. Such methods were more frequently used by those teachers who believed that the teaching and discussion of the content of the reading passages was important and that their students learned well with these methods.

As can be seen from the above discussion, relevant findings of this investigation were reiterated in order to illustrate two different teaching orientations, namely the constructivist orientation advocated by the Standard and the transmission orientation embodied in the teachers’ current teaching practices. The constructive orientation emphasises students’ inquiry in the learning process with the teachers acting as facilitators. The discussion showed that this orientation called for by the Standard encountered various difficulties among the teachers due to many factors, including the practical realities that the teachers face and the ways that they are trained to teach.
Another aspect of the changes and improvements that the Standard requires teachers to make is that the Standard and the reform in general, highlight the need for changes to occur in the teacher–student relationship. Traditional classrooms are dominated by teachers, who act as “informants”. The expectation is that teachers impart information and the students act as passive receivers. The reform calls for teachers to change this mode of delivery by paying more attention to the development of students’ learning motivation, interests and learning strategies (as described in Section 1.1). The teaching of culture provides exactly the right content for teachers to experiment and explore this change of relationship. The teachers and students are from the same linguistic and cultural background, and both are “foreigners” in terms of the target culture. Also, the teachers are unlikely to be familiar with every topic concerning Chinese culture. The textbooks provide various cultural topics and teachers are not necessarily knowledgeable about all the culture content. Culture teaching would be more meaningful if it were presented in the spirit of knowing about others and self. Dasenbrock (1992, p.39) describes this process as developing curiosity about, rather than expert knowledge of, culture. What we need, he says, is a way of telling, hearing and reading stories of self, not to possess their meanings or demonstrate knowledge already in place, but as a scene of learning. In fact, very few participants from the key schools expressed any joy or appreciation gained from the cooperation and interaction with their students in the process of exploring cultural content through the teaching materials they were using in English classes, as described in Section 5.2.3, where the findings of classroom observation are summarised.
Those teachers who claimed that they paid attention to the cultural dimension believed that many cultural topics in the textbooks were within the reach of students’ interests and that the students had better knowledge than the teachers. For example, when the topic is sports, many students know the names of NBA players. One participant concluded that the more culture was included in her class, the more her students showed an interest in learning about culture and in the learning of English. Those who acknowledged the significance of culture, but attached more importance to teaching their students vocabulary and grammar, tended to put less time and effort onto the teaching of culture, either explicitly or implicitly. It was observed from the classes that when teaching vocabulary and grammar, those teachers who did not express much concern about teaching culture focussed more on the grammatical functions of vocabulary rather than its pragmatic use. These teachers also seldom taught the content of the reading passages in depth and beyond the scope of the prescribed texts. These teachers seemed to think less about culture teaching issues. Most of the participants did not focus the majority of their teaching time on vocabulary and grammar, nor did they teach much beyond the scope of the prescribed texts. Instead, they aimed at making the students understand the literal meaning of the reading passages, and with the help of the reading passages, understand the usage of vocabulary and grammar. These teachers appeared to be trying to strike a balance, within their limited teaching time, between the teaching of vocabulary and grammar, both in syntactic function and contextual meaning.
In addition, those teachers who expressed a positive attitude to students’ culture learning as inquiry, reflection and process, tended to integrate more cultural content and apply more classroom activities. Those teachers who believed that achieving good exam scores was the ultimate goal of teaching and student learning, tended to include less culture teaching. It was also observed that in the classrooms where the teachers paid attention to the explanation and exploration of the content of the reading passages, the students showed good class involvement and more English was used. However, the students tended to be more passive note-takers and Chinese was used much more than English in the classrooms where the teachers predominantly explained vocabulary and grammar.

Three main types of instructional practices summarised in OECD (2009, p.200) were all found to exist among the research participants of this study: structuring practices, student-oriented practices and enhanced learning activities. Structuring practices include such activities as stating learning goals, summarising former lessons, checking students’ understanding and reviewing homework. Student-oriented practices involve students working in groups, grouping students by ability and differentiating the tasks they are set and the involvement of students in planning classroom activities. Enhanced learning activities, for instance, have students working on projects, holding debates and creating a product. In fact, although student-oriented practices and enhanced learning activities are the approaches demanded by the Standard on the basis of a belief in a “constructivist” teaching and learning belief, it was structuring practices that were found to be dominant in the classrooms observed in this study. Teachers as facilitators or as dominants require different student-teacher relationships and different modes of classroom interaction.
In brief, a gap was found between the changes that the Standard required the teachers to make and the way in which teachers are trained to teach and have to teach based on their situational teaching realities. The changes required by the Standard are designed on the basis of a “constructivist” teaching and learning belief; however, the investigation of this study disclosed that the majority of the teachers are practising their teaching on the basis of a “transmission” model. The Standard requires teachers to be creative and to be able to synthesise the Standard with their individual teaching. In terms of the cultural dimension, the Standard provides orientation and suggestions on teaching English in general, instead of specific guidance on how to teach culture. Teachers are encouraged to explore their own teaching methods and activities based on the general orientation indicated in the Standard and the reform as well as on their teaching environments. However, the majority of the participants wanted to have specific and practical instructions that they could follow in their practice. According to most participants, the textbooks were generally well designed and well matched to the Standard in terms of cultural content. As had been hoped for when the textbooks were designed, they were used as a primary resource for both teaching and teacher development. However, teachers expression confusion and were faced with a dilemma in the practical handling of the teaching of culture. Their confusion and frustration basically stemmed from their struggle to balance the teaching and drilling of vocabulary/grammar and the exploration of cultural content. The Standard and the textbook design principles oriented the teachers towards improving themselves in teaching theory and practice and required them to do so. While it cannot be denied that this is a professional responsibility that teachers have to take on board, they
need practical and effective guidance on the journey towards their professional development. In other words, there must be something to help fill the gap between what the Standard and the textbooks provide and what the teachers need. In talking about teacher training and development (Section 5.2.4), it was found that the participants felt that there was a lack of effective channels for gaining more ideas about the theory and methods of teaching culture. What might these channels might be deserves to be explored, and will be dealt with in the following chapter on implications.

*The lip service paid to culture teaching in the Standard and the assessment requirements that drive curriculum decisions*

As discussed in the introduction of Section 6.1, two sets of conflicts are identified as contributing to the clear gap between the process-oriented approach required by the Standard and the current, outcomes-oriented teaching culture in China. The first set of conflicts has been discussed above and the following paragraphs will focus on the second set, namely that because of the contradiction between culture teaching requirements as defined in the Standard and assessment requirements, the Standard is regarded by the majority of participants to some extent as paying lip service to culture teaching.

As discussed in Section 3.4 of Chapter Three, the Standard did not provide any specific teaching and assessment methods regarding culture teaching. In fact, culture teaching was only mentioned in the Standard in the sections on English teaching objectives and the listing of cultural awareness objectives for the different levels. Apart from these objectives, the Standard did not offer any teaching suggestions or information about
assessment requirements. In brief, as discussed in the previous section, the Standard requires teachers to integrate culture teaching in a creative way according to their individual teaching situations, but that this demand appears to be quite challenging for the teachers. The majority of the teachers agreed that the development of cultural awareness should be the ultimate goal of foreign language education, but within the limited teaching time, the teachers tended to pursue the short term goal of improving the students’ exam results instead. With the exception of the two teachers from the municipal key schools, all the other participants believed that the exam requirements of the current testing system placed a huge burden on them.

As stressed in Chapter Three, the teaching of English in China takes place in a particular educational context. The investigation of this study uncovered the reality that the teachers are not only endeavouring to carry out the requirements of the Standard, but also working hard to meet the expectations of the school administration, the students and their parents. These expectations always involve conflicts, and the teachers face many dilemmas in the process of trying to meet these expectations. Gao (2008) analysed a range of messages from an online teachers’ community on the Chinese mainland. His research revealed that the different expectations of the education stakeholders placed great pressure on teachers. Gao found that many teachers in the community had serious doubts and insecurities about their professional identities. They felt a lack of confidence due to the seemingly unsolvable contradictions between the expectations of curriculum reform and the realities of their teaching situations. On the one hand, the government often urges teachers to take a quality education approach and foster positive personal qualities and skills among
students in the learning process instead of placing emphasis on exam results. On the other hand, teachers were also pressed to produce high exam results as it is crucial for pupils to succeed in their exams in order to maintain a school’s public reputation. As a result, Gao found that many teachers in the community felt that they were not only constantly questioned by various stakeholders in the educational process but also were questioning themselves about whether they were doing the job properly (p.161). In addition, as families' investment in their children’s education in China increases, parents become more demanding about their children’s education results. In short, Gao’s investigation revealed the pressure and the dilemmas that Chinese school teachers are facing and presented an accurate picture of the current high school educational context. The context of culture teaching in China presented in Chapter Four and discussed in this chapter indicated that the study of culture teaching is highly contextual. The general educational situation in China and the individual teaching reality and environment within the society provided the context and conceptual framework for this research on culture teaching.

The Standard was designed to indicate the recommended direction for English teaching. In short, it recommends that English teaching should aim to cultivate students with English language skills as well as a healthy, broad world view and an understanding of Chinese identity. This direction was set in the context of globalisation and the future needs of Chinese society. One of the important functions of education is to cultivate the values and morals required to provide a positive foundation for social development and national cohesion. In the coming decades, educational goals should be directed towards the cultivation of future generations, and schools are the best place in which to encourage
this process. The humanistic aspect plays a very important role in education, and English language learning is a very important subject, basically because English teaching involves culture teaching.

Based on this consideration and in contrast to previous curricula, the Standard emphasises this aspect of humanities education. For a long time, English teaching placed too much emphasis on the acquisition of linguistic skills, primarily because Chinese education has been exam-oriented. It can be argued that, because of this orientation, in education in general and in the liberal arts subjects in particular, a utilitarian approach to the teaching of humanities-based subjects has resulted in the progressive loss of many of the positive features typically associated with humanities curricula. In other words, the practical outcome of learning rather, than the process of learning, was promoted as the priority for both teaching and learning. In this study this utilitarianism is reflected in the priority given to lifting exam scores, and the attitudes/beliefs and ways of teaching generated by this teaching priority. In this process, the students became “exam machines” and the teachers tend to teach as “exam trainers”. This ‘teaching-for-exams’ focus has led to a lack of consensus about the original nature of education and teaching for humanistic development. In the twenty-first century, China is no longer in the same economic position as it was 30 years ago when non–humanities based qualifications were in great demand as the nation struggled to rebuild itself in the wake of the devastating impact of the Cultural Revolution. At that time, the urgent demands of the situation encouraged the focus on exams as the most direct way to select appropriately qualified talent. However, given the context of globalisation, there is a growing expectation that young people
should cultivate a wider range of talents and attitudes, to become more creative in outlook with comprehensive competence and a healthy world view. In other words, sustainable personal development and the teaching of the subjects required to achieve this has become the focus of education. As Pang (2005, p.171) argues, the capacity of a nation to remain competitive globally depends on whether its citizens are educated and sufficiently skilled for work in the future, and not on capital and technology as before. In addition, Gu (2007, p.5) stresses that the quality and vision of the teaching force determines the quality and development of human society and, ultimately, the status and levels of engagement of a nation in the global knowledge society. The Standard resulted from this necessity. More importantly, it stressed that English teaching, as an important part of education, should highlight its humanistic aspects. This dimension involved almost every aspect of teaching, ranging from the teaching content and teaching methods to teacher–student relationships. In brief, English teaching is expected by the Standard to facilitate the students’ education in such a way that encourages their development as human beings.

However, as the study revealed, teachers are confronted with many dilemmas and conflicts between the indicated teaching directions and goals and their teaching realities. In their practical teaching, they have to take exams as the priority. This is due to the vital significance of the exams to their students’ future. This priority is imposed upon them from the time students start their primary education until they enter the employment market. At every stage, exams act almost as the sole criterion. It is common in China for parents to send their children to a primary school with the expectation that the teachers
have the ability to teach their children how to attain high scores so they will be able to go to a good high school. To parents, a good teacher in high school is one who can teach well enough to enable their children to attend a reputable university, which might then pave the way for them to get a decent job after graduation. In other words, the predominant criterion for a good teacher is whether the teacher is able to teach students how to get high scores. A very serious problem with Chinese parents at present is that they focus on sending their children to school to obtain good exam scores rather than being motivated by what kind of young people their children should develop into. The students are informed of the significance of the exams from the day they enter their primary school, both by the school and their family. This environment tends to undermine students’ intrinsic motivation and interest in learning. Instead, it makes the students place a disproportionate value on and effort into exams. This over-emphasis on results and under-emphasis on process is criticised by Chinese people both in and out of the field of education. A “quality-oriented” education approach has been called for by the education policy makers and educators for many years. The latest reform raises the concept of humanistic-oriented education. However, the exam system has remained largely unchanged and exam-oriented education still prevails. This social context and the expectations of the parents and students and their influence on teachers has led to a dilemma about how to practise assessments that are congruent with the Standard.

This is one of the significant dilemmas expressed by most participants in this study. On the one hand, the teachers acknowledged that the humanistic aspect should be the core of education. On the other, facing the realities of the classroom, they tended to compromise,
succumbing to the teaching realities and teaching for exams. This dilemma generated many problems and conflicts, as discussed in Chapter Two and the previous sections of this chapter, where the investigation findings were presented and discussed, particularly in relation to the exam-oriented culture of education currently predominant in China (Sections 3.2 & 3.3).

So far, in Section 6.1, the first clear gap identified by this study between process-oriented education and the exam-oriented culture of teaching has been discussed. Two sets of conflicts contributing to this clear gap have been explained. The next section will focus on another clear gap found by this study, namely, the gap between how the research participants conceptualised culture and how they need to conceptualise it if they are required to teach culture with the aim of developing students’ intercultural awareness.

6.2 Gaps between teachers’ perceptions of culture, the content they taught and intercultural conceptualisation of culture necessary to develop students’ intercultural awareness

Section 2.1.1 reviewed the main ways in which culture is conceptualised outside and inside China in relation to foreign language teaching. Basically, two main categories of understanding about culture were identified in the studies outside China, namely, culture as a product and as a process or pattern of living. These two ways of conceptualising culture constitute an appropriate framework for understanding concerns about the cultural dimension in foreign language teaching, as they point to questions as to why culture should be included in teaching, how to teach culture and what should be taught. In
particular, this way of understanding culture provides a new direction for the discussion of the role of culture in intercultural communication. In addition, seeing culture as a process or pattern of living lends complexity to understandings in the field of language teaching, as it acknowledges pragmatics as a key component of intercultural language teaching (ICT).

As discussed in section 2.2, in recent years, many scholars have paid increasing attention to observing communication from a pragmatic perspective of language use, and this perspective has provided sufficient evidence for the complex language and culture nexus in intercultural communication. These scholars (Byram & Feng, 2005; Byram, 2006; Himmelman 2006, Ryan, 2006; to name but a few) explained the significance of the cultural dimensions by viewing foreign language instruction as social action and as a means of cultivating intercultural citizenship. This view of foreign language teaching recognises the dynamic features of language and culture, which leads to dynamic thinking about language teaching. As Borg (2006, p.24) concluded after conducting an exploratory study with over 200 participants across a range of contexts, teaching a language extends beyond teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills and includes a wide range of other issues such as culture, communication skills and learning skills.

A similar approach to understanding culture has been adopted by Chinese scholars. At the same time, Chinese scholars also focus on the particular contexts within which cultural products are created and the informing values which are reflected in cultural products. For example, Gao Yihong was the first to use Chinese cultural concepts of Dao and Qi to
explain culture as a product and as a process in intercultural communication. *Dao* refers to the general principle of the communication subject and *Qi* refers to the instrument and function of mastery of the communication message and communicative strategies as well as the outcome and effect of communication. Based on this conceptualisation, Gao has argued that foreign language teaching should not be regarded as linguistic skill training but rather as a vehicle for developing students’ qualities and characteristics (Gao, 2000, p.196).

At the interviews, participants were asked the question “What do you think culture is?” Unexpectedly, most participants did not show much interest in talking about this concept and they appeared quite unprepared for such a question. Many of the participants admitted that they knew little about this concept and had never seriously thought much about its connotation. Observing the participants’ feedback to this question during the interviews and analysing their answers, the researcher got the impression that the few participants who showed enthusiasm for talking about culture were all from the key schools, in particular, the two teachers from the municipal key schools. The reason for this gradually became clear when the participants expressed their understandings about culture teaching and the researcher observed their teaching practice.

Another impression gained through the interviews was that all the participants showed concerns about the teaching of culture as both subject teachers and as educators. These concerns basically involved determining which culture should be taught and why. School subject teaching unavoidably occurs in a particular educational context. As noted in
Section 2.1.2, education is one of the components of culture and it is influenced by many factors including political systems and economic development. The participants’ espoused attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching reflected this link between China’s school education, English teaching, and the individual school environment in which the participants taught.

In terms of school education and the cultural dimension of English teaching, all the participants related this relationship to the issue of the teaching of target culture and Chinese culture. The expression of this relationship by the participants reflected the role of the teachers as educators of the next generation. The participants in this study recalled the situation over the last two decades. Some of them were teaching English at that time and some were learning English in high school or university. However, they were living in the same historic and cultural context. They agreed that China is gaining more confidence in expressing its native culture as its national power increases and its international status rises, and that Chinese people now have greater access and pathways to foreign cultures.

In addition, all the participants pointed out that the Chinese people’s attitudes towards foreign culture have changed. When China first began to open up to the rest of the world, Chinese people showed great curiosity about, and admiration for, foreign cultures, especially about different ways of living. With enhanced communication with the rest of the world, largely brought about by increased national power and improved living standards, Chinese people began to be more critical of foreign culture and to better
appreciate their native culture. The topic of festivals came up frequently at the interviews when participants were explaining their rationales for teaching foreign culture and native Chinese culture. Many Western festivals, such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Halloween are enthusiastically celebrated by many Chinese youth. However, according to the teachers, while the “fun” aspects, such the decorations and parties, can be easily learned and copied, the origin of and cultural meanings behind the fun cannot be so readily accessed. The teachers took it as their responsibility to explain the cultural meaning behind these events to their students. At the same time, many Chinese traditional festivals such as the Dragon-Boat Festival, Tomb-Sweeping Day and Mid-Autumn Festival are losing their attraction for young people. The teachers also saw it as their task to inspire the students’ interest in and appreciation of their native culture.

It was found from the participants’ explanations, that, at present, the integration of the native culture was basically inspired by the teachers’ pride in Chinese culture and their confidence in its revival. As for the role of the target culture in the teaching of English, two major beliefs were presented by the participants. The target culture is a default element in English teaching, resulting from the inseparability of language and culture, and the meanings of language produced by this connection. In brief, key findings with respect to participants’ perceptions of the rationale for teaching both target and Chinese culture are: (1) to develop students’ awareness of the need to compare target and Chinese culture and to recognise cultural difference, and thus to cultivate in students the awareness of the self and others and (2) to use English as a tool for understanding “others” and explaining Chinese culture to the rest of the world. In this sense of
understanding the relationship between the cultural dimension of English teaching and school education, the participants did not show much difference in their espoused attitudes and beliefs. However, when they were asked in the interviews to articulate their understandings about culture and when they were observed in classrooms, problems were identified in their understanding of the concept of culture and the cultural content they were teaching.

The teachers’ responses to their understanding of the concept of culture showed that they tended to understand culture as product, rather than as process. This understanding could be identified from the participants naming such aspects of culture, as geography and history, tradition and custom, and literature and arts, and so on. Two key ideas were found to emerge from their answers. The first is that culture is everything and everywhere. The second is that culture is what is formed and accepted by a particular community. It was not expected that in answering this question participants would provide definitions for the concept of culture. This concept is too complex to offer easy definitions. However, what could be perceived from the participants’ answers was that they acknowledged the two components of culture as being a group of people and the context in which people live, but tended to see culture as static. Moreover, in classroom observations, there was little indication that teachers understood culture as process and therefore as dynamic.

The Standard is the guiding document for the latest educational reform and emphasises the development of students’ comprehensive qualities and characteristics as the ultimate educational goal. As described in Section 3.4, the Standard briefly provided the rationale
for integrating culture into English teaching and defined the concept of culture by way of listing many areas of cultural content such as history, geography, customs and traditions, living styles, literature and arts, norms of behaviour and ideological values, and so on. In addition, the Standard listed cultural awareness objectives for the nine-level English proficiency benchmarks. Many participants also demonstrated their understanding of the concept of culture, as exemplified in the Standard, by way of listing some aspects of culture in the interviews. Nevertheless, many participants, no matter which group they belonged to, said that the definition of culture and the statement of culture teaching objectives were not yet explicit enough to assist teachers to understand, think about and practise culture teaching. In other words, gaps existed between the teachers’ needs and what the Standard provides.

6.3 Summary

The discussion of findings in this chapter has focussed on the two significant gaps that the researcher found by comparing the results of the data analysis to the Chinese educational context. The first major gap is between what is expected of teachers in the Standard and what is achievable in the classroom. The second significant gap is found to be between teachers’ perceptions of culture and of the content they actually teach and the way they need to conceptualise culture if their teaching goal is to develop students’ intercultural awareness.

Two sets of conflicts were found to contribute to the first gap. The overall educational culture in China today is outcomes-oriented and the reality of learning for exams
encourages a utilitarian approach to teaching. However, the aims stated in the Standard for developing students’ intercultural awareness emphasise inquiry and require a process-oriented teaching approach. This set of conflicts was discussed in Section 6.1 from two angles. Firstly, the Standard requires teachers to change and improve in many areas of their teaching and professional development. They are expected to change their pedagogical approach, improve their subject knowledge and understand and synthesise the ideas expressed in the Standard with their individual teaching situations and demonstrate this in every aspect of teaching. In terms of culture teaching, the majority of the participants were found to be frustrated and anxious because they have not been trained to meet these demands. Most participants expressed a lack of confidence in their cultural knowledge and linguistic ability when dealing with complex cultural topics. Most participants also expressed concern as to whether their students’ linguistic skills and cognitive capacity was sufficient to cope with the diversified cultural topics in the textbooks. In addition, many participants expressed frustration and were stressed by the limited teaching time. Although teachers from the key schools showed more optimistic attitudes toward these problems than their counterparts from the ordinary schools, it cannot be denied that there is a conflict between what the Standard expects teachers to achieve and what the teachers have been trained to teach and that this constrains teachers in their efforts to implement the Standard. In brief, the discussion of this set of conflicts showed that the teachers needed practical and effective guidance in every aspect of professional development.
The second set of conflicts identified as contributing to the gap between the Standard’s expectations and the teaching realities result from the participants’ perception that the objectives and requirements of culture teaching as expressed in the Standard conflict with current assessment requirements, and so the Standard is perceived by the majority of participants to be paying lip service to the concept of culture teaching. In other words, confronted with a teaching reality where the current examination system places a huge strain on them, most teachers could not find practical suggestions in the Standard to help them pursue the long-term goal of cultivating students’ intercultural awareness rather than the short-term goal of improving their exam results. The discussion of this set of conflicts focussed on revealing the Chinese results-oriented social environment where exams take priority in teaching/learning. The purpose of this discussion was to point out that while all the participants understood the Standard’s statements regarding the importance of the humanistic aspect of English teaching, when faced with the real social environment and the teaching realities, most teachers tended to compromise, prioritising teaching for exams. This discussion revealed that any future reforms to the Standard must address the fact that teachers need more practical advice if they are to meet the Standard’s expectations.

Another significant gap was between teachers’ perceptions of culture as well as the content they actually teach and the way they were supposed to conceptualise culture if their teaching goal is to develop students’ intercultural awareness. Section 6.2 briefly revisited some of main ideas on culture and culture teaching discussed in Chapter Two and reinforced the idea that seeing culture as both “product” and as “process” was
essential for the development of intercultural awareness and intercultural communication competence. However, it was argued by the researcher of this study that the Standard failed to provide sufficient explanations of the concept of culture in terms of its articulation of the development of intercultural awareness. It is acknowledged in the literature that developing intercultural awareness requires the focus to be on the concept of culture as a “process” of living. This weakness in the Standard was demonstrated in this investigation by the fact that most participants tended to see culture as “product” in a static mode, which is not the recommended way to conceptualise culture if the aim, as explained in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, is to develop intercultural awareness.
Chapter 7 A framework for change

7.0 Introduction

Chapter Six discussed the gaps between the short term goals of favourable exam results and the long term intercultural awareness goals in the Standard, which are not compatible with a teaching environment that emphasises results over learning. This study explored one dimension of English teaching—the teaching of culture. The findings indicated that this dimension of the subject involved a series of educational concerns, ranging from the context in which culture teaching takes place to the development of teachers. The educational context discussed mainly involves the factors that influence teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about English teaching, which provide opportunities for teacher development and, at the same time, impose constraints on teachers’ ideology and behaviour. These influences include the expectations of the Standard, the students and the parents in the outcome of English teaching, among other factors. These factors are interwoven to make up the current circumstances under which teachers try to implement the teaching of culture.
On the basis of the discussions of the previous chapter, this chapter aims to provide recommendations for a change in the description of China’s school education in terms of culture teaching. Five areas of recommendations are provided and each one of them centres on an agent of change that is an actual target population in China’s educational sphere, and these can drive the recommended changes. The recommendations are structured into a framework that is presented in the table below as a map for this chapter.

Table 7.1 Framework of recommendations for change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation/section</th>
<th>Recommendations for change</th>
<th>Agent of change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation 1</td>
<td>Re-orientate the exams to favour a process-driven approach to language teaching</td>
<td>The Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 7.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 2</td>
<td>Revise the Standard and include a much clearer and more detailed supplementary materials for teachers</td>
<td>Standard writers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section 7.2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 3</td>
<td>Re-orientate the goals and content of pre-service college teacher training to facilitate a better and more sophisticated understanding about the content (culture as process) and the pedagogy (inquiry-based learning)</td>
<td>University educators</td>
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<td>Section 7.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation 4</td>
<td>Re-orientate the goals and content of in-service teacher development</td>
<td>University educators and school administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Section 7.4</td>
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7.1 Re-orientate the exams to favour a process-driven approach to language teaching

As discussed in Section 6.1, the essential conflict which confuses and frustrates teachers and constrains inquiry-based English teaching in China is the exam-oriented culture of teaching. Influenced by this teaching environment, stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, students and parents, have become driven by students’ exam results. The phrase “I know…but I believe…” was often heard from participants. The most common circumstance where this phrase was heard was when participants stated that they knew they should integrate more culture into their English class, or they should try a variety of teaching methods, but they did not believe this was realistic due to the realities of the current teaching environment.

As described in the discussion on the second set of conflicts in section 6.1, summative assessment is the only pathway practised for Chinese students to advance to the next academic grade and to be selected by prestigious schools and universities. As described in section 3.2, where China’s English evaluation system was introduced, the NMET (the
National Matriculation English Test) is regarded as the ultimate goal for student achievement by many teachers, students and parents so that students can go to university. The NMET and other tests in the national college entrance examinations (NCEE) are regarded as important and competitive examinations and have a major impact on the stakeholders in Chinese society. For instance, the 2011 NCEE was held for two days in June (the month is commonly called “black June” by school teachers, students and parents). Approximately 64,600 students took part in the exams at over 2,180 testing centres in the research city. An enormous number of parents and teachers waited outside the testing centres. Police were sent to control construction noise and traffic around the centres. Some roads were blocked and vehicles had to detour. This happens every year on these two examination days, and they have become a nationwide event. These two days carry the hopes of many people, and years of preparation. In this sense, the NMET can be regarded as a high-stakes test as it has lasting and irreversible consequences for the test candidates.

As described in the interview data analysis, the majority of participants mentioned the stress caused by the NMET on their teaching. The NMET is regarded by teachers as a ”baton” (zhihuibang) for teaching, as this test influences how society evaluates the schools, and how schools, parents, and students evaluate the teachers (Cheng, 2008, p.19). Section 6.1 discussed the heavy pressures that this social environment exerts on teachers. It is no exaggeration to say that a large majority of teachers’ teaching activities are centred on helping their students achieve good scores in the NMET. In addition, in order to help students to become familiar with the testing format of the NMET, the school term
exams essentially apply the same format as that of the NMET. Excluding frequent classroom quizzes, every student has to do at least four formal exams set by individual schools and Education Bureau at district level or municipal level within the 40 week teaching year, once every 10 weeks on average. Every exam within this period covers the content that students have learned to that point. It is a common practice for the results of the exams to be used to evaluate students by teachers as well as to evaluate teachers by school administrators. The results of the NMET serve as the most significant means of evaluating both students and their teachers in terms of English proficiency and teaching ability. In this sense, the NMET is regarded as a “baton” and years of English learning and exam preparation are geared to performing well in the NMET.

The format of the NMET consists of the testing of listening, the use of linguistic knowledge, reading and writing. Except for writing, which occupies 35 points of the total score of 150, the examination takes the form of multiple choice questions (MC), and this constitutes 115 points (76.6%) of the total score of 150. Qi (2007) conducted a survey regarding the intended wash-back of the writing task of the NEMT. The survey participants included eight test constructors, 388 teachers and 986 students. A gap was found between the intention of the test constructors and what the teachers and students think of the testing of writing. The writing task was considered by the test constructors to represent their intentions to encourage the development of students’ language-use ability as opposed to mere linguistic knowledge since it was believed to be more direct and communicative than the other tasks or items in the same test, most of which adopted the MC format (p.53). The underlying assumption of the test constructors was that if writing
was tested in the NMET it would be taught in schools. Further, through testing writing in a more communicative way, teachers would be encouraged to teach writing communication skills and students would learn to write for communication purposes (p.58). Among other things, Qi’s survey found a gap in perceptions between the test constructors and the teachers/students. The test constructors attached much more importance to context whereas none of the teachers or students in the interviews mentioned it at all (p.60). A similar gap regarding the NMET was found among the research participants of this study. In addition, it was found from the classroom observations in this study that most classrooms focussed on input activities and left the students with little opportunity to actually speak the language. Even when the teachers asked their students to express themselves in English, too many teachers tended to correct grammatical mistakes instead of the contextual appropriateness of language use.

In a vast country such as China, with a huge population, the selection function of the national exams has to remain. This form of standardised national exams such as the NMET has to find a balanced way to test many different qualities, such as validity, reliability, fairness and workability. The large proportion of MC items has been a compromise in order to find this balance. It is understandable in such a vast country as China, where there is a massive pool of test candidates, that any minor change in the test format could cause huge uncertainty to teachers, students and even parents. However, the researcher insists that it is necessary to reform and re-orientate the content and the format of the exams if the desired inquiry-oriented English education is to happen.
The recent radical educational reforms in China, such as the introduction of the New Curriculum Standards, are perceived as following a policy of decentralisation by some researchers (Zhao, 2008; He, 2011). These reforms discourage text-book bound, teacher-centred, and transmission-based teaching, while encouraging more student-centred creative learning. In schools, teachers are advised to “teach less” and give more time to student practice in the classroom to promote student-centred learning. This pedagogical change indicates a policy that is making an effort to transform the culture of teacher-dominated transmission into a culture of student-centred explorative learning (Zhao, 2008, p.185).

The interviews of this study found that many teachers acknowledged the important role of particular cultural contexts in helping students to understand a particular communication discourse, such as in understanding a conversation in their listening exam or comprehending a reading passage in their reading test. However, according to many teachers, the current exams do not require much by way of cultural awareness and cultural knowledge, as the exam tends to focus on linguistic skills and therefore “cultural awareness” is isolated (section 5.2.2). In order to verify teachers’ responses to exams, the researcher analysed seven years of NMET papers, from 2004 to 2010. The analysis focused on examining whether the tested items embodied cultural knowledge and whether the answering of the items required cultural awareness. The research teachers’ responses were verified through the researcher’s view that questions were set mainly to draw facts from the students instead of eliciting responses about the students’ knowledge and awareness of cultural discourses. One reading passage below illustrates this
phenomenon. Translations of the English words that are not included in the testing syllabus are given in Chinese characters in brackets on the paper.

SYDNEY: As they sat sharing sweets beside a swimming pool in 1999, Shane Gould and Jessicah Schipper were simply getting along well, chatting about sport, life and “anything else that came up.”

Yet in Sydney next month, they will meet again by the pool, and for a short time the friends will race against each other in the 50-meter butterfly (蝶泳) in the Australian championships at Homebush Bay.

Gould, now a 47-year-old mother of four, has announced she will be making a return to elite competition (顶级赛事) to swim the one event, having set a qualifying (合格的) time of 30.32 seconds in winning gold at last year’s United States Masters championships. Her comeback comes 32 years after she won three golds at the Munich Olympics.

Schipper, now a 17-year-old from Brisbane with a bright future of going to Athens for her first Olympics, yesterday recalled (回忆) her time with Gould five years ago.

“I was at a national youth camp on the Gold Coast and Shane had come along to talk to us and watch us train,” Schipper explained. “It seemed as if we had long been good friends. I don’t know why. We just started talking and it went from there.”

“She had a lot to share with all of us at that camp. She told us stories about what it was like at big meets like the Olympics and what it’s like to be on an Australian team. It was really interesting.”

Next time, things will be more serious. “I will still be swimming in the 50m butterfly at the nationals, so there is a chance that I could actually be competing against Shane Gould,” said Schipper, who burst onto the scene at last year’s national championships with second places in the 100 m and 200m butterfly.
59. What is the passage mainly about?
A. Stories happening in swimming competitions.
B. Two women swimmers winning Olympic golds.
C. Lessons learned from international swimming championships.
D. Friendship and competition between two swimmers.

60. Gould and Schipper are going to ______.
A. talk about sport and life
B. go back to elite competition
C. set a qualifying time and win gold
D. take part in the same sports event

61. Gould won her three Olympic golds when she was    .
A. 15
B. 17
C. 22
D. 30

62. The underlined word “it” in the fifth paragraph probably refers to_____.
A. the Olympics    B. the youth camp
C. the friendship    D. the Australian team

63. What Schipper said showed that she______.
A. was no longer Gould’s friend
B. had learned a lot from Gould
C. was not interested in Gould’s stories
D. would not like to compete against Gould

Source: www.ewstudy.com

As can be seen from the passage, the five questions could be answered correctly regardless of the cultural context of the story. This situation can be found in every year’s paper from 2004 to 2010. Therefore, the current exams did not match the curriculum
reforms and did not present the requirement of the Standard in terms of targeting students’ intercultural awareness development as the goal of English teaching. Therefore, the researcher would recommend that exams should be a positive “baton” for teachers and students to understand and practise culture teaching/learning and to think about the necessary changes to pedagogy and learning strategy. To this end, the exam content should involve more cultural content and be able to inspire the students to learn through applying cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. Another recommendation regarding exam reform is that more attention should be paid to the formative evaluation of the process of teaching and learning. Evaluation methods that weaken the influence of NMET in favour of strengthening students’ feedback in the process learning should be encouraged and expanded.

In brief, this section further discussed the significant gap between the inquiry-oriented constructivist belief of the Standard, based on an exam-oriented transmission teaching approach, and the culture of teaching English in Chinese high schools. The NMET, the most critical exam for the majority of the teachers, students and their parents, was described in terms of its content and format. Using one of the many reading comprehension passages on the NMET papers, the researcher has pointed out the deficiencies of the NMET as a function of “passing the baton” for culture teaching. The researcher recommended that as the NMET has been regarded as a “baton” by educational stakeholders, it should function as such in a positive way. In other words, the NMET should involve more cultural content and set more culturally-based questions for students to answer. In so doing, it would be hoped that teachers and students would pay
more attention to culture teaching/learning and changes of pedagogy and learning strategy. At the end of the section, the researcher suggested that methods of formative evaluation should be encouraged and expanded in order to put more stress on student feedback in the process of learning. Recommendations on exam reforms are provided. However, the researcher fully acknowledges that exam reform is not easy to achieve in a vast country such as China. Many other agendas should be considered and should be involved in any pedagogical change. The following sections will further discuss and put forward recommendations on the Standard revision, teacher development programs and a relevant research agenda.

7.2 Revise the Standard and include much clearer and more detailed supplementary materials for teachers

All the research participants agreed that the Standard was effective in highlighting the importance of culture, in stating that culture was a key element of teaching content, and in stressing the importance of both to the target and the Chinese culture. However, participants held different opinions with regards to the cultural awareness objectives and the students’ cultural awareness evaluation. Most participants thought that the objectives lacked detailed explanation and instructional guidance for teachers to relate to particular module content and particular objectives. A few participants, mainly from the key schools, contended that it was the teacher’s role and responsibility to explore the connotations of the objectives and to integrate them into a meaningful teaching experience. According to these teachers, the Standard fulfilled its function in providing guidance and orientation. The third key finding was that the majority of participants suggested that the Standard should have provided sources of culture teaching theories and
research to support teacher development in this domain. In brief, for the majority of the teachers, the Standard needs to be more explicit with regards to teaching culture and to provide more detailed supplementary materials. Based on the findings of this investigation, two matters should be explained in more detail, namely, the contextual rationale for teaching culture in English teaching, and improving the understanding of the language-culture nexus.

In the teaching context under discussion in this study, the problem of “why teach culture” broadly concerns two issues: the significant role of culture teaching in school education, and teachers’ beliefs about the interrelation between language and culture. The significant role of culture teaching in school education relates to the in-depth interpretation of the Standard with regards to culture as part of the teaching content. In other words, teachers should be sufficiently informed about the goals of education and the context of globalisation, which demands the integration of culture teaching into English instruction. It was found in the interviews that teachers were not very well informed about the importance of the phenomenon of globalisation, the broader context where English teaching is taking place. It is necessary for teachers to be informed about this phenomenon, as it impacts on the rationale for English teaching and the development of a global view for students. Globalisation nowadays inhabits almost every corner of human life. It has ushered in an era where communication opportunities cross cultural and national boundaries and make us all citizens of the world. This global interaction requires the need for sensitivity to the understanding of, and the respect for, the self and others, and concern about many global problems as well.
Despite the lack of awareness of the importance of globalisation as a key rationale for emphasising culture in English teaching, the current educational reform was launched in the context of globalisation. Wu (2002, p.18) analyses the reform in this context and says that it aims to cultivate in students a “global quality” (guoji suzhi). By “global quality”, Wu refers to:

- global awareness, such as the awareness of inter-dependence, international integration, peaceful development, environmental protection and the world justice;
- global knowledge, such as the knowledge of world geography and history, international current affairs and international language, and international economy and trade;
- global skills, such as the skills of international understanding and communication, critical thinking and creativity, information processing, dialogue and cooperation and life-long learning;
- global values, such concern for the earth, human rights, respect for life and social justice and harmony; and
- global behaviour, which refers to all the behaviour which is related to global justice.

Wu notes that these global objectives should be achieved progressively by combining with local objectives. This combination embeds both the global orientation and the national orientation in a dialectic manner (p.19).
Unfortunately, in China the conventional mode of curriculum implementation is hierarchical. A gap usually exists between the policy makers and the teachers, the practical implementers. Apart from many other practical concerns, one way to positively fill the gap is to fully inform teachers of the intention and background of the educational and curriculum reform. This information facilitates a change in beliefs and reorients ideas in their instructional practice and professional development. As noted by Huang (2004, p.104), lack of clarity in educational aims inevitably lead to lack of clarity in the objectives. One of the main goals of the reform undertaking is to develop and articulate clear educational aims and to establish an overall and operable system for developing objectives. The Standard, as the guiding document for teaching, should provide teachers with a sufficient rationale for the reform and the clear aims of the reforms, and provide sufficient and operable practice suggestions. Teachers can be encouraged and informed to develop their beliefs and practices of teaching within the context of a global view and communication. The understanding of globalisation would benefit the teachers in two respects. First, in order to cultivate positivity in students’ contributions to society, as desired in the Standard, teachers need to enhance their own knowledge about the world context, to broaden their view and develop their understanding of, and attitude towards, others and the self. Second, a general overview of the global context would assist teachers to reflect on a series of relevant culture teaching issues, such as: What is the value of English as a school subject in terms of culture teaching?; What do students need to learn and what do teachers need to teach?; How do we deal with the relationship between target culture and native culture?; ‘How do we develop in students a global view
of culture difference; and How can we develop in them a concern for the global problems facing all humanity?

The benefits of having information about globalisation directly relates to the question of why we teach culture. This issue concerns the teachers’ view of language and culture. The fieldwork of this study revealed that the view that language is merely a code system is common among teachers. This understanding of language limits teachers’ classroom teaching to imparting vocabulary and the rules of grammar and practising structure. Translation and sentence making are the predominant classroom activities, and the content of the reading texts are ignored. Explanation in Chinese is also typical of this teaching mode. The teachers who expressed this view of language tended to attribute their practice to their students’ low language proficiency and the need for passing exams. As a consequence of this teaching mode, students normally ignore the content behind the literal meaning of the many passages read. In addition, students are easily influenced to view language as a series of rules, and fail to link language learning to its practical use. This mode of teaching ignores the pragmatic function of language and is removed from the humanistic notions of English teaching espoused in educational reforms. In general, a teacher’s view of language decides the way they teach it and influences the way students view language and language learning, as the teacher is often the only model that students encounter in their language study in school (Fleet, 2006, p.13).

Based on the findings and the discussion of this thesis in relation to the gaps between the Standard view and the new way, the researcher suggests that a supplementary booklet, or
a similar type of material, be provided to teachers. As a new and explicitly added area of teaching content, culture and culture teaching and relevant concepts, such as globalisation and English as an international language, should be explained in detail in the booklet. First, the explanation of the concept of culture needs to be expanded and deepened. The Standard defined the concept by way of listing cultural dimensions, which tended to mislead teachers into thinking that culture merely referred to products. As can be seen from the interviews, none of the teachers related culture to a dynamic phenomena such as communication, exchange and evolution. In order to encourage teachers to think of English teaching as an activity that develops students’ intercultural awareness, the Standard should provide ample information and references to culture study and the study of English as an international language. In so doing, teachers will be encouraged to sharpen their thinking about culture and its relationship with the English language. Second, the research responses suggested that teachers were not sufficiently informed of a definite access point into knowing and conceptualising culture-teaching-related matters. Since the Standard has acknowledged and stated that English is being taught in China as an international language against a background of globalisation, these concepts should be clearly spelt out for the teachers to think about and expand on within their relevant professional knowledge. Moreover, the Standard showed conflicts and confusion in its statements about teaching English as an international language and of developing students’ global views and in its stress on culture teaching that targets the main English speaking countries, such as the US, the UK and Australia. The data from participants on culture teaching content and the presentation of the textbooks are also confusing. The Standard and the textbooks have limited English to its ‘inner-circle’ to the detriment of
helping teachers gain an understanding of globalisation and teaching English as an international language. The researcher recommends that the Standard needs to take into consideration its guiding role in the design of the range of culture represented in textbooks.

7.3 Re-orientate the goals and content of pre-service teacher education

As can be seen from the findings and the discussions of this study, culture teaching faces many difficulties. Apart from those caused by the exam-oriented reality, weaknesses were also found in pre-service education, which points to the importance of paying attention to teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about culture, the culture-language relationship, and cultural knowledge, and to improve course design. The data revealed that few teachers develop their ideas about teaching culture from university education programs. Teachers generally admitted that they lacked interest in learning and thinking about pedagogy in their pre-service education as undergraduates. They devoted almost all their efforts to developing English linguistic proficiency and improving linguistic skills. In addition, not all of them planned to work as teachers after graduation. Moreover, they had little idea about the realities of high school teaching, and lacked any motivation and awareness to learn how to teach.

The discussion of this section provided an overview of the situation regarding the teaching of culture in high school classrooms in a particular city. In addition, teachers acknowledged that culture teaching involved subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, as well as the teachers’ beliefs about the language-culture interrelationship.
Freeman points out that different views of language teaching lead to different views of what the essential skills of teaching are, and thus to different approaches to the preparation of teachers (Freeman, 1991. p..36). On the basis of this comprehensive view, teachers need theoretical and practical guidance in terms of culture teaching. Borg (2006) conducted an exploratory study with over 200 participants across a range of contexts into the distinctive characteristics of foreign language teachers. One of the findings summarised by Borg (p.24) is that the content of teaching for foreign language teachers is unique in its scope and complexity. Teaching a language extends beyond teaching grammar, vocabulary and the four skills, and includes a wide range of other issues such as culture, communication skills and learning skills.

Teachers change the way they teach when their beliefs about foreign language learning change (Freeman & Freeman, 1994, p.41). As the review of the literature about teachers’ attitudes and beliefs showed, researchers interested in this area have paid much attention to pre-service teachers and in-service teachers. This body of research has supported the notion that teachers’ attitude and beliefs have a close relationship with their classroom instruction and with student learning. Ample research in this area has provided valuable data with implications for many educational activities such as teacher education, curriculum design and implementation, and pedagogical development (see section 2.3). This notion, combined with the gaps discussed in Chapter Six, informs the recommendations on pre-service and in-service teacher development regarding culture teaching. In other words, the study on teachers’ attitudes and beliefs provided the basis and framework for the recommendations made in Sections 7.3 and 7.4. As can be seen
from the findings of this thesis, teachers’ beliefs about teaching culture need to be enhanced and the relevant theoretical and practical knowledge needs to be developed and included in pre-service as well as in-service teacher development courses.

Two aspects of the limitations in Chinese pre-service education were found to negatively influence teachers’ practicing culture teaching in high schools. First, student teachers are not prepared for the on-going changes and demands of high school English teaching in China. They have the basic four-year Bachelor program that graduates take in a normal university (Teacher Education University). As mentioned in section 3.1, in normal university, students study a specific discipline and the specialised course takes up the largest share of their timetable. For instance, English majors focus on training in the four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and on introductory lectures on linguistics and literature (mainly British and American). Professionally relevant courses such as educational psychology, moral education and pedagogy are delivered by lecturers from individual academic faculties and schools that are not related to foreign language instruction. In Zhan’s words (2008, p.56), the pre-service university program has tended to be a mixture of teaching English as a subject and learning about teaching as a profession. As seen in section 3.2, the second half of the last year of the Bachelor’s program is normally allocated to student practicum in high schools. This is the first and only opportunity for the student teachers to go into high schools and observe and gain a sense of the high school teaching environment. However, during and after the practicum, no teaching guidance or discussion is normally provided by university lecturers in relation to what the student teachers have learned in university and what they
encountered in high schools. The lecturers who are in charge of their students’ practicum normally act as facilitators and examiners, as they are responsible for communicating with the practicum schools and the co-evaluation of their students’ general performance. In other words, the student teachers do not have much idea about the high school teaching environment until they are approaching the end of their university program. In brief, the student teachers’ learning in university is focused on training in English skills so they tend to learn English as a subject at the expense of other pedagogical knowledge. In addition, student teachers have little contact with high schools during their program so have no reason to think about the place of high school teaching in the process of being trained as future teachers of English. This unsatisfactory situation was echoed in the responses of the teachers in this study who said they had little idea about high school English teaching when they were trained in university. Based on this situation, the researcher recommends that university programs should be restructured to provide a good balance between skill training and professional preparation. One way to make students more aware of high school teaching is to expand opportunities for the students to go into high schools in various roles. These can be in observing classrooms, observing jiaoyanshi (teaching and research group) meetings, project collaboration with high school teachers, working part-time as a high school teacher assistant, and so on. In addition, the practicum should be well-supervised and the student teachers’ feedback and assessment should focus on helping them to find and solve practical problems and even provide them with further and updated information about English teaching and teaching methodology. Another way to prepare students for high school English teaching might be by inviting high school teachers or administrators to deliver lectures or to speak in workshops and
seminars. The purpose of the activities suggested above is to help students initiate the construction of their practical knowledge about high school English teaching and update their knowledge about the high school English curriculum, textbooks and any required changes and reforms, and to prepare them for challenges they are going to meet in the classroom. In brief, these activities would help make students’ training more meaningful.

Second, the content of university pre-service teacher development programs and the mode of teaching should be re-oriented and reformed to accommodate the needs of the high school English teaching reforms. Summarising the recognition by many scholars of the pivotal role of teachers in any educational change, Zhan (2008, p.54) emphasises that changing teachers’ teaching behaviour depends on whether student teachers are appropriately trained for the new syllabus. There is a need for a professional development program for in-service teachers that can direct those changes in the new syllabus. The second deficiency of the university pre-service teacher development program in the research city is that the program focusses too much on skill training and pays little attention to practical courses relating to foreign language acquisition, English teaching methodology, textbook analysis and curriculum evaluation, and so on. In other words, the student teachers are not trained to connect their learning to their future profession, that is, high school English teaching. In this sense, the researcher recommends that the university place more emphasis on the practical requirements of high school English teaching and help student teachers to be more prepared for their future teaching at secondary level. More courses should be included into the program, such as English as an international language, update of national and international ideas of teaching English, fundamental
educational theories about teachers and students, the psychology of student learning and knowledge of classroom management (Zhan, p.62) and culture studies. The addition of the recommended courses would facilitate the student teachers in thinking more about learning English and learning about teaching English on the basis of working as future teachers rather than simply being passive learners.

The current teaching mode of university pre-service teacher development programs is much like that of high school English teaching described earlier in this thesis. Lecturing is almost the sole teaching method used, and there are very few student-centred activities, such as workshops and seminars or other forms of interactive communication. The student teachers, much like they do in high schools, spend most of their time listening to lectures, reading textbooks and preparing for semester exams and the Test for English Majors (the TEM). It is widely recognised that teaching knowledge is not simply about an extended body of facts and theories but is “experientially and socially constructed out of the experiences and classroom from which teachers have come” (Johnson, 1996, p.767). The pre-service teacher development program should be an effective influence and intervention in the student teachers’ learning process (Zhan, p.56). According to the investigation of this study (section 5.2.4), many teachers said they were provided with little guidance regarding how to teach English in a communicative way, and they were not encouraged to think about the language-culture relationship when they were learning English as a major subject in university. Based on this deficiency in the teacher-centred teaching mode of the pre-service program, the researcher would suggest a re-orientation of student teachers’ learning processes to be taken into consideration by the Ministry of
Education and by university educators. The current high school English teaching reform requires a more learner-centred approach and a change in the role of teachers—from a unidirectional transmitter of knowledge to an organiser, an advisor, a facilitator of learning (Lee, 2009, p.145). Many teaching abilities required by the Standard, such as creativity and research ability, cannot be developed in a short time and the training in the acquisition of such abilities needs to start early in a teacher’s training. More student-centred teaching/learning activities and modes should be explored to develop the student teachers’ hands-on skills, the ability to locate and solve problems, and their research ability, critical thinking ability and creativity.

7.4 Re-orientate the goals and content of in-service teacher development

As far as this study is concerned, the teaching of culture plays an important part in the humanity-oriented aspect of English teaching. However, teaching culture is a complex activity that involves both the content that teachers deal with and the ways they transmit the content to students. At the same time, teachers have to learn how to find a balance between the teaching of culture and the teaching of linguistic skills, the long-term goals of developing in students a healthy world view and intercultural awareness, and short-term goals of achieving high exam scores. It requires a systematic long-term plan to attain this goal. It needs to involve an enlightened and enhanced view of language and culture, relevant subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. In-service teacher development plays a very important role in the process of helping teachers to find problems and solve them, as teachers need effective and practical guidance in their professional development.
As pointed out in the discussion of the findings in Chapter Six, the Standard requires teachers to improve their understanding of the Standard and to learn to synthesise aspects of the Standard. However, the development of a sound curriculum in culture teaching requires both sound subject content knowledge and sound pedagogical knowledge. In other words, teachers need both the knowledge of culture and culture teaching and the skills to integrate such knowledge into their language teaching. The subject content knowledge refers to why it is necessary to teach culture and what culture to teach. The problem is: how is this to be achieved? This study has revealed the need for teacher development in all three aspects of culture teaching. However, teacher development is a complex activity and requires the collaborative involvement of universities, school administrators and teachers themselves. For this reason, this recommendation regarding in-service teacher development will be explained in two respects: knowledge about culture and culture teaching, and the skills of teaching culture. The improvement of both requires the collaboration of universities, school administrators and teacher themselves.

Most teachers in the survey thought that there was a lack of connection between in-service development programs and teachers’ real work. They agreed that some courses are interesting and help them to update their theoretical knowledge; however, they did not think the courses were relevant to their work. This situation is mainly due to the fact that not every course is given by teacher educators who are familiar with the high school teaching situation. Some courses are given by lecturers whose research areas are more theory-oriented, which is also necessary for the updating of the theoretical knowledge of
the student teachers. However, these lecturers are normally not involved in practical high school related work. This problem of the disconnection claimed by the teachers needs to be viewed from both sides - from the perspective of the university and from the point of view of high school teachers. On the part of the university, the arrangement and the integration of teacher education courses are an on-going process. The inclusiveness and efficacy of the courses they aim to provide meet the demands of the teachers’ subject content knowledge enhancement that their work needs. In terms of culture teaching, many relevant courses need to be included. For instance, the activity of teaching culture involves the understanding and application of relevant knowledge of culture studies. This area is conventionally neglected in the course design of foreign language teacher education.

There are usually three main courses for in-service development programs that are closely related to high school English teaching—Teaching Methodology, Curriculum Evaluation and Design, and Teaching Materials Design and Evaluation. The educators of such courses normally have experience in supervising pre-service teachers’ practicum in high schools, and they are more familiar with the situation there. Few participants of this study stated that they learned any culture teaching related knowledge or ideas through such courses. The researcher of this study clarified this information with the educators of the courses of a teacher education program in the research city in 2008. The three teacher educators admitted that culture teaching was given little attention in the courses, and in their training. All of them acknowledged the significance of the teaching of culture. However, they felt regretful and helpless about it because they were unfamiliar with
research areas of cultural studies and culture teaching. The three educators stated that more student teachers in recent years were expressing concerns about culture teaching. The three educators felt inadequate in tutoring or supervising teachers in this domain, except for encouraging them to make their own explorations during their research and teaching program. Taking the Master of Education thesis as an example, between the years of 2002 and 2009 at a university in the research city, 22 out of a total of 298 theses (7.38%) focussed on culture teaching issues in high school English teaching. Of these 22 theses, four focussed on the integration of culture teaching for the improvement of student reading skills; six studied the role of culture teaching to improve intercultural communication competence; three focussed on teaching culture to arouse interest in learning English language; four discussed the teachers’ roles in integrating culture into teaching; four analysed the cultural presentation of the textbooks; and one conducted research on the results of the students’ culture and language testing. These culture teaching theses are diverse; however they are a minority compared with the 276 theses that largely looked at issues of teaching and learning strategies, language skill teaching and multimedia in English teaching. The research on culture teaching was rather peripheral. Therefore, clearly teacher development in respect of culture teaching in the university setting is in a difficult situation. The research on culture teaching needs to be included in the agenda of both the teacher educators and the teachers who take the in-service development program. This research agenda will be discussed in the next section.

The data in this study shows that schools are important settings in which teachers can work and learn. The interviews showed that, compared to teacher educators, teachers
preferred to solve practical problems with their fellow teachers in jiaoyanshi (teaching and research group) meetings, and through casual discussions. In the practical discussions, teachers felt that they were learning from each other. However, as places for teachers to work and to learn, the school environment differs in many ways. In particular, where the teaching of culture is concerned, the fieldwork showed that the school environment has a significant influence on the development of teachers. Two examples of the school environment are explained below. These situations highlight the significance of the school in promoting and constraining teacher development.

The fieldwork indicated that teachers in most schools were working under great pressure due to work overload and the stress of having to live up to the demands from school administrators for good exam scores. This pressure of work overload and the exam-oriented teaching environment precludes teachers updating their theoretical or pedagogical knowledge. Obviously, in this environment discussions about teaching culture are given very little space. This is because the teaching of culture is not a focal element of the teaching strategy, compared with the teaching of language forms and the preparation for exams. According to the teachers, there is another reason why culture teaching is rarely discussed: few teachers can conceptualise or problematise the teaching of culture, and they have no access to relevant debate and discussion in the field. This feedback is congruent with the situation of university-based teacher education described in section 7.3.
Only two out of the 14 participants expressed their satisfaction with the regular jiaoyanshi meetings, with respect to discussions on the teaching of culture and sharing culture teaching resources at school. According to the teachers, two factors contributed to a satisfactory environment. First, their school administrators paid significant attention to the research work and in-service efforts of the teachers, thus encouraging a research environment in the school. This environment helps inspire teachers to explore different avenues in their work. Second, their schools attached importance to the students’ personal development in respect of humanities-based issues. The teachers worked in an atmosphere where students’ life-long learning and development took priority in education and subject teaching. Although these two teachers stated that teachers in their particular school environment still lacked theoretical guidance in exploring and conducting research on culture teaching, the positive environment, nevertheless, provided a good atmosphere for teacher development. What one has to note is that these two teachers worked in key municipal schools. The students admitted into these types of schools are normally the most academically gifted ones in the city of Tianjin. The teachers working in such schools normally have less to worry about in relation to the students’ exam scores, compared to other schools. Instead, they have the opportunity to consider the students’ life-long learning goals and their overall development. In addition, the key schools conventionally have a higher teacher recruitment standard. Teachers working in such schools are usually the envy of teachers in other schools, as they work in pleasant conditions, which is a positive for their professional development.
It can be seen from the description above and the findings of this study in Chapter Four that the school environment is a significant influencing factor on teachers’ conducting and exploring culture teaching. Culture teaching is a new topic in English teaching and, from the description above, few existing theories and opportunities to advance teachers’ knowledge in this area are available. What matters in relation to this issue is that teachers need a favourable environment in which to explore this domain of teaching. The current educational reform is not designed particularly for the key municipal schools, which only comprise a tiny proportion of secondary schools. Despite the fact that school context must be taken into account, the positive environment of the key municipal schools in terms of encouraging teachers to conduct research and professional development provides a positive model for other school administrators. The descriptions above also suggest that the classroom is not a bounded unit where teachers make decisions independently of other factors. Instead teachers’ decisions and classroom practices are influenced by many external considerations. The teaching of culture is only one of the aspects of English teaching. However, the fieldwork conducted for this study indicates that the exploration and practice of this issue involves the consideration of possible solutions offered by schools in the current educational reform program and in teacher development.

A possible solution is to enhance the schools’ key decision makers’ understanding of the curriculum reform and the ethics of humanities-based education. It is inevitable that school administrators will be under great pressure in relation to the expectations of parents and students. At the same time, they face the stress of peer school competition. Inevitably, there will be gaps between the ideal and the reality, and it takes time and
effort to change. However, school administrators need to enhance the ethics of humanities-based education advocated by the current reforms and explore ways to implement the reform goals. It must be emphasised that English is a subject embracing dual features: it is a tool for communication and it is an access point for the cultivation of students’ knowledge about how those from other cultures think and behave. High school students are at an age where they are full of curiosity, have a high capacity to learn, and where their thinking is evolving rapidly. It is a good time for schools to develop their creativity and self-awareness, their sensitivity to others and to human feelings and emotions. Therefore, exam scores should not be the ultimate and sole objective of all the activities involving teachers’ teaching and students’ learning. School climate is fundamental to the quality of schooling and instruction. A growing body of research shows that the school environment affects students’ academic achievement and their well-being and personal and social development (OECD, 2005, p.108).

Along with acknowledging the wider value of learning a foreign language comes the enhancement of school culture in respect of the development of teaching pedagogy. The pursuit of humanity-oriented education not only embeds the content and approaches of teaching within practice, but also includes fostering an environment where teachers are able to explore and research as a part of teaching. Hargreaves (1994, p.ix) notes that teachers teach in the way they do not just because of the skills they have or have not learned. Their careers, their hopes and dreams, their opportunities and aspirations, or the frustration of these things, are also important and they impact upon teachers’ commitment, enthusiasm and morale. So too in relationships with their colleagues, either
as supportive communities who work together in pursuit of common goals and continuous improvement, or as individuals working in isolation, with the insecurities that sometimes brings. Achieving complex objectives, such as quality of education and school development, requires common goals and cooperation among staff to facilitate the co-ordination of resources and strategies of individual teachers, since no teacher can achieve such goals without at least some input from others (OECD, 2005, p.101).

Teachers do not act only in the classroom, where they instruct students more or less in isolation from other classes and teachers. A modern view of teaching includes professional activities at the school level, such as co-operating in teams, building professional learning communities, participating in school development, and evaluating and changing working conditions (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin & Heilig, 2005).

School-based activities such as jiaoyanshi meetings and classroom observations are the main ways for teachers to exchange ideas and to find peer support, according to the interview responses described in section 5.2.4. So school administrators and subject coordinators should make full use of these activities in order to update professional knowledge.

As suggested by the fieldwork in this study, there are, basically, three problems that impinge on teaching development in respect to culture teaching. Firstly, how do teachers balance the teaching of language forms and culture, or, rather, for most teachers, the content of the reading texts, in very limited teaching time? Secondly, how do teachers improve their cultural knowledge of both the target culture and Chinese culture? Thirdly, how do teachers explore effective and practical classroom activities to enhance culture
teaching? Resolving these problems may involve many activities, such as exploring and integrating teaching materials, developing selective subjects as supplements to the textbooks and classroom teaching, inter-disciplinary cooperation of teachers, the reasonable restructure of teaching time, and enhancing the opportunity for students to communicate with English native speakers, and so on. However, these ideas need the support of school administrators in many respects, such as the reconsideration of teachers’ workloads, the collaboration of the teachers involved, and the management of teaching resources. Facing up to these problems, the teachers alone cannot be the decision makers; instead, they need a supportive professional community to seek, to explore, and even to take risks, and to learn.

In addition to school-based activities, short overseas study programs were also regarded as an effective way for the teachers to enforce their linguistic ability and to activate their intercultural awareness. Moreover, some teachers who did not have the opportunity to participate in such projects experienced low-efficacy in handling culture teaching. So the researcher recommends that school administrators should expand pathways in order to send their teachers to English speaking countries. One of the factors that distinguishes the experience of foreign language teachers from that of teachers of other subjects is pointed out by Hammadou & Bernhardt (1987, p.305). This factor is that language teachers reach out for communication, not fact. In other subjects, teachers can increase their subject matter knowledge through books, but it is harder for FL teachers to maintain and increase their knowledge of the FL because doing so requires them to have regular opportunities to engage in FL communication.
Aside from the schools’ share of responsibility for fostering a favourable and supportive teaching and research environment, the teachers’ own self-development is also very important in their professional development. As Wu (2005, pp.195-196) notes, teachers, as adult learners, tend to learn throughout their lives, across settings and circumstances, becoming problem-oriented and experience-based. To relate these features to the questions of why teach culture and what to teach, the recognition and awareness of teaching culture may lead teachers to accumulate cultural knowledge in their work and daily life. The participants’ opinions about the textbooks described in section 5.2.2 implied that the textbooks served as a good guide for teachers to conceptualise culture, to update and expand their knowledge about the target native culture. In spite of the fact that different participants held different opinions on the adaptability of some of the cultural topics to their students’ cognitive capacity, the participants expressed a generally positive attitude towards the presentation of the cultural content of the textbooks. In this sense, the textbooks achieved their role as the main teaching resource and as the main resource for the development of teachers’ subject knowledge, as the ample cultural content enabled the teachers to participate in a process of trying to find cultural context and meaning of language. However, the teachers’ awareness of, and their ability in, self-development in the areas of the pragmatic use of language and cultural connotation of language largely depends on the teachers’ degree of conviction for language-culture interrelationships. In this sense, other than the need to reform pre-service and in-service development program, teachers, as the professionals in the teaching arena, should also positively update their knowledge of English teaching theories and research outcomes.
The Standard, as the guide to the teaching of English in general, is unlikely to provide specific practical instructions on how to deal with a particular teaching content. However, teachers need to develop the awareness and the theoretical and practical knowledge of synthesising what the Standard orients and suggests into their own ways of dealing with culture teaching. This awareness and the ability to synthesise are beyond the scope of the Standard, rather they challenge the teachers to reflect on their beliefs in education, English teaching and their roles as teachers. To achieve this synthesis, teachers need to expand their knowledge of relevant theories and research findings. More importantly, teachers need to develop an awareness of life-long learning and the inspiration associated with knowing what they need to know within their teaching of culture. This process of knowing is not static but is dynamic, in which teachers’ knowledge is developed, enriched and used in the classroom. The researcher of this thesis is not defending the Standard, rather, the researcher believes that the Standard motivates teachers, extrinsically and intrinsically, to think about culture teaching issues in their English teaching practice.

The exploration of culture teaching activities and patterns can be an important part of teachers’ action research. Culture teaching still has a peripheral status in academic research on English teaching in China. In these circumstances, action research conducted by front-line teachers is significant in this research domain. There are already teachers combining classroom action research with their degree theses of the in-service education programs. This is beneficial both to the teachers’ practical instruction and to their
professional development. As O’Connor et al. (2006, p.3) found, in many research studies, participating in action research has been found to be the impetus for positive change exemplified by teacher improvement, self-reflection, and over-all learning that enhances classroom practices. In order to encourage this positive change, schools need to foster a favourable and encouraging environment for teachers to explore culture teaching and to conduct relevant research.

Last but not least, teachers need to improve their subject knowledge in order to feel confident about their teaching. Lafayette (1993, p.124) points to four primary areas of language teachers’ subject-matter knowledge: culture, language, linguistics and literature. The fieldwork of this study revealed that most teachers felt inadequate in some area of their subject knowledge. Teacher development should be a life-long activity. In addition, as part of life-long learning and professional development, teachers need to learn to update their professional knowledge and actively participate in relevant discussions with their counterparts in the rest of the world. This type of learning and developing has been ignored by many Chinese teachers. Culture teaching, in the intercultural context, is a problem facing many countries and areas. It is a heated topic of debate among foreign language teachers in many parts of the world. Therefore, as suggested by Dunnett, Dubin and Lezberg (1986, pp.158-159), teachers should develop their intercultural knowledge by participating in a number of professional associations, such as the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL); the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA); the Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL); Foreign Language Teachers Association (FLTA); and the Society for
Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR). The majority of English teachers in China are isolated from professional associations such as these. Therefore, this type of communication with professional counterparts all over the world needs to be implemented by English teachers and educators in China.

To summarise the recommendations regarding in-service teacher development, culture teaching is a key aspect in English teaching. It involves intertwined factors ranging from the global and national context, and the teachers’ beliefs and knowledge about the value and goals of culture teaching, to teacher development. In other words, teachers need to be fully informed of the issues about why culture should be taught, what kind of culture to teach and how to teach it. In order to explore the answers to these questions, collaboration between universities, schools and the teachers themselves is needed. Together with recommendations on the pre-service teacher development program, research into the field of culture teaching presented here could play a significant role in achieving these recommendations. This aspect of the recommendations will be provided in the next section.

7.5 Research on culture teaching needs to be expanded and deepened

The frustration of teachers regarding the lack of guidance and the lack of practical instruction of the Standard, and even the inadequacy felt by teacher educators, implies that local Chinese academic research on culture teaching, in particular, of high school English teaching, and the research on teacher development regarding this issue, are insufficient and deserve more attention. This research depends on the capacity of
university scholars, school teachers and relevant educators to explore the cultural dimension of English teaching in more fruitful ways.

First, the research into the globalisation and teaching of English as an international language in the Chinese context is still in its infancy. Discussions about the globalisation and localisation of the English language, involving both linguistic and cultural features, are very rare in China. In the Chinese context, the integration of the cultures of ‘others’ and Chinese culture would be beneficial to young students, both for broadening their views and for their better understanding of their own culture and cultural identity. This applies both to learning about and from others and also to learning how to explain their own culture to others. However, little in-depth research is available. Table 2.1 presented the proportion of culture teaching research, which showed the insufficient in-depth attention given to culture teaching research. According to the figures in this table and the personal experience of the researcher of this study, culture teaching is not yet a mainstream research area in the Chinese foreign language teaching academy, compared with the attention paid to theoretical and practical concerns of many other aspects of language teaching and research. However, globalisation and humanistic education in English teaching need to pay more attention to the cultural dimension in English teaching, in particular, the reality of high school education.

Second, culture teaching is still a new research area in China’s English teaching academy and it is unlikely to have developed a universal approach to teaching to accommodate all teaching realities, so teachers’ explorations and practices in their particular teaching
contexts would be a contribution to this domain of study and research. At the same time, the lack of a universal teaching approach provides teachers with the space to develop their own culture teaching modes. In this sense, action research conducted by the school teachers or through the collaboration of schools teachers and teacher educators should be encouraged.

Third, it is clear that the reform of Chinese school education is aimed at establishing a concept and an environment for student learning which is based on a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. It involves not just an improvement in the existing conventional curriculum, but an overhaul of the fundamental concept of curriculum, and hence it challenges basic assumptions about education and curriculum (OECD, 2010, p.90). As revealed by this study, mismatches exist between what the reforms, specifically the Standard, called for and the realities teachers face. The central mismatch is the conflict between the inquiry-oriented teaching/learning process and the exam-oriented social environment. Based on this social reality, the reform needs changes to happen at all educational levels, for all the stakeholders in the education field. Much research is required by all relevant research communities.

7.6 Summary

On the basis of the discussions of the gaps between what the school educational reform and the Standard requires and the realities facing teachers, as shown in Chapter Five, this chapter outlined five areas of recommendations for implementing a new system. First, the exam-oriented social environment was found to be the key gap between what the
Standard called for and the teaching environment where teachers struggle to manage the teaching of culture. Reiterating the teachers’ descriptions of the teaching reality and examining the format and content of the NMET, the researcher recommended that more pragmatic content should be added and integrated into the exam content to inspire teachers’/students’ to deal with more culture teaching and to pay more attention to teaching/learning English to enhance intercultural communicative competence. Moreover, the summative approach of examinations should be mixed with formative approach to reduce the weight and stress of the NMET on teachers, students and even parents.

Second, in line with negative comments from research participants about the insufficient amount of instruction on culture teaching by the Standard, the researcher recommended that the MoE, the Standard writer and the textbook compilers should provide teachers’ booklets or other forms of supplementary materials to explain the issue of culture teaching in a clearer and more complete way.

Third, reforms of pre-service teacher development programs were recommended; they need to be more accommodating to the changes to high school English teaching and to help student teachers be better prepared to teach.

Fourth, the researcher delivered recommendations on the in-service teacher development program and the roles that the schools and teachers themselves should play in terms of fostering a favourable teaching/research environment, as well as a positive environment for teachers’ professional development.
Finally, many of the problems and recommendations were found to be essentially related to the research situation on culture teaching and many other relevant issues. Based on this finding, the researcher suggested three main areas of research for the research community: the study of teaching English in China in the context of globalisation, teachers’ action research on culture teaching in their individual teaching situations, and a study of English teacher development in terms of culture teaching.
Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.0 Introduction

This study began with a concern about teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching within English language instruction in China. This concern stemmed from the current high school reform which highlighted the development of students’ intercultural awareness, and hence made culture teaching a significant area of teaching content and placed it on the research agenda. This study wanted to ascertain the extent to which the objectives of English teaching, in terms of the cultural dimension advocated by the reform, were accessible to teachers, the extent to which the reforms could be achieved and which obstacles, if there were any, lay in the path to achieving the goals. In general, this empirical study fulfilled the task through a five-year research process involving a review of the literature and the Chinese educational context, designing and conducting an investigation, analysing and interpreting data, discussing problems and formulating recommendations. This study’s contributions are two-fold: firstly, as mentioned in the Introduction Chapter, culture teaching is a problem not only confronted by Chinese teachers, but by teachers in many other contexts where English is taught as a foreign language. This study provided an overview of the Chinese educational context and
investigated professionals teaching in this context. This is one of this thesis’ contribution for those who are unfamiliar with, but interested in, the Chinese context. The study of non-native English teaching is scarce and this study contributed to filling this research gap by focussing on the teaching of culture by teachers who had limited, if any, exposure to the target culture but are still expected to incorporate culture into their foreign language instruction. In that sense, although the study focussed on the Chinese educational context the implications would be relevant beyond this context. Secondly, this study raised questions regarding the statements of the Standard about culture teaching and the actual teaching realities that teachers face. The literature review and the findings of the study set the ground to make recommendations to the relevant agents who can influence the area of culture teaching (as seen in Chapter Two). This final chapter provides a brief review of this study by revisiting the aims of the research questions, presenting a summary of each chapter, highlighting strengths and limitations, and pointing to future emerging research agendas.

8.1 Aims and research questions revisited

Due to her experience in the field, the researcher knew that she could elicit information from teachers about the benefits and the impediments to teaching culture and developing students’ intercultural awareness in the current Chinese teaching context. To date, culture teaching has not been a research focus in the study of English teaching and education in China, and it has not been given sufficient attention in the research community. This study aimed to fill this gap by conducting an empirical study and contributing ample data and in-depth discussions.
The impetus for this study was the current Chinese school educational reforms which started at the turn of 21st century. A new English curriculum standard ("the Standard" in this thesis) was launched in this reform as the guiding document for high school English teaching. The focus of this study, culture teaching, was stated for the first time in China’s English teaching history as one of the five main areas of teaching content. The ultimate goal of English teaching was said, in the Standard, to be the development of students’ intercultural awareness and communicative use of the English language. Based on the tradition of the four English skills training (listening, speaking, reading and writing), which have been the central task of English teaching in China, and the researcher’s knowledge about the teaching/learning-for-exams educational environment, this study addressed two questions: (1) To what extent are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching congruent with the relevant objectives presented in the Standard?; and (2) To what extent can the culture objectives stated in the Standard be achieved within the current educational environment in China?

8.2 Summary of thesis and findings

The background and the significance of this study were explained in the introductory chapter. The aim of this study and the research questions were also stated in the introductory chapter. Based on the aim and research questions the relevant literature was critically reviewed in Chapter Two. Firstly, scholarly understandings about the concept of culture within and outside China were examined. The various definitions and conceptualisations of culture presented the complexity of the concept of culture and
provided multiple focuses for examining culture. Both similarities and differences were noticed across the examined understandings and definitions of culture. One major similarity was that all the definitions acknowledged that culture is seen as both a product and a process. In the particular context of education in China, the main themes of the culture debate were summarised, namely: advanced culture, discussion about Chinese traditional culture/modern culture, and Chinese culture/Western culture. In addition, the relationship between culture and education was reviewed.

The second aspect of the literature review focussed on studies on culture teaching inside and outside of China. In brief, the integration of culture teaching with foreign language teaching has become a widely accepted idea among educators and teachers. This recognition was reached on the basis of the close language-culture correlation, through a sociolinguistic perspective, an anthropological perspective and an intercultural communicative competence perspective. Following this recognition, exploring contextually suitable approaches to, integrating culture teaching into English teaching became the focus. In this exploration, the crucial role played by teachers became evident, mainly because the integration largely depends on teacher attitudes and beliefs about culture and culture teaching. Moreover, teachers are in a privileged position as they have a good understanding of every aspect of the reality of teaching. For this reason they were given primacy in the discussion of the issue of culture teaching.

Further literature review focussed on the understandings of the concepts of attitude and belief, the two aspects that this study planned to investigate with the research participants.
The review of these two concepts benefited this study in two ways. Firstly, people’s attitudes and beliefs are congruent with each other in a spider-like network that involves cognition, affective and behavioural components. People’s attitudes and beliefs about the same object may vary due to individual differences and different contexts that individuals are faced with. One key benefit of reviewing attitude and belief related to the methodology that this study applied. On the one hand, the investigation of the participants’ attitudes and beliefs in the form of questionnaires and interviews provided essential access to an understanding of participants’ behaviour. On the other hand, the participants’ classroom behaviour served as a methodological technique to verify the participants’ responses to the questionnaires and interviews. Moreover, the participants’ classroom teaching provided an appropriate setting for the researcher to understand their attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, the review of the literature on attitude and belief provided guidance to the researcher in using multi-methods to conduct the investigation and to ascertain the attributes and variables that form participants’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching.

Following the review of theoretical studies relevant to this study, Chapter Three introduced the current situation with regard to Chinese school education, English teaching and culture teaching. This introduction served as background knowledge for understanding the issues of this study. It can be seen through this introduction that Chinese education was influenced by politics in the period from the founding of the PRC in 1949 to the present. In the global context and with China’s national development, the current school education reform began in 2001. It was claimed to be a comprehensive
reform that ushered in a change from teaching ideology to teaching methods. In this reform, teachers were placed in a crucial position which called for their creative input into curriculum implementation. Similar to what occurred to education in general, macro politics also dictated that English teaching become important. As a sensitive dimension of English teaching, culture teaching was reviewed in different historical periods. Finally, the cultural dimension in the Standard was described, which further illustrated its significance in the Standard as a central focus of the English curriculum in China today. After synthesising the critical review of culture understanding, culture teaching in foreign language teaching and teachers’ attitudes and beliefs in the Chinese context, three sub-research questions were formed, namely: What are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the concept of culture and culture teaching?; What do teachers think of the account of the cultural dimension in culture teaching in the Standard and their presentation in the textbook?; and What are the relationships between teachers’ attitudes/beliefs and their classroom practice? These three sub-research questions are closely connected to the two main research questions of this thesis: To what extent are teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about culture teaching congruent with the relevant objectives presented in the Standard?; and To what extent can the culture objectives stated in the standard be achieved within the current Chinese educational environment?

Based on the examination of the Chinese educational context and the literature review, Chapter Four explained the methodological concerns of this study. Firstly, the paradigm of this study as an interpretative case study was justified. Secondly, accounts of participant recruitment were provided. Thirdly, the researcher’s role in this study and the
investigation was made clear. Fourthly, the instrumentation was described and the issue of triangulation was attended to. On the basis of the solid theoretical framework established in Chapter Two and the logical design of the investigation explained in Chapter Four, ample data were collected and analysed and the results were presented in Chapter Five.

It was clear from the data that all the participants showed similar favourable attitudes towards the notion that culture teaching should be integrated into English teaching and English teaching should be practised in line with the goal of developing students’ communicative competence and intercultural awareness. However, when relating these goals to their individual teaching environments, different attitudes and beliefs appeared. Basically, the participants teaching in key schools held more positive attitudes towards their teaching environment and were willing to explore ways of integrating culture into English teaching. The participants from ordinary schools tended to worry more about their students’ English linguistic proficiency and cognitive capacity, thus they expressed a negative attitude towards culture teaching. Apart from this different attitude/belief, teachers from the key schools and their counterparts working at ordinary schools shared common concerns about the constraints they faced in culture teaching.

These concerns revealed two significant gaps. The first gap was found to be between the results-oriented culture of teaching and the process-oriented teaching/learning required by the reforms and the Standard. The second gap was between teachers’ perceptions of culture, as well as the content they actually teach, and the way they are supposed to conceptualise culture if their teaching goal is to develop students’ intercultural awareness.
The first gap regarding the culture of education in China consisted of two sets of conflicts. The first set of conflicts was between what was expected in the Standard and how teachers were trained to teach. The Standard serves to guide English teaching, and at the same time it is a part of a wider educational reform. One striking feature of the reform in general was the perceived need to reform teachers’ pedagogy of education, teaching and professional development. It was found from this study that the relevant theory and practice called for by the Standard was totally new to the overwhelming majority of teachers. In general, the Standard called for an inquiry-oriented teaching mode that demanded teachers play many roles, such as teachers, facilitators, curriculum participants and researchers, rather than the traditional role as passive implementers of the curriculum.

Teachers have been accustomed to teaching in a certain way which is aligned to the authoritative pattern of education in China. In reality, the teachers’ current ways of teaching generally reflect the transmission of highly traditional beliefs about instruction, for instance, that teachers act as instructors who provide information and demonstrate solutions to students. This kind of practice largely conflicts with the student-centred, inquiry-oriented teaching approach advocated by the Standard, which is a constructivist way of approaching teaching. It was identified in this study that the change called for in the Standard caused various difficulties among teachers. This was due to many factors, most notably the practical realities of everyday teaching and the ways participants had been trained to teach. In light of these findings, this study has contributed some recommendations for change, in Chapter Seven.
Another set of conflicts identified by this study was the gap between the lip-service paid to culture teaching in the Standard and the current assessment requirements that drive teachers’ curriculum decisions. As shown in Section 3.4, the Standard did not provide any specific culture teaching and assessment method regarding culture teaching but required teachers to integrate culture teaching in a creative way according to their individual teaching situations. This requirement was found by this study to be difficult for teachers because of the pressures faced under the current assessment requirements that emphasises students’ exam scores. In this context, the majority of the teachers tended to play down and even ignore the long-term goal of cultivating intercultural awareness in their students. In the discussion of this conflict, the overemphasis on exam results as an overwhelmingly significant Chinese social phenomenon was explained. This presented the argument about the strength of the social context which influences teachers’ decisions involving teaching goals and teaching methods. Chapter Seven made relevant recommendations for the Standard in light of this conflict, which gives supplementary explanations about teachers’ views.

The second major gap was found in this study to be between teachers’ perceptions of culture, the content they actually teach and the way they need to conceptualise culture if their teaching goal is to develop students’ intercultural awareness. Key conceptualisations of culture in the literature inside and outside China were reiterated in the discussion of this gap. The shared view was that culture is dynamic and is a product as well as a process. The participants’ interview responses and their classroom observations were summarised in the discussion of this conflict. It showed that teachers tended to
understand the concept of culture as a product rather than as a process, as static rather than dynamic. In addition, the participant teachers did not present a clear understanding of the globalisation context and of the significance of culture teaching in the global environment, where English is an international language. Apart from summarising the major findings regarding the participant teachers’ understanding of the concept of culture, the discussion also reiterated the Standard’s definition and its explanation of the concept of culture and argued that the Standard failed to provide sufficient guidance for teachers to understand the concept. Based on this argument, Chapter Seven proposed relevant recommendations for the Standard and the pre-service/in-service teacher education/development programs, as well as recommending that the research community, pay more attention to helping teachers to better conceptualise the concept of culture.

On the basis of the discussions of the two major gaps found in this study, Chapter Seven provided seven recommendations for change, and addressed a change agenda that may realise these recommendations. Firstly, the significant gap between the inquiry-oriented constructivist belief that the Standard was based on and the exam-oriented transmission teaching approach and culture of teaching in Chinese high school English teaching was further discussed with the detailed explanation of the NMET (the National Matriculation English Test). One real-life test item from such test papers was provided, indicating that the current exam failed to present the Standard’s requirement and the goal of developing students’ intercultural awareness, as the item did not require any degree of intercultural competence to respond to the task. Therefore, the first recommendation was that the current exams should be re-orientated to favour a process approach to language teaching
and learning. Apart from the change in the content of the exams, the form of the testing should be another aspect of the change. That is, more formative assessment should be included that stresses student feedback and development through the process of teaching and learning in terms of the cultural dimension in English teaching.

The second aspect of the recommendations focused on the Standard itself. Based on previous discussions about the insufficient knowledge and guidance that the Standard provided in terms of the concept of culture and culture teaching methods, the researcher of this study recommended that a revised Standard is needed to explain more about matters relevant to culture teaching and to provide more detailed supplementary materials for teachers to apply and to refer to. Based on the investigation of this study, two aspects should be explained in much more detail to facilitate teachers’ understanding of culture and culture teaching, namely: the contextual rationale for teaching culture in English teaching and the reinforcement through explanations of the language-culture correlation.

The need for re-orientating the goals and content of pre-service teacher education was the third aspect of the recommendations. The data in this study revealed that few teachers agreed that they gained ideas about teaching culture in their pre-service education in university. In reality, English teaching pedagogy has been a weak content area in the pre-service teacher education programs, where the training in linguistic skills and the basic introduction of linguistic theories were the main content. In addition, when the pre-service teachers studied in university as English majors, they had little opportunity to form contacts with high schools, with the result being a lack of stimuli to reflect on the
practical aspects of high school English teaching. Therefore, it is recommended that activities that help student teachers to understand the high school teaching context should be introduced and expanded in the pre-service programs. Such activities could include inviting high school teachers to give lectures, organising seminars and workshops involving high school teachers and observing high school English classrooms. Reform to the content of pre-service teacher development and the mode of teaching were also recommended. In relation to teaching content, the recommendations included teaching content that enabled the student teachers to prepare for their future high school English teaching and for them to be directed in relation to the new syllabus. Relevant courses should be considered for inclusion in the program, such as English as an international language, updated national and international ideas of teaching English, fundamental educational theories about teachers and students, the psychology of students’ learning and knowledge of classroom management. With regards to the mode of teaching, it was recommended that the current teacher-centred teaching mode be re-orientated to encourage student teachers to become more involved. Therefore, more student-centred teaching/learning activities should be explored to develop student teachers’ hands-on skills, the ability to locate and solve problems, research ability, critical thinking ability and creativity.

The fourth aspect of the recommendations related to in-service teacher development programs. In terms of culture teaching, both teachers’ subject content and pedagogical knowledge need to be developed. Specifically, the subject content knowledge should address why there is a need to teach culture and what culture to teach. The pedagogical
knowledge should concern the skills needed to make such knowledge accessible to students. Three agendas that may contribute to such development were addressed, namely: the university in-service teacher development program, the schools where teachers practise their teaching and get their workplace support, and teachers themselves. According to the responses of the high school teachers participating in this study and of some teacher educators from the university in the study, culture teaching has been a weak and peripheral part of university research and teacher education. The enhancement of such areas of research and teaching therefore needs more sustained commitment to, and attention from, all the three parties involved. Universities that provide in-service teacher education should pay more attention to the changes of the Standard and enhance the relevant research on culture teaching in order to better assist in-service teachers to update their relevant theoretical knowledge and to help them to solve practical problems. Additionally, the schools where the teachers practise their instruction were recognised by the participant teachers as the most important setting for gaining professional support. With regards to culture teaching, it is recommended that school administrators endeavour to build a positive and encouraging environment for their teachers to conduct action research and to explore culture teaching. Moreover, teachers’ own self-development is very important in their professional development. Teachers should be encouraged to be positive and to take the initiative in expanding their own knowledge of relevant theories, and research findings and develop their awareness of life-long learning and the inspiration of knowing what they need to know within their teaching of culture. Possible ways of gaining access to this activity of knowing were suggested, such as: updating English teaching and education theories, conducting action research, expanding ways to
enhance subject content knowledge and trying to avoid being isolated from the broad global English teaching community.

The last recommendation is relatesto the relevant research in the field of culture teaching. The research into globalisation and the teaching of English as an international language in the Chinese context is still in its infancy. Little in-depth research is available. Research on high school English teaching is even more limited. The recommendations call for more research, that is also in-depth research, to be conducted by university researchers, teacher educators and school teachers, and also greater collaboration between these sectors. Finally, as revealed by this study, the central gap in the various mismatches between what the Standard calls for and the realities of teaching practice was the conflict between the inquiry-oriented teaching/learning process and the exam-oriented social environment. Based on this social reality, the reform needs to be applied at all educational levels and needs to include all educational stakeholders. Therefore, ample research is needed by all relevant research communities.

8.3 Strengths, limitation and emerging research agendas

The research questions of this study were developed by comparing the requirements of the reform to English education with the current Chinese educational context. The literature was reviewed critically and inclusively to establish a firm framework on which the rest of the study was based. The discussion which responded to the research questions enabled the researcher to offer corresponding recommendations. This study has limitations as well. This research focused on teachers and due to the time and personnel
constraints of the researcher handling the whole investigation and data analysis single-handedly, students were not included in the investigation. Clearly, in future relevant studies on culture teaching in Chinese high school English teaching contexts, students should be investigated, as their perceptions would provide a rich contribution to every aspect of English teaching. As the OCED stressed, good instruction is not determined just by the teachers’ background, beliefs and attitudes; it should also be responsive to students’ needs and various student, classroom and school background factors (2009, p.90). The future of education in China will increasingly depend on the abilities of its teachers to facilitate the development of creative and culturally-minded students. An important part of this future will depend on the ability of teachers to present culture as a dynamic process of everyday life. This will help students to develop intercultural awareness. Therefore, teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about the concept of culture and the teaching of culture should be modified and enhanced to be brought into line with the ultimate goal of English teaching: the development of students’ intercultural awareness. Teachers’ pedagogies should be also refined accordingly. This task can only be fulfilled through the collaboration of all stakeholders.
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<th>Module</th>
<th>Topic and Task</th>
<th>Cultural Corner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>My First Day at Senior High</td>
<td>A Letter from a Senior High Student</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Task: Writing a brochure about your school</td>
<td>Task: Read the letter from a Senior High student in the US. What’s similar and what’s different in the American and Chinese school systems?</td>
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<td>1/2</td>
<td>My New Teachers</td>
<td>Different Countries, Different Schools</td>
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<td>Task: Setting criteria for a good teacher</td>
<td>Task: Read the passage and answer these questions:</td>
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<td>What kind of differences in schools does this passage describe?</td>
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<td>What’s the relationship between students and teachers in China?</td>
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<td>1/3</td>
<td>My First Ride on a Train</td>
<td>The Maglev-the fastest Train in the World</td>
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<td>Task: Talking about a trip you made to a tourist spot</td>
<td>Task: What are the main differences between a magnetically levitated train and an ordinary train?</td>
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<td>What are the advantages of travelling on a Maglev train?</td>
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<td>1/4</td>
<td>A Social Survey- My Neighbourhood</td>
<td>Read about the problems of some villages in western Europe. Answer these questions.</td>
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<td>Task: Planning a presentation to give a brief report of your neighbourhood</td>
<td>What are these problems?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do villages in your area have similar problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>A Lesson in a lab</td>
<td>Mark Kendon is a Canadian student at Senior High school. Read his description of science teaching in his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task: Preparing a</td>
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<td>Book/Module</td>
<td>Topic and Task</td>
<td>Cultural Corner</td>
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</table>
| 1/6        | The Internet and Telecommunications  
Task: Preparing a report on a simple scientific experiment showing the uses of the Internet | Read the passage and answer these questions.  
Why has Mark become more interested in science?  
Do you enjoy studying science? Explain why or why not. |
| 2/1        | Our Body and Healthy Habits  
Task: Preparing a survey about healthy living | Read about the health care system in three different countries. Answer the question.  
Which health care system do you think is the best?  
Write two or three sentences explaining why. |
| 2/2        | No Drugs  
Task: Preparing a presentation on the dangers of smoking | Stop Smoking Now-We Can Help  
Answer these questions:  
Which of the four Ds do you think is the best idea?  
Which of the other ideas do you like best?  
Do you think you would follow this advice if you were a smoker? |
| 2/3        | Music  
Task: Presenting a biography of a famous Chinese musician or composer | Ye Xiaogang  
Work in pairs. Say what you already know about Ye Xiaogang  
Read the text and make a note of any new information |
| 2/4        | Fine Arts-Western, Chinese and pop Arts  
Task: Preparing a class questionnaire on students’ likes and dislikes in arts | Read the passage. Answer the question.  
What do we learn about (a) Picasso’s blue period, (b) Picasso’s pink period, (c) Picasso and Cubism? |
| 2/5        | Newspapers and Magazines  
Task: writing about your school. Answer these questions.  
Why has Mark become more interested in science?  
Do you enjoy studying science? Explain why or why not. | Read about daily newspaper in Britain and the US and answers the question.  
What are the main differences between quality |
### Table

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<tr>
<th>Book/Module</th>
<th>Topic and Task</th>
<th>Cultural Corner</th>
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</table>
| 2/6         | Films and TV Programs  
Task: Writing a film page for a magazine | Steven Spielberg-Film Director  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
Why is Spielberg so special as a film director?  
Think of a famous Chinese film director. What do you know about him or her? |

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</table>
| 3/1         | Europe  
Task: Preparing a fact file on a region of China | The European Union  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
Find the names of three first members and three new members of the European Union.  
In terms of size and population, how big is the European Union compared with China? |
| 3/2         | Developing and Developed Countries  
Task: Writing an advertisement for your hometown | Town Twinning  
Read the passage and answer these questions.  
What happens when two towns have a town twinning agreement?  
Does your hometown have a twin town? Do you think it is a good idea? Say why or why not. |
| 3/3         | The Violence of Nature  
Task: Writing or talking about a natural disaster | Earthquake Around the Pacific  
Read the article and answer these questions.  
Where was the worst Chinese earthquake?  
What was the most dangerous thing about the California Earthquake of 1906?  
Is it possible that there could be another earthquake there? |
| 3/4         | Sandstorms in Asia  
Task: Designing a poster that encourages people to | The Green Movement  
Read the passage and answer these questions.  
How do countries in Europe try to improve the |
look after the environment environment?
Are there organisations in China whose aim is to protect the environment?
What do you know about these organisations?

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<tr>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>Great People and Great Inventions of Ancient China Task: Writing about a famous person from ancient China</td>
<td>The Industrial Revolution Read the passage and answer these questions. What changes happened with the Industrial Revolution? What do you know about the development of industry in China?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/6</td>
<td>Old and New Task: Preparing a news bulletin about changes that have taken place in your regions</td>
<td>The Empire State Building, New York Read the passage and answer these questions. For how long was the Empire State Building the tallest in the world? Why do you think there are so many tall buildings in the world now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>Life in the Future Task: Describing your ideal houses for the future</td>
<td>Famous last Words Read the passage and decide which prediction you find most amusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2</td>
<td>Traffic Jam Task: Completing a poster giving advice to visitors to your city/hometown</td>
<td>The London Congestion Charge Answer these questions. What is a congestion charge? Would a congestion charge be a good idea in your town?</td>
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<td>4/3</td>
<td>Body Language and Non-Clapping</td>
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<td>4/4</td>
<td>Great Scientists</td>
<td>Read the passage and answer the questions. Rockets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Task: Preparing a radio biography about a famous scientist</td>
<td>How were rockets invented? What are they used for today?</td>
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<td>4/5</td>
<td>A Trip Along the Three Gorges</td>
<td>Postcards to Myself</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Task: Writing some rules for travellers arriving in your town</td>
<td>Read the passage and answer the questions. What does Mr McCorquodale like doing when he travels? Choose any country and imagine you are there. Write a short postcard to yourself.</td>
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<td>4/6</td>
<td>Unexplained Mysteries of the Natural World</td>
<td>The Universal Dragon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Task: Writing about a mystery for visitors to China</td>
<td>Read the passage and answer the questions. How are western dragons different from Chinese dragons? Do you know any dragon stories?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>British and American English</td>
<td>The Man Who Made Spelling Simple</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Task: identifying a variety of English</td>
<td>Read the passage and answer the questions. What reasons did Webster have for writing an American dictionary? Can you see any similarities between Webster’s work and attempts to simplify Chinese?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/2</td>
<td>A Job Worth Doing</td>
<td>Growing Jobs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Task: Identifying important jobs for the future</td>
<td>Read the passage and answer the questions. How many jobs does the passage refer to? Which of them do you think are important in</td>
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<td>5/3</td>
<td>Adventure in Literature and the Cinema&lt;br&gt;Task: Doing a survey of teenage reading habits</td>
<td>The Life of Mark Twain&lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions.&lt;br&gt;In what ways was Mark Twain’s life an adventure?&lt;br&gt;What are the best Chinese adventure stories?</td>
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<td>5/4</td>
<td>Carnival&lt;br&gt;Task: Describing a Chinese festival</td>
<td>The Meaning of Carnival&lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions.&lt;br&gt;What is the meaning of carnival?&lt;br&gt;Which Chinese festival is most like carnival?</td>
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<td>5/5</td>
<td>The Great Sports Personality&lt;br&gt;Task: Making a list of Chinese sports personalities</td>
<td>Marathon: the Ultimate Olympic Event&lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions.&lt;br&gt;What are the origins of the marathon?&lt;br&gt;Why is the marathon the last Olympic event?</td>
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<td>5/6</td>
<td>Animals in Danger&lt;br&gt;Task: Making a survey of endangered species in China</td>
<td>WWF&lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions.&lt;br&gt;What is the WWF?&lt;br&gt;What is the WWF doing in China?</td>
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<td>6/1</td>
<td>Small Talk&lt;br&gt;Task: Preparing a small talk phrasebook for use inside and outside the classroom</td>
<td>The AAA&lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions.&lt;br&gt;How does the AAA model work?&lt;br&gt;Is the AAA model a good idea while making small talk with someone you don’t know in China?</td>
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</table>
| 6/2         | Fantasy Literature<br>Task: Writing short descriptions of books | The Lord of the Rings<br>Read the passage and answer the questions.<br>In what ways is Middle Earth different from our world?<br>Explain how the Ring is important to the story.<br>Do you know a Chinese story about a ring with
<table>
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<th>Book/Module</th>
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| 6/3        | Interpersonal Relationships-Friendship  
Task: Describing a problem you had with a friend and giving advice on how to keep friends | Friends Reunited  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
What is Friends Reunited? How do you use it?  
Are there similar websites in China? If not, do you think a website like Friends Reunited would be successful? Say why/why not. |
| 6/4        | Music  
Task: Role-playing a TV or radio music programmes | The Grammy Awards-Are They Important?  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
In what way are the Grammys similar to the Film Academy Awards (the Oscars)?  
If there were Grammy Awards for Chinese music, what categories would you like to see? |
| 6/5        | Cloning  
Task: Debating-To clone or not to clone | Brave New World  
Read the passage and answer the questions  
What are the most important features of the society described in *Brave New World*, in your opinion?  
Do you think the world described in this novel is possible? Explain why. |
| 6/6        | War and Peace  
Task: Giving a presentation on your opinion about war | How the United Nations Tries to Keep the Peace  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
What is the purpose of UN peacekeeping forces?  
Do you think the need for UN peacekeeping forces will increase or decrease in the future? |
| 7/1        | Basketball  
Task: Explaining | How Did They Start?  
Read the passage and answer the questions. |
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<td>7/2</td>
<td>Highlights of My Senior Year &lt;br&gt;Task: Writing an article for a school newspaper about the highlights of your school years</td>
<td>The American Art of Cheerleading &lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions &lt;br&gt;Do you think cheerleading is a serious activity? Say why/why not &lt;br&gt;What part does dance or gymnastics play in your education?</td>
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<td>7/3</td>
<td>Literature &lt;br&gt;Task: Acting out a scene from one of Charles Dickens’ novels</td>
<td>Charles Dickens &lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions &lt;br&gt;What experience from his own life did Dickens use in his novels? &lt;br&gt;What new information have you learnt about <em>Oliver Twist</em>? &lt;br&gt;How did Dickens’ novels help to improve English society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/4</td>
<td>Music Born in America &lt;br&gt;Task: Organising a class concert</td>
<td>Americans Who Changed the World of Music &lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions &lt;br&gt;What kind of music was each artist famous for? &lt;br&gt;What else do you know about other musicians mentioned in the passage?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/5</td>
<td>Ethnic Culture &lt;br&gt;Task: Writing an article about an ethnic minority</td>
<td>Native Americans and Australian Aborigines &lt;br&gt;Read the passage and answer the questions &lt;br&gt;In what way are the Native American and the Australian Aborigines’ cultures similar? &lt;br&gt;Are there any similarities between these cultures</td>
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<td>Book/Module</td>
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| 7/6         | The World’s Cultural Heritage  
Task: giving a presentation about a world heritage site | Santa Fe’s Living Treasures  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
How does the Living Treasures Program work?  
Do you think it’s a good idea?  
Have you heard of a similar program in China? |
| 8/1         | Deep South  
Task: Finding out about a heroic journey | The Travels of Marco Polo  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
Why did people think Marco Polo was not telling the truth about his voyage?  
Do you believe that Marco Polo did visit China? |

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<tr>
<th>Book/Module</th>
<th>Topic and Task</th>
<th>Cultural Corner</th>
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</table>
| 8/2         | The Renaissance  
Task: Describing a Chinese Painting | Printing  
Read the passage and answer the questions  
Where did printing begin in Europe?  
Why was printing so important for the Renaissance? |
| 8/3         | Foreign Food  
Task: Writing some advice for visitors | The Willow Pattern Plate  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
What is the story of the willow pattern plate?  
Do you know any similar stories? |
| 8/4         | Which English  
Task: Comparing Chinese and English vocabulary | Chinese as a Foreign Language  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
Why do people want to learn Chinese?  
Is Chinese a difficult language for foreigners? |
| 8/5         | The Conquest of the Universe  
Task: Making a time line of Chinese space | The War of the Worlds  
Read the passage and answer the questions.  
What science fiction stories have you read?  
Do you believe there are aliens Mars? |
Task: Talking about a Chinese poet

Read the passage and answer the questions

How many Romantic poets does the passage speak about?

Which Chinese poets are most "romantic"?

Appendix 2  Map of Tianjin Districts
Appendix 3  Percent with college education Tianjin, 1990.
Appendix 4 Questionnaire
Teachers’ Attitudes and Beliefs about Culture Teaching in China

This questionnaire consists of 22 questions in three sections.

Section 1 Personal Background
Q1. Your gender (Please tick) M ( ) F ( )
Q2. What is your age? _________
Q3. Please tick the highest level of your educational qualifications:
   Teachers’ College ( )
   Bachelor’s degree in English ( )
   Bachelor’s degree in other subjects than English ( )
   Please write in: __________
   Master’s degree in English ( )
   Master’s degree in another subject than English ( )
   Please write in: __________
   Diploma of Master’s program in English ( )
   Diploma of Master’s program in another subject than English ( )
   Please write in: __________
Q4. Have you been to (an) English-speaking country (countries)? Please tick.
   YES ( ) NO ( )
Q5. If YES, please write in the country (countries).
   Please write in the space here:
Q6. When and how long did you stay in the above country (countries)? If you have been to more than one country, please list them respectively.
   Please write in the space here:
Q7. Did you take training course(s) during the above travel(s)? Please tick.
   YES ( ) NO ( )
Q8. If YES, please write in details:
   Where:
   For how long:
What course(s):
*Please write in the space here:*

Q9. How long have you been teaching English?
   I have been teaching English for _______ years.

Q10. How many classes of students are you teaching?
   I am teaching _________ classes of students.

**Section 2 English teaching and culture teaching**

Q11. Please indicate the degree of your agreement for the statements below ranging from ‘Strongly disagree to ‘Strongly agree’. Please indicate the extent of agreement in each statement by circling one of the letter choices. SA=strongly agree, D= disagree, A= agree, or SD=strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. To enthuse my students for learning English.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA D A SD</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. To acquire a level of English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing that allow them to achieve better in exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA D A SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. To acquire a level of English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing that allow them to use in their life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA D A SD</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. To promote the familiarity with the culture and civilization of countries where English is spoken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA D A SD</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. To promote an open mind towards foreign culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA D A SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. To assist my students to develop a better understanding of their Chinese identity and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA D A SD</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. To acquire skills that will be useful in other subjects (such as memorise, summarise, put into words, and think critically and logically, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA D A SD</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Q12. Do you integrate cultural dimension into English teaching? Please *tick*.
   YES ( )               NO ( )
Q13. If YES in Q12, please indicate how frequently you deal with the cultural dimensions below in your teaching. Please indicate the frequency of each dimension by circling one of the letter choices: F=frequently, So=sometimes, Se=seldom, or N=never.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F</th>
<th>So</th>
<th>Se</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>1. Geography and history</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>Se</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2. Traditions and customs (i.e. festivals, dressing etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>Se</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>3. Daily life and routines (i.e. food &amp; drink, living conditions, sports etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>Se</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>4. Literature and art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>Se</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>5. Society, politics and religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>Se</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>6. Values, beliefs and behaviours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q14. Please indicate how familiar you are with the above cultural dimensions of main English-speaking countries. Please indicate your familiarity of each dimension by circling one of the letter choices: V=very familiar, F=familiar, L=less familiar or N=not at all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>1. Geography and history.</th>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2. Traditions and customs (i.e. festivals, dressing etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>3. Daily life and routines (i.e. food &amp; drink, living conditions, sports etc.)</td>
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<td>V</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>5. Society, politics and religion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>6. Values, beliefs and behaviours.</td>
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</table>

Q15. How do you update cultural knowledge in these above areas? Please write in the space here.

Q16. Please indicate how frequently you deal with particular culture below in your English classroom teaching? Please indicate the frequency of each dimension by
circling one of the letter choices: F=frequently, So=sometimes, Se=seldom, or N=never.

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<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. American culture.</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. British culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Australian culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>Se</td>
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<td>4. Canadian culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. New Zealand culture.</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>Se</td>
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Q17. Please indicate how frequently you use the activities/technologies listed below to deal with culture teaching. Please indicate the frequency of each dimension by circling one of the letter choices: F=frequently, So=sometimes, Se=seldom, or N=never.

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<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Posters and pictures</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The Internet</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. CD-ROMs, videos and movies</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Research and presentation</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Discussion and debate</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Direct communication with native speakers</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>So</td>
<td>Se</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Role plays</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q18. If you use other culture teaching activities/technologies in your classroom other than the above ones, please write in what activities/technologies you use and how often you use them. Please write in the space here:

Section 3 The Standard and the textbook

Q20. Please write in the main teachers’ book(s) which you are using. Please write in the Name and Press. *Please write in the space here:*

Q21. Culture teaching is stated as one of the teaching contents in the High School English Curricular Standard (the Standard, henceforth) starting in 2001. Please indicate the degree of your agreement for each statement. Please indicate the extent of agreement in each statement by circling one of the letter choices. SA=strongly agree, D= disagree, A= agree, or SD=strongly disagree.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. It is a correct decision to explicitly state that culture is a teaching content</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The explanations about culture teaching in the Standard are clear and sufficient.</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The objectives of cultural awareness are easy to understand.</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>4. I often refer to the Standard when I practice culture teaching.</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The Standard provides sufficient instructions for me to practice culture teaching</td>
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</table>

Q22. Below are statements about cultural dimension in textbook. Please indicate the degree of your agreement for each statement. Please indicate the extent of
agreement in each statement by circling one of the letter choices. SA=strongly agree, D= disagree, A= agree, or SD=strongly disagree.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1. Cultural content is sufficient in the textbook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2. Cultural dimensions in the textbook are inclusive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>3. Cultural content in the textbook enables me to practice diversified classroom culture teaching activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>4. Cultural content in the textbook is well organized according to students’ cognitive and linguistic proficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>5. Cultural content in the textbook is instructive to develop students’ positive attitude and tolerance to foreign cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>6. Other than presenting target culture, the textbook presents sufficient Chinese culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>7. The textbook provides sufficient teaching-assisted materials such as CD-Rom, teachers’ book, exercises, etc..</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References:


Perceptions, Challenges and Contributions to the Profession (pp.25-43). New York: Springer.


